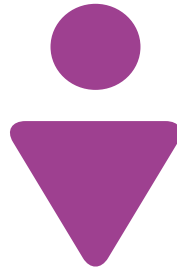


Country Report

SUPERVISION FOR CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONALS IN MOLDOVA

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List of Acronyms

CSA	Community social assistant
MOLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (and previous names of this authority)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSAA	National Social Assistance Agency
Mechanism	Mechanism for Professional Supervision in Social Assistance. Practical Implementation Guide
TSAS	Territorial social assistance structures
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

Supervision is quite a new reality in Moldova, likewise the field in which it is applied – social assistance. Social assistance, in its contemporary understanding, started developing after the proclamation of independence of Moldova in 1991. Progress in this field was made step by step, with the support of various international projects. Introducing the concept of supervision in 2008, in compliance with the existing pressing needs, was one of the development stages. During the period 2008-2009, a Supervision Mechanism was approved and started to be piloted. The currently applicable version of the Mechanism of supervision dates back to 2017, when it was modified and updated. While the 2008 version of the Mechanism focused on community social assistants and social workers, who were the only categories subjected to supervision, the scope of supervision was extended since 2017 to all employees of territorial social assistance structures (TSAS) which interact with the beneficiaries.

Supervision is not uniformly applied throughout the country: in certain institutions, it is totally unplanned and informal. A series of formalities shall be respected when performing it: group and individual meetings should be planned, an agenda, minutes and reports should be developed, but many institutions do not comply with such requirements. The quality of this process totally depends on the competence and the sense of responsibility of the involved human resources, starting with TSAS administration, managers etc. Supervision is well performed in a number of districts, but not in all of them. At the same time, it is worth being noted that the process has improved after service accreditation has started (2012-2014).

Supervision is performed following a cascade system, starting with managers and going to community social assistants or similar-level staff. Managers benefit just theoretically from supervision. Supervision in the social assistance field covers all the staff's work: the tasks related to children, as well as to the elderly, the disadvantaged people etc. Supervision is not specifically adapted to a certain area of work, for example, to child protection. Professionals of multidisciplinary teams dealing with child protection cases, who are not part of the social assistance system, such as medical, education and police staff, are not covered by supervision in its formal understanding, in accordance with the current mechanism.

The intense staff turnover seems to be the main challenge to the good implementation of the supervision practice. The system accepts unprepared people, who have no relevant education, therefore supervisors need to do much more work than it would be normal, as a new professional requires a lot of attention. At the same time, supervisors also have to perform their main job-related tasks, or the supervision of colleagues or subordinates is a supplementary task for them. People could be motivated to do this big amount of work, if they enjoyed financial incentives, such as supplementary remuneration, but the financial incentives either lack, or are absolutely symbolic.

Supervision is a matter covered by university curricula, but it is not part of the initial and continuing training curricula for the professionals working in the social assistance system. Some training and promotion activities have only been implemented when the mechanism was developed and when it was updated. Once

the donor-funded projects which supported the establishment and the review of the Mechanism were completed, training activities on this issue also ended.

The National Agency for Social Assistance (NSAA), which is not concerned about the supervision mechanism at present, should have an active role in guiding and improving the supervision practice. It should be in charge of organizing training activities, preferably according to ToT methodologies, so that knowledge is further transmitted more quickly, based on the cascade method, in the respective district.

Introduction

This report highlights the findings of a mixed methods study on supervision for the professionals working in child protection field in Moldova. The country report is a component of a wider regional research covering several Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia, in addition to Moldova).

Exploring the existing services and using the professional connections within the Child Protection Hub network, this project aims to explore the different understanding, standards, and challenges in terms of supervision faced by social workers and other child protection professionals involved in multidisciplinary casework with children and families. The project aimed to:

- Provide a snapshot of supervision for child protection professionals working in multidisciplinary team settings across the region.
- Explore the attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of child protection professionals regarding supervision.
- Identify the key factors that hinder and promote the supervision practices in multidisciplinary team contexts.
- Provide a comparative analysis of the situation in the region.
- Identify good supervision practices.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening the supervision across the region and in specific countries.

This research was conducted by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE), part of Cardiff University, within the framework of the Child Protection Hub project, funded by the Austrian Development Agency, Oak Foundation and Terre des hommes. All views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the above-mentioned donors.

