



Alberta Home Visitation  
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## In this issue

Message from the Provincial Director

Effective Coaching:

A Powerful Approach to Support Learning

Coaching Connections

Applying Reflective Supervision Practice to  
Home Visiting Programs

The Basics of Performance Reviews

The 10 Keys to Maintaining a Successful  
Workforce

The Benefits of Coaching Training

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## Message from the Provincial Director

# Coaching and Reflective Supervision: A journey in growth and relationship

By Lavonne Roloff

This issue of *Connections* is focused on two concepts of interacting with others in relationships: coaching and reflective supervision. Incorporating these concepts into both personal and professional relationships, are invaluable. In home visitation practice, both techniques can be useful. Reflective practice has been used within home visitation for the past nine years, while coaching has recently been introduced through a pilot project.

Reflective supervision asks the individual to reflect on their own practice - how are they doing within the relationship. Providing reflective supervision is one of the components in the home visitation standards and guidelines.

AHVNA has been delivering reflective supervision workshops since 2006 when Zero to Three and Marlena Field first presented a one-day workshop on reflective supervision for AHVNA members. A working group designed the curriculum for a two-day workshop that has been presented over the past nine years.

The benefits have been that supervisors are connected to their staff and are able to follow up on how things are going with home visitors and their caseloads. In my opinion, it has likely reduced burnout and staff turnover, as staff feel supported in their roles.

Coaching is new to the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association. AHVNA received a grant to provide coaching training for home visitors and supervisors that was funded under code 355. As a result of this grant, AHVNA has been able to train over one hundred home visitation staff in this pilot project. As indicated in the publication, response from the participants has been extremely positive. Home visitors say that coaching has had an impact on their lives, both professionally and personally. They see a difference that a coaching approach makes in assisting a family to reach their own personal goals.

After participating in a coaching workshop, I agree with the comments of other participants. Coaching has the potential to assist each of us in reaching our goals through a process of asking great questions. As in many situations, when we generate our own solutions, we are more likely to commit to accomplishing them - there is accountability to self. There is also a sense of satisfaction in knowing that, as individuals, we have been successful in meeting our goals. In doing home visitation work, where we engage with others, this practice is empowering. ■

*Lavonne Roloff is the provincial director of the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association (AHVNA).*

# Effective Coaching: A Powerful Approach to Support Learning

By Paula J. MacLean

A quick Google search of the word “coaching” yields more than 250,000 hits. A scan of the first few resources demonstrates the diverse nature of the concept and uses of coaching. Of course, there are many references to coaching in sports, and an almost equal number to coaching as a tool used by supervisors and managers with employees. Dig a bit deeper and you will also see some disagreement about exactly what coaching is and how it is best used.

The value of coaching in the work of human services and health care professionals is well established in research and clinical literature. However, the precise nature of coaching and how to best use this approach to support learning is not always clear.

## Who can be coached?

Coaching is most successful when used with people who are interested and motivated to learn something new or to refine skills that are partially developed. This means that coaching cannot become a default strategy for all situations or all learners. For example, coaching is unlikely to achieve desired outcomes with people who know how to do a task but are reluctant or refuse to engage in doing it.

## Where does coaching start?

Effective coaching accepts the current skill level of the learner and begins at this point. The coach assists the learner in progressing toward a future goal or outcome over a period of weeks or months. It is crucial to the coaching process that this outcome be negotiated with, or at least agreed to, by the learner and never imposed by the coach or third party.

## What are the major steps in the coaching process?

The essential steps in the coaching process are as follows:

1. Tell (“Let me tell you how or what to do.”)
2. Show (“Watch me while I do this.”)
3. Guide (“You try it now; I will help you and give you feedback.”)
4. Independent Practice (“Now, you’re on your own. Give it a try and tell me how it goes.”)

In practice, Steps 1 (Tell) and 2 (Show) often occur simultaneously. This feels like a natural way to encourage learning. Step 3 (Guide) is usually done with the coach present and Step 4 (Independent Practice) may be done with or without the coach being present, depending on the complexity of what is being learned and the confidence of the learner.

## Who can coach?

Successful coaches are not only competent and confident in the skill being taught, they must also be skilled at breaking complex skills into smaller pieces and providing both supportive

and corrective feedback to the learner. The most powerful and successful coaches are fundamentally exceptional teachers.

As is the case with coaching in sports, not all coaches in human services or health care are equally talented or effective. In the early stages of their own learning, many coaches require support to ensure they understand and become capable in their roles.

## Does group coaching work?

Can coaching be done in groups? This is one way that coaching in human services and health care differs from coaching in sports. Because coaching is usually skill specific, it is most successful when done face-to-face and is best done one-on-one. While group coaching is possible, the group of learners should be small - three people at most when matched with a single coach. Even when all three people in a group desire to learn the same skill, each will begin their learning at a different place, each will learn at a different speed and each will need different types and frequency of feedback to best learn.

## What is peer-based coaching?

Within a workplace, a coach need not be an employee’s supervisor or manager. Peer-based coaching can be highly effective and may lighten the load of those in leadership roles who are often assumed to be the only people suitable to become coaches. Establishing peer-based coaching expands the skill sets within a team by developing the coaching abilities of members and by broadening the competencies of their peers.

Finally, parent-to-parent coaching is most certainly an approach worth exploring, yielding multiple benefits both for the parents who are coaches and for the parents who participate as learners in acquiring and refining skills. ■

*Paula J. MacLean is the best-selling author of six books on leadership in the human services sector. For the past 25 years, Paula has worked as an adult educator, human resources management expert and consultant to the non-profit sector.*

*Paula’s new Learning for Leaders online training program will launch in early January 2016. Readers are invited to sign-up for three, free, thirty-minute training videos (on effective workplace coaching, successful delegation and preventing and managing employee performance concerns).*

*Sign-up at [3freevideos.learningforleaders.ca](http://3freevideos.learningforleaders.ca). Note: the URL and video access will be available in January 2016.*



# Coaching Connections

By Cathy Gretzinger

The International Coaches Federation defines coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”

Coaching is a deliberate process that uses focused conversations to create a safe and confidential environment for individual growth, purposeful action and sustained improvement. Coaching is a one-on-one process based on a relationship between an individual (coachee) and a coach. Together they formulate specific objectives and goals that are focused on developing potential, improving professional relationships and enhancing performance. Coaching is a process of self-leadership that enables others to gain clarity about who they are, what they are doing and why they are doing it.

The International Coaches Federation defines coaching as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” Coaching is essentially a one-on-one dialogue where the coach uses tools such as questioning and mirroring to build employee engagement and leadership capacity.

A coach is a dedicated professional who specializes in developing and helping others to excel. A coach is often referred to as a thinking partner who creates a safe environment in which both parties can share insights and information, untangle the causes of limitations (often self-imposed) and identify different methods to practice new approaches. As an unbiased third party, a coach uses a variety of methods to help clients gain clarity and achieve greater job satisfaction and an improved quality of life.

The coach’s goal of each coaching conversation is to

- Promote self-discovery in a confidential, safe non-judgemental environment
- Establish achievable goals
- Determine a course of action to move the coachee closer to where they want to go
- Empower the coachee to achieve those goals

Coaching Connections was started in 2010 within the Government of Alberta (GoA) ministry of Employment and Immigration, now Human Services. Its vision is to “develop a culture that supports leadership capacity at all levels of the organization through coaching strategies.”

Through a four “C” approach of integrating culture, coaches, coachees and cross-ministry work, it strives to achieve the following outcome:

GoA uses coaching as a preferred strategy to build leadership as a way of being.

Since 2010, this initiative has trained over 65 GoA staff in a certified coaching model and supports these internal staff to use their coaching training and skills to support other Alberta government leaders. Over 600 hours of internal leadership coaching has been provided to GoA leaders through this initiative, and it has now expanded to include ten government ministries.

■  
*Cathy Gretzinger is the manager of Coaching and Mentoring Initiatives with Alberta Human Services-Human Resources.*

# Applying Reflective Supervision Practice to Home Visiting Programs

By Karen Moran Finello

The complexity of infant and early childhood work, particularly with high-risk families, creates a need for a safe arena to reflect upon and discuss issues that arise and feelings that these issues engender. Service providers need a supportive network of relationships with both supervisors and colleagues to help them cope with difficult situations and challenging work. Reflective practice and supervision can provide this support, promote ongoing learning and reduce the feelings of isolation and vicarious trauma often experienced by direct service providers. Research has indicated that reflective supervision reduces isolation and addresses the stress of home visiting and professional boundaries (Wasik, Bryant & Lyons, 1990; Zero to Three, 2006), ultimately leading to improvements in the quality of services and professional satisfaction in the workforce.