The purpose and limitations of the country report

This report reflects the specific situation in Moldova and is a component of the regional report, which provides a comparative analysis of the seven countries. The regional report also covers the theoretical background of supervision, the definitions, the functions and the main research which defined the current understanding of supervision. This report looks in more detail at the situation in Moldova, aiming to describe the current state of supervision, to explore different views and experiences and to make recommendations for improvements.

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The methodology

This study adopted an observational and exploratory design and used a mix of different methods to provide a snapshot of supervision in Moldova. The methodology was common across all seven covered countries in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The study was organized into four work packages, running concurrently to complete the research within the required timeframe (between the beginning of February and the end of March 2022). The methodology was established by the lead regional researcher, who mentored and directed the team of local researchers in charge of the recruitment and data collection, making a significant contribution to data analysis, writing the individual country reports and having an input into the regional report, as well.

The research results were obtained using the following four methods: document analysis, interviews, survey and Q-method. Data collection was organized into four work streams, as follows:

1. A brief desktop analysis of supervision policies and procedures;
2. Interviews with key stakeholders;
3. An online survey with managers and frontline workers in multidisciplinary child protection teams;
4. A q-study and follow-up interviews with managers and frontline workers providing or receiving supervision.

Sampling had a pragmatic and purposeful basis. A range of people with different professional backgrounds were involved in key stakeholder interviews to ensure the variability of the data collected. The key interviews were conducted with representatives of key local NGOs, which contributed to the development of supervision in Moldova and continue to oversee this field, as well as with relevant authorities at the central and territorial level who have an important role in providing and developing supervision. An invitation to take part in the survey was sent by email to a large number of multidisciplinary teams. As for Q-sorts and follow-up interviews, a range of people with different experience in providing or receiving supervision were involved in them. The following minimum targets for the recruitment were established by the methodology in each of the seven countries – five key stakeholder interviews, 15 completed surveys and five Q-sorts and follow-up interviews.

1.1 Workstream – desktop analysis

The first workstream implied a desktop review of the existing policies and guidance with the purpose to understand the policy context for supervision in each country (the document analysis is detailed in Appendix 1 to this report).

1.2 Workstream – key stakeholder interviews

The second workstream implied interviews with key stakeholders to explore their understanding and conceptions of supervision for frontline staff of multidisciplinary and child protection teams. An interview schedule was developed to be used in the seven countries, consisting of nine qualitative questions, with additional five questions for key stakeholders who had a direct experience in providing supervision. Supplementary questions were added when needed to explore the local particularities in terms of supervision policy and practice. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher provided a standard definition and description of supervision, as follows:

"A process which aims to support, ensure and develop the knowledge, skills and values of the person being supervised (the supervisee). It provides accountability for both the supervisor and the supervisee in exploring the practice and the performance. It sits alongside an organization's performance management process with a particular focus on developing people in a way that is centred on achieving better outcomes for service users and their carers."

Interviews were audio-recorded by the local researchers for later analysis.

1.3 Workstream – online survey

The third workstream implied an online survey conducted via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com), disseminated via an anonymous emailed link to supervisors and frontline staff of multidisciplinary and child protection teams. The survey was available in Romanian language.

At the beginning of the survey, the respondents were asked to provide basic information about their personal and professional demographics (age range, gender, working pattern and environment, professional background), and were given the definition and description of supervision used in key stakeholder interviews. Afterwards, the respondents were asked a screening question about their own experience in either providing or receiving supervision. Those who had provided supervision were further asked questions about their experience of being a supervisor. Those who had received supervision were asked

questions about their experience of being a supervisee. The respondents who had both received and provided supervision were asked questions about being a supervisor. Those who had neither provided nor received supervision were asked questions about their attitudes and beliefs about supervision, rather than about their own direct experience with it.

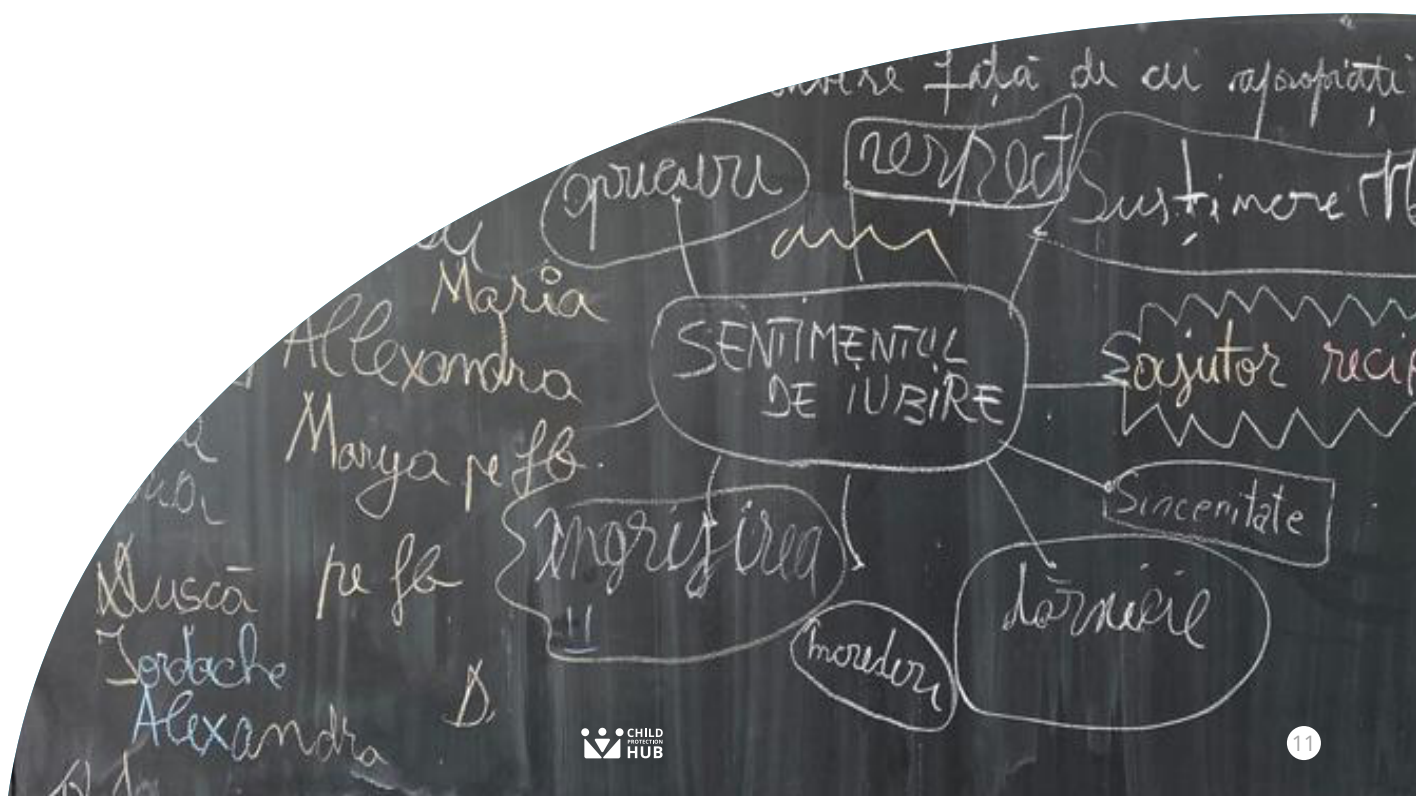
As part of the survey, the respondents were asked to provide information about the provision and the nature of their supervision (and/or about what they would prefer), for example the frequency and the length of supervision sessions. The respondents were also asked several open-ended questions about their best experience in supervision, their views on how supervision makes a difference for them and for families they work with, and about the barriers and the facilitators of effective supervision.

Workstream – q-study and follow-up interviews

1.4

The final workstream implied a Q-study and follow-up interviews with supervisors and frontline professionals. Q-studies are an especially useful method for exploring subjectivity, with a focus on the views, opinions, preferences and beliefs of the respondents. Taking part in a Q-study involves reviewing a list of statements and sorting them using a normalized distribution grid ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Sorting of the statements represents the respondent's subjective view about a topic. Along with the sorting task, the respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions to explore their response to different statements.

Note: This report covers the results of the Q-study interviews. Please consult the regional report for the list of statements sorting the conclusions and for other elements of the methodology.



2

The regulations for supervision in Moldova:

2.1 an overview

The concept of supervision is relatively new for the social work system in the Republic of Moldova. Its implementation started in 2008-2009 with the adoption of the Social Assistance Supervision Mechanism¹, approved by Order no. 99 of 31.12.2008 of the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, and of the Implementation Guide for the Supervision Mechanism in social assistance field², approved by Order no. 15 of 10.11.2009 of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family.

Supervision became a necessity in 2007, when the first³ community social assistants (CSAs) were hired under the mayor's offices countrywide. A mechanism for training them how to work was necessary: social services were still at the inception phase, their staff did not have any relevant education and even the superior-level staff of the social services lacked specialized knowledge. The donors provided support for setting up some basic and important mechanisms, such as case management, followed by the supervision mechanism and the mechanism for case referral.

In 2008-2009, two documents were approved. The first of them was the Social Assistance Supervision Mechanism. The Ministry also requested the development of a guide for the implementation of this Mechanism. Such a Guide was approved by the end of 2009.

In 2017, following a process of piloting and nationwide implementation, a decision was made to review the mechanism and approve a new single document, covering both the mechanism and the implementation guide. The practical guidelines developed in 2008 focused on community social assistants and social workers, who were the only supervised categories, while in 2017 the coverage was extended to all employees of the territorial social assistance structures who interacted with the beneficiaries.

¹ <http://old.mmppsf.gov.md/file/documente%20interne/Mecanismul%20de%20supervizare.rom.pdf>

² <http://old.mmppsf.gov.md/file/documente%20interne/Final%20Ghid%20in%20supervizare%20rom..pdf>

³ https://www.ipn.md/en/every-village-could-have-by-a-social-assistant-by-year-end-7967_964842.html#!

The Mechanism for Professional Supervision in Social Assistance and the Guidelines for its practical implementation⁴ (hereinafter “the Mechanism”) were approved by Order No. 74 of 10.05.2017 of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and represent the most up-to-date version of the Mechanism to be applied countrywide.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection⁵ (the previous name of this authority: this ministry has frequently changed its name over the past years), hereinafter “MOLSP”, is the central public authority in charge of policy development in the area of labour and social protection, including child and family protection. The mechanism of supervision, as updated and approved in 2017, relates to those who are formally employed in the social assistance sector, mainly the staff of the “territorial social assistance structures”, hereinafter “TSAS”. TSAS are set up by local public administration authorities and have the task to enforce the legislation and to implement the social assistance policy at the local level. TSAS operate in all administrative-territorial units of the Republic of Moldova: Chişinău municipality, Bălţi municipality, 32 rayons/districts, and Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Unit.

As defined by the Mechanism (p. 1.1):

“Supervision is a process of provision of professional support to the staff of TSAS. Professional support is related to effective case management, competence development and strengthening and improvement of the quality of services provided to beneficiaries, strengthening the practical implementation of the theoretical knowledge.

Professional supervision is an important component of the social assistance system. It represents a type of professional support and peer consultation, contributing to the improvement of professional competences. Professional supervision is a method for support, professional competence evaluation and monitoring of the staff’s performance. Supervision is integrated into the context of clearly defined professional relations: head of TSAS – subordinated service managers – supervisors – supervised staff.”

The primary goal of professional supervision is to improve the quality of social services provided to beneficiaries, to ensure opportunities for professional and personal growth of the staff, to ensure awareness of roles and responsibilities and contribute to the development of the organization or service. As a result of achieving the primary goal of supervision, the staff will clearly know their roles, responsibilities and job-related tasks and, as TSAS representatives, will have a clear understanding of the limits of authority and of the professional boundaries, will be aware of when, how and with regard to what kind of issues they can call on their superiors.

⁴ English translation: file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervision.pdf
or access information from 11.14.2017 on: <http://www.p4ec.md/en/projects/reports/default.aspx> ; in Romanian: file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/GHID_supervizare%20(1).pdf
or access information from 14.11.2017 on: <http://www.p4ec.md/ro/projects/reports/default.aspx>

⁵ The central public authority which is now named “the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection” has several times changed its name in the past – the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and other names. For the purpose of this report, we will use the acronym – MOLSP, also referring to the previous names of this authority.

The professional supervision process has the following objectives:

- on-going development and strengthening of the professional skills of the staff;
- ensure the compliance with the regulatory framework and the achievement of TSAS objectives by the staff;
- ensure the provision of quality social services to the beneficiaries;
- encourage the constructive communication between the staff involved in common tasks;
- set up a favourable climate for sharing positive practices;
- reduce stress and prevent professional burnout of the staff;
- ensure the access of the staff to all necessary resources for fulfilling their job-related tasks;
- analyse the progress and the difficulties faced by the staff in working with the beneficiaries.” (p. 1.1, Mechanism)

The implementation of the professional supervision mechanism in social work implies the need for setting up an appropriate organizational framework and for the differentiation of supervisory responsibilities at the administrative level.

- At the national level, the MOLSP is responsible for developing methodologies and informative materials, for training the staff of TSAS and social assistance services on professional supervision.
- At the regional level, TSAS shall ensure the implementation of the professional supervision mechanism by all TSAS staff. In this context, the head of TSAS and the managers of social services shall identify the individuals to be entrusted with supervision responsibilities, shall ensure their training on the supervision methodology, shall set up the required conditions for the fulfilment of their responsibilities and monitor the supervision process within the subordinated structures. The head of TSAS shall provide supervision to TSAS specialists and to managers of services provided by or subordinated to TSAS (for example, community social assistance service, foster care service, homecare service, mobile team service, etc.).

The main goal of professional supervision **within the community** social service is to improve the professional skills of the community social workers and to support the members of the local multidisciplinary teams in the provision of quality social services at the community level. The need for professional support to be provided to community social workers derives from the fact that they are in direct contact with the community population, they are the first contact point in community social work and make up one of the largest groups of TSAS staff members. Considering this, the quality of their relationship with the beneficiaries and the quality of the work done by this group of staff is crucial for building trust and respect-based relations with the community members.

The **social services** working within the subdivisions subordinated to TSAS employ different categories of staff: social workers, educators, psychologists, legal professionals, etc. The supervision process shall be organized by types and groups of staff or based on the principle of multidisciplinary activity (for members of multidisciplinary teams).

In the process of professional supervision, the head of the TSAS is responsible for organizing this process and for delegating the supervision responsibilities to managers of branches or services subordinated to TSAS (mid-level managers): the responsibility for the organization of the supervision process, for the identification of staff members who could carry out supervision responsibilities, for setting up the required conditions and for monitoring of the supervision process.

The advantages of supervision are described in the Mechanism as follows:

“The implementation of the professional supervision mechanism provides the TSAS staff with a range of opportunities related to the management of complex social and human issues. The professional support gives advantages through its contribution to the increase of effectiveness when working with limited resources, including human resources in the social field, and to the improvement of the quality of social services provided to beneficiaries. The availability of motivated and competent staff, working in line with the current policies and procedures and having a clear understanding of their roles, competence and level of accountability within the TSAS, ensures the provision of quality social services.

The staff of the social assistance system need supervision to check their own understanding of the responsibilities and of the methods of intervention, to reduce the stress caused by the shortage of time and resources, etc. Due to the implementation of the supervision mechanism, the employees are provided informational support, get answers to questions from trustful colleagues, select the best solutions for difficult cases in their work, have shared understanding of various professional issues, have the opportunity to follow the developments of the cases (case management). The professional support inspires encouragement, gives the possibility to exchange experience in professional growth, to share opinions and feelings, thus reducing and preventing the professional burnout.” (p. 1.1)

The following schedule of supervision sessions is recommended:

- monthly: one group session at the regional level (for example, all community social workers and the head of TSAS or the specialists and the head of TSAS; all staff of a social service within or subordinated to TSAS and their direct manager);
- monthly: a sub-group session at the regional level with 7-10 staff members (for example, the supervisor with a group of supervised community social workers; a supervisor with the supervised psychologists of the specialized social services);
- whenever necessary- individual sessions;
- whenever necessary – monitoring field visits. (p. 1.4, Mechanism)

The third part of the Mechanism includes practical organizational details and explains how a supervision meeting shall be prepared, organized and conducted. The “records” of the meeting shall be enclosed in a report.

The supervision session report:

- is a formal tool helping to monitor the progress and the development of the supervised staff;
- follows a standard template;
- a person in charge of each action specified in the report shall be appointed and a time limit for carrying it out shall be established;
- the time, the date and the venue of the following session shall be specified;
- the report shall be signed by all participants in the session and by the supervisor;
- the head of TSAS shall establish the rules for the access to the reports on supervision sessions and the limits of confidentiality.

The annex to the Mechanism includes a template for reporting on the supervision sessions. Such a report shall provide information about the supervisor, the supervisee(s), the type of session (individual session, group session, field monitoring visit (when necessary)), the date when the supervision session was held, the venue of the supervision session, the agenda (the objectives and the issues discussed; the actions recommended and the resources needed; the person in charge; the time limit for carrying them out), the signatures of both parties and the date of the next supervisory meeting. For more details regarding the Mechanism's provisions, see the Document analysis in **Appendix 1** to this report.

The Mechanism does not describe in detail how the process of professional supervision shall be organized at the national level. It only defines the responsibilities of the MOLSP in terms of developing methodological and informative materials and providing training to the staff of TSAS and of the social assistance services, without specifying how the ministry shall collect the feedback and how the results of supervision shall be used in decision-making.

The current Mechanism does not define the role of the NSAA, an authority established in 2016 which is meant to improve the quality of social assistance by implementing state policies in this area. NSAA⁶ is a governmental agency under the MOLSP whose mission is to enhance the quality of social care provided to the beneficiaries by implementing the social assistance state policy, including the development of the methodological framework for the coherent implementation of the legislation in the social assistance field and enabling the process of capacity building among the social assistance staff.

Although the new Mechanism clearly describes the entire process of professional supervision (types of supervision, frequency of supervision meetings, participants, standard procedures, and the tools to be used), it has been unevenly implemented across the country. The next chapter describes the supervision practice and the challenges, as perceived by key stakeholders.

⁶ Government Decree no. 1236/2016 on the approval of the Regulations for NSAA organization and operation, its structure and the staffing scheme. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110438&lang=ro

Implementing the supervision. Empirical research findings

Who took part?

3.1

The current status of supervision in Moldova was assessed through 10 interviews and a survey. Key interviews were conducted with representatives of key local NGOs, including an academic holding a doctoral degree who contributed to the development of supervision in Moldova and who still oversees this field, two key interviews were conducted with relevant authorities at the central and territorial level who play an important role in providing and developing supervision. In addition to it, three representatives of central public authorities were interviewed, including two senior specialists and an outreach consultant who provides donor-driven technical assistance. As for the survey, local researchers have sent to multidisciplinary teams an email invitation to take largely part in it. Five other interviews were conducted according to a special qualitative analysis method (the Q-method) and covered a range of people with different background in providing or receiving supervision (one top-level supervisor, one middle-level supervisor and one supervisee working in a state-funded social service and one supervisor and one supervisee from a private-funded social service).

	Key informant interviews	Survey	Q-method and follow-up interviews
Number	5 (with 7 individuals)	18	5
	Total	Male	Female
Number	30	2	28
	Number		
Social workers	8		
Police officers	1		
Academics	1		
Education/school staff	9		
NGO staff	8		
Other	3		
TOTAL	30		

4

The results of key informant interviews

4.1 Implementing the supervision. Efficiency of supervision

The supervision practice was institutionalized as a national mechanism aimed to improve the professional performance and the quality of social service provision. The supervision in the social assistance area is valid for all TSAS staff and for all cases the staff deal with: children, as well as the elderly, the disadvantaged people. There is no supervision specifically adapted to a certain field of work, for example, to child protection.

Professionals of multidisciplinary teams in charge of child protection cases, who are not part of the social assistance system, such as medical, education and police staff, are not provided supervision in its formal understanding, in accordance with the existent mechanism.

Most interviewees were neutral with regard to the need to extend supervision to other members of the multidisciplinary teams in charge of child protection cases (medical, education and police representatives), saying that supervision is not traditional or inherent to such areas and that those sectors have better education and training systems. On the other hand, one interviewee firmly recommended to extend the practice of supervision to other systems working with children: *“Supervision should not be limited to social assistants, it should also cover: the police officers working with children; the staff working in the education field and the family doctors. All these categories have high responsibilities for child protection: family doctors are responsible for children from 0 to 3 years of age; the educational staff - since kindergarten, from the age of 3 to 6; school teachers - from 7 to 18 years of age. I have worked with all these categories in the field of child protection and I can say that all of them need for sure support through supervision”* (L.A., child protection officer, NGO).

One of the most important observations, which was shared by practically all interviewees, was that **supervision is not uniformly implemented or understood:**

“There are territorial structures in the country which successfully implement supervision, but there are still a large number of structures which do not implement it in accordance with the established mechanism. In many territorial structures, it is either not implemented, or it is implemented superficially, mostly on paper. As for preventing the professional burnout, it is nor performed almost anywhere”; (M.S., academic)

“Supervision is not uniformly implemented throughout the country: in some institutions, it is totally unplanned and informal. It needs to be performed in accordance with all the appropriate formalities: group and individual meetings with a plan of the meeting, an agenda, minutes, reports, but these elements lack in many institutions.” (E.C., TSAS manager)

Interviewees stated that supervision is unsatisfactorily implemented at the national level and that only a few territorial structures apply a good supervision mechanism. The quality of this process totally depends on the skills and the sense of responsibility of the involved human resources, starting with TSAS administration, managers etc.

Two key interviewees, who are national experts for service accreditation, pointed out that all services have internal supervision procedures, as this is a mandatory requirement for the accreditation of social services, but the procedures are not applied into practice. When requested to submit supervision-related documents (such as an agenda, the minutes of the meetings, individual and yearly plans), a large number of social services cannot submit any proof of performing supervision. However, the process has improved since the accreditation of services has started, as it contributed to some progress. The Law on the accreditation of social service providers⁷ was adopted in 2012 and the first accreditation certificates were issued in 2014⁸.

Organizing the supervision

4.2

The supervision is organized in a cascade or as a pyramid - senior managers supervise lower managers - and this system covers, following the cascade method, all the staff in social assistance sector. The TSAS designates one supervisor per service. One supervisor can supervise several services. The burden of supervising the community social assistants (CSA) is put on other CSAs, who have more experience. With regard to CSA, the ratio is one supervisor per eight CSAs.

Social services must approve internal procedures for supervision and annual supervision plans. Supervision takes place by the means of group and individual meetings. According to the interviewees, difficult cases are discussed at group meetings, along with ethical, legal, methodological matters. Individual meetings are meant for providing support, for motivating and monitoring of the individual performance.

⁴ English translation: file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervision.pdf
or access information from 11.14.2017 on: <http://www.p4ec.md/en/projects/reports/default.aspx> ;
in Romanian: file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/GHID_supervizare%20(1).pdf
or access information from 14.11.2017 on: <http://www.p4ec.md/ro/projects/reports/default.aspx>

⁵ The central public authority which is now named “the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection” has several times changed its name in the past – the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and other names. For the purpose of this report, we will use the acronym – MOLSP, also referring to the previous names of this authority.

4.3 The necessity and the goal of supervision

The need for supervision was underlined by all interviewees. The rationale for supervision derives from a long list of factors. Here are the most important of them:

- Many people who do not have a relevant educational background are working in social assistance field. The staff needs support in terms of how to apply the case management, how to work with the stakeholders, what is the relevant legislation. Supervision is a type of continuing education;
- Supervisors check if the tasks are appropriately fulfilled; they guide the staff to do their work in accordance with the quality standards;
- There are frequent and numerous changes in the legislation and the need for guidance is permanent;
- There are many and serious vulnerabilities in the field of child protection and there is no model-framework for how to act, as each case is different and involves an emotional side;
- The staff members interact with the beneficiaries individually and their superiors cannot observe them acting during this process: therefore, it is important to ensure that the employees respect the ethical standards during their interaction with the beneficiaries and do not exploit their vulnerability;
- Supervision helps to answer questions and overpass the difficulties; to identify alternative solutions, to find out other views and perspectives;
- Supervision contributes to stress management and burnout prevention;
- Group supervision helps people to see that they are not alone.

4.4 The involvement and the role of central public authorities. Training

MOLSP and the National Social Assistance Agency (NSAA) are not involved in the practical implementation of supervision. Supervision is performed at the level of TSAS and neither MOLSP, nor NSAA request reports or analyse how it is performed. The heads of TSAS have a lot of questions and uncertainty with regard to performing supervision, but they rather prefer to consult each other, as the central authorities are not very helpful, despite the fact that NSAA has the task to provide methodological support to territorial structures. Both above-mentioned central public authorities have insufficient human resources to respond to all needs.

The interviewees expressed a negative attitude towards the fact that MOLSP and NSAA do not provide any significant support to their territorial structures in terms of supervision and other policies:

"Nobody monitors the implementation of policies. They should apply a mechanism for monitoring of policy implementation after their approval." (E.C., TSAS manager)

The concerned ministry does not involve NSAA in making laws and policies, therefore it is difficult for them to provide methodological support for policy implementation. As they were not involved in policy making, they are not aware of all subtleties. (V.H., project coordinator, NGO)

In order to fulfil its mission, the basic tasks and responsibilities, in particular to provide methodological support to TSAS, it is essential that NSAA takes part in the process of professional supervision in social assistance. To ensure a better functionality of the Mechanism, the role of NSAA should be specifically defined, so that it directly monitors the implementation of the professional supervision by TSAS across the country and identifies solutions to improve it.

Training on the supervision mechanism is necessary, but this subject lacks in the NSAA training curricula. The only training and promotion activities in this field were organized by donors, when this mechanism was established. After the completion of the project which supported the establishment/review of the Mechanism, the training activities on this subject also stopped. Most interviewees pointed out the need for a training programme on this subject to be developed by NSAA, as this agency is responsible for strengthening the knowledge of the staff in the social assistance system.

Note: the university curricula⁹ for social assistance education covers the supervision, but, in fact, most of the social service staff do not have any relevant education.

Another problem is the **inappropriate dissemination** of the supervision Mechanism and its limited accessibility: *"Our central authorities issue various orders, but they do not take the required steps for these orders to be publicized and easily accessible. Sometimes, we find out very late about the issuance of an order regulating a certain matter. Policies should be published on the Ministry's webpage, but one cannot find them, because the Ministry has passed through a lot of transformation over the past years and its webpage is new."* (E.C., TSAS manager)

Challenges

4.5

The implementation of supervision in Moldova has been affected by a wide range of challenges, some of which have already mentioned above.

⁹ Consult, for instance, the Course notes for university subject "Monitoring, evaluation and supervision in social assistance", Social assistance specialty: <http://tinread.usarb.md:8888/tinread/fulltext/canter/monitorizare.pdf>

The main challenges are general and are faced by the whole social assistance field:

- The intense staff turnover; low, unattractive salaries;
- The fact that the system accepts unprepared people, who have no relevant educational background. The supervision process was transformed into a training process in the context of the underdeveloped national system for initial and continuing training in social assistance.

The **specific** challenges faced by the supervision mechanism:

- Supervision is not performed by people who are entirely dedicated to this job. Supervisors have a full-time job and, in addition to it, they supervise their colleagues;
- Supervision provided by community social assistants is not efficient. A supervisor needs to have experience, but CSAs usually do not have enough;
- Supervision implies a big amount of supplementary unpaid work. A salary supplement for performing supervision is seldom paid and it is symbolic. There is no motivation for doing supervision;
- Managers benefit from supervision only in theory. Managers need more guidance, mentoring and training, which should ideally be provided by NSAA;
- Senior managers, as the heads of TSAS, are not the most appropriate staff to do supervision. Managers do not have to do supervision;
- There is no clearly specified supervisor/supervisees ratio, except for community social assistants for which the limit of eight people per supervisor was established;
- In most social services, the supervision conducted at present does not really address stress and burnout;
- Supervision involves a substantial paperwork which could be simplified.

Most interviewees consider that supervisors should be trained individuals, fully dedicated to this job, preferably experts from outside the system who are aware of the situation within the system and are able to provide relevant support to specialists.

Note: the challenges coming from the lack of relevant education and from the excessively passive role of central authorities are approached under “The involvement and the role of central authorities. Training” section.

4.6 Good supervision practices

Despite the challenges outlined above, the interviewed key informants also identified some clear examples of good practices in supervision.

The good practice examples were identified from the perspective of the skills of a ‘good supervisor’ and of the actions of a supervisor. It includes being available for the staff, being responsive to the needs of the wider team and showing empathy:

"The social assistance system is new in Moldova. The staff turnover is extremely high. If we have some success, it is due to supervision. We guide the staff: 80% of the supervisor's job consists in providing tools for case solving, we also explain how to transmit a message to the stakeholders. We provide solutions and support to the employee, so that he/she keeps doing the job and doesn't give up. (...) The supervisor is for the supervisee like a doctor for his/her patients in a hospital: at each stage, the doctor consults the patient, proposes the appropriate actions/treatment. Supervision is a training method and it ensures the implementation of good practices. Without supervision, our social assistants would be very unprepared." (N.R., head of a community social assistance service, supervisor)

The key informants stated that supervision has an impact on the staff, good supervision can make a difference for the employees in terms of emotional well-being and their ability to provide good services for children and families. It implies that supervision enables the employees to make good professional judgements and to be more considerate and reflective in decision-making.

"There is a big difference between a demotivated employee, suffering from burnout, and