Although most evidence-based early childhood programs require reflective supervision, there has been limited attention as to how it is implemented, used and supported within programs. Typically, supervisors train for four to eight hours and then return to their agencies to conduct the work. More consideration in conducting reflective supervision is needed in these areas:

- selecting appropriate individuals to do this type of work
- preparing staff
- finding the fit between the training and the challenging experiences
- providing ongoing support

Typically, no discussions are held with the staff who will be receiving reflective supervision about what it entails and their responsibilities in reflective sessions; further, often little is done to ensure that everyone within an agency understands and values the process of reflective supervision. Not surprisingly, great variation exists in the quality of reflective supervision and its use across early childhood programs. What should be happening? And how can we ensure reflective practice is developed and used in meaningful and coherent ways? The following strategies may provide a meaningful approach.

### Build organizational understanding

Information should be shared with all program personnel, including leadership, about the value and role of reflective supervision in organizations and the research supporting it. As an example, reflective supervision in early childhood has been associated with greater resilience among providers, and its absence has been linked to provider burnout (Turner, 2009). Gibbs' research (2001) conducted with front-line child protection workers demonstrated that early supportive and validating supervision relationships had a lasting impact on workers' self-esteem, sense of value and ability to manage difficult workloads later in their careers. It also supports the theory in infant mental health of a parallel process of relationships between organizational leadership and reflective supervisors, supervisors and staff, staff and caregivers, and caregivers and young children. Gibbs hypothesizes that early reflective supervisory relationships are critical for retaining staff, creating later supervision styles and providing learning processes and continued growth of early childhood professionals within the boundaries of their organizations.

### Develop time to apply reflective practice

Key tenets of reflective supervision are **predictability** and **regularity** in meetings (Fenichel, 1992; Heffron & Murch, 2010; Heller, 2009). A variety of analyses (Clouder & Sellars, 2004; Eltringham, Gill-Crips, & Lawless, 2000; Gilbert, 2001), however, show that heavy workloads leave limited time for reflective practice. Gilbert (2001) describes this as a sense of "selfless obligation" (p. 203) arising from personal beliefs and organizational cultures that put needs of clients ahead of staff. Organizations need to monitor such practices and ensure provision of infrastructure supports to allow for appropriate supervisor-staff ratios.

Regular reflective supervision sessions provide nurturing and case support that benefits the organization. Leadership commitment can also protect staff from the pressure to increase productivity to the exclusion of supervision time and personal self-care (Van Berckelaer, 2011). To see continued growth in professional staff, which leads to strong and positive outcomes for children and their families, there should be regular meetings during which front-line staff share their struggles and brainstorm about strategies.

### Provide support to reflective supervisors in their work

In building meaningful, long-term success in the reflective process, it is important to evaluate the reflective experiences of supervisees and to provide training and support for supervisors. Ongoing support to reflective supervisors is critical for growth and retention of effective reflective supervisors. Promoting system and organizational changes will help ensure that reflective practices are viewed as important to the organization, client outcomes and retention of high quality staff.

### Consider the cost savings associated with good reflective supervision

Best practices in home visiting programs are associated with improved service delivery, better outcomes and improved organizational climate. Reflective supervision is considered a best practice promoted across multiple early childhood programs including home visiting, infant mental health and early intervention. Good reflective supervision can have a positive impact on home visitors through improved job satisfaction, job performance and child and

family outcomes. Thus, there can be significant indirect cost savings due to reduction in staff attrition.

### Regularly measure the efficacy of reflective supervision

Quality assurance processes are common in most service arenas, yet reflective supervision is rarely addressed through such processes. More attention should be paid to developing and using measures of reflective practices, including ratings by supervisees of aspects of their work, video clips of reflective supervision sessions and supervisor self-ratings of their skills, strengths and needs in doing the work. Advancing the field through such measurement will be of benefit to all involved in this work. ■

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# The Basics of Performance Reviews

By Kathy Archer

Most of us hate performance appraisals. Whether undergoing one or doing one, both are taxing. The reason? It's often either negative or fluff. Managers are taught the sandwich technique: provide three good comments, then one thing the employee can improve on. It's painful! It's also time to change that.

Consider these four points the next time you conduct performance appraisals.

## Make performance appraisals part of ongoing discussions

There should be no surprises that come up during a review. Performance appraisals should be part of an ongoing discussion about growth and development for the employee. Any concerns ought to have been previously addressed. A review is a process of going over again to reflect.

**Task:** Make sure you have regular supervision meetings with staff: weekly or monthly as appropriate for your program. Work with an agenda that is both yours and that of the employee. Design a template for you to work from that includes a review of the goals, training, challenges and things to follow up.

## Address concerns as they arise

When something comes up, address it. Don't keep a running list of things to speak to annually. If the employee is repeatedly late with paperwork, call them on it as soon as you identify it as a concern. When you get a hint that tension exists amongst staff, open up a discussion to see what's going on.

**Task:** Make note when you get irritated or annoyed with an employee. It's usually a sign of something that might need to be addressed. Review these notes each week or month before doing your regularly scheduled supervision with them.

## Follow the 80-20 rule

Eighty per cent of what you cover in a performance appraisal should be focused on what

the employee is already doing well. Only 20% is for reprimands and warnings. When you build on strengths, employees are more likely to develop into the kind of employees you want to keep around.

**Task:** Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. Review the draft appraisal you have put together. Make quick bullet points on the left side of your page indicating which comments are focused on your employee's strengths, complimenting their work and building them up. In the right column, note the comments that are reprimands, corrections and warnings. Ensure the side with strengths far outweighs the second column.

## Keep the focus on the future

A key to employee retention is that employees feel they are growing, developing and being appropriately utilized. The staff that idle at a certain level tend to lose interest. They will either get bored and create havoc on the team or look elsewhere for employment. To keep employees, show them that you see more possibility for them and demonstrate your willingness to have them grow.

**Task:** First, visualize your staff still working for you in two years. Imagine they have developed and grown into a stellar team member. Make a list of the areas of growth you see in them. Next, ask them to make a list of their aspirations. Ask staff: "Imagine two years from now, you are still working here. What skills and abilities do you think you will have grown and developed?" Finally, take your two lists and compare. Use this to guide future developmental discussions. What do you need to do to get them there?

Performance appraisals can become useful tools in developing employees to be effective, happy and have them stick around long term. To employ them in this way, be certain that the performance appraisal is part of an ongoing discussion you have with your staff on a regularly-scheduled basis. When a situation arises throughout the year, address it, presenting no new information during the review time. Focus most of your effort on the person's strengths both during the review and on a regular basis. If you want employees to mature, don't dwell on the undesirable. In its place, concentrate your energy on what you want to see flourish.

Here are four more practical approaches to performance appraisals.

## Four Coaching Questions to Ask Employees During Their Next Performance Appraisal

### *What does this appraisal mean to you?*

Let the analysis and interpretation start with the employee. Getting them to talk about what happened helps you to see their point of view and where they are at in absorbing lessons from experiences.

You might then ask: What does your assessment suggest you might do? This allows the employee to lead the discussion. Even though it may not be easy for them to redirect themselves, it takes the onus off you and puts it back in its rightful place.

### *What part of this do you want to discuss?*

Let the employee lead. Giving them the floor first prevents defensiveness. It also allows employees to take ownership of their development.

Another way of phrasing it might be: Where do you want to focus your growth? The message is that your conversation is about learning and growth.

### *Is it the impact you want?*

Connecting cause and effect is important for development. When we help employees get clear on the outcome they are looking for, they can get clearer about what they need to do to get that outcome.

A follow-up question might be: If this is the impact you want, what can you do to have more of that show up? This builds on the employee's strengths.

### *Where does it point you?*

Letting employees indicate next steps lets them be proactive in their growth and development. It helps them connect to their "self-doing" future more effectively, efficiently or with more impact.

You might then ask: What excites you about what you've just learned? This helps to take mistakes and see them as learning opportunities rather than something to avoid. ■

*Kathy Archer is a leadership coach at Silver River Coaching (<http://www.silverrivercoaching.com/women-with-grit.html>), offering training for women who want to strengthen their leadership capabilities and find balance in life. She mentors females as they rediscover their purpose, passion and persistence for life while dealing with office politics, jerk bosses and the challenges of family life. In her signature program, *Women with Grit: Leading with Courage & Confidence*, Kathy gives her clients the hope and inspiration they need along with a kick in the pants to make positive change in their lives.*

# The 10 Keys to Maintaining a Successful Workforce

By Karin Naslund

Success is said to be the accomplishment of an aim or purpose, which sounds simple. However, no two people define success exactly the same because of all it encompasses, such as career, health, family, faith and finances.

A *Global Career Aspirations Survey* of employees released by Right Management in April 2015 (<http://www.right.com/>), looks further into the area of career in correlation to success. Their findings support the need for supervisors who are skilled in building and retaining collaborative relationships. For example, 53% of employees want to be respected for their knowledge and experience by their leaders, and 59% want mutual trust with colleagues at work. Additional relationship factors rating high in this study include transparency, relationships as equals and friendship.

Furthermore, supervisors must spend time getting to know their staff on a personal basis while taking an interest in their professional development. It can start with aiding employees in defining career success followed by coaching them toward achieving it. Keeping this in mind, supervisors should also make connections between the organization's vision, mission and goals and individual career interests. The result will be engaged employees who are motivated to do their best.

This survey then goes on to rate other factors as identified by employees that enhance their satisfaction and motivation in the workplace, such as happiness/enjoyment, salary, doing the best work, respect, recognition and high performance. It is obvious that employees view their relationships at work as a priority and desire a place to connect with others, belong, have resources to do their job well and be supported through difficult times.

Considering the importance of workplace relationships, career development and support supervisors should be focusing their time on these 10 activities during their staff's employment.



## Upon hiring

1. Ensure connections to others early.
2. Help staff contribute quickly.
3. Begin career development conversations promptly.

## To maintain engaged employees who feel successful

4. Provide challenges and learning opportunities on the job; provide training and development opportunities.
  - Opportunities for employees to excel and recognition when they do
  - Opportunities for employees to grow, and feedback to support that development
5. Ensure interesting work that is valued by the organization.
6. Clarify expectations and practise good communication skills.
7. Reinforce how work fits into the “big picture.”
8. Encourage employee involvement in decision-making; their opinion counts!
9. Nurture trust amongst colleagues and in you as supervisor; walk your talk.
10. Creatively reward good effort and performance, and say “thank you” often. ■

Karin Naslund has her own consulting practice, Naslund Consulting Group Inc., [www.ncginc.ca](http://www.ncginc.ca) or on Facebook at Naslund Consulting Group Inc.

# connections

## Coming up

The next issue of Connections will focus on Coaching and supervision part two. If you would like to submit an article or resource for this topic, please contact the AHVNA office by May 31, 2016.

## Hearing from you

Connections is published three times per year by the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association. We welcome comments, questions and feedback on this newsletter. Please direct any comments to Lavonne Roloff, AHVNA Provincial Director, by phone at 780.429.4787 or by email to [info@ahvna.org](mailto:info@ahvna.org).

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# The Benefits of Coaching-Training

## Home visitors' comments on the benefits of coaching

In my visits with families, I have been reminded to ask questions - lots of questions - before I ever offer any advice or opinions. Better yet, I often let the family talk their own way into a solution. When the parent owns the idea, it is so much more likely to be implemented than if the idea was given to them by a home visitor. When advice or opinions need to be shared, I try to remember to ask "Would it be okay if I shared an observation with you?" or something to that effect. I find that in their agreeing to hear my idea, they become much more open to a new way of seeing the issue. Their defences are taken down because they feel that they are still in control. I have seen this work so effectively with one family in particular.

I have also had my supervisor use the coaching technique with me during a reflecting session. I did not realize at first what she was doing, but her questions were effective in helping me to think deeper about a family, the core issues that were blocking our progress and how to approach things in a different manner. Just to have her listen attentively and ask me "and what else?" was so helpful!

*- Darci Dejx is a home visitor with Accredited Supports to the Community in Olds.*

The recent coaching workshop was amazing! I have been a home visitor for just over a year, and this training has really given me the words, literally, to help my clients. I feel that I am good at meeting the client where they are and helping them explore their own goals, but the "coach approach" has given me a new way of assisting clients to realize and go for their own goals. I would love to have continued coach training!

*- Leanne Lyon is a home visitor with FCSS in Sylvan Lake.*

This three-day training was among the best three days in training I've ever spent, on both a professional and personal level. I have found a shift in how I approach conversations in general. It feels empowering for me and those I support. It's like I'm giving a gift of ownership and accountability of one's own actions and choices. In my role of family support with at-risk families, this is particularly important. Thank you for making this training possible. I immediately looked into the extensive course available through Royal Roads University and am strongly considering completing the whole course. Thank you so much. I am a better social worker, mother, wife and friend because of it.

*- Christina Perrott is a home visitor with Healthy Families, The Children's Cottage Society in Calgary. ■*

For more information about the Exceleator Essentials coaching program, contact [www.essentialimpact.com](http://www.essentialimpact.com).



Alberta Home Visitation  
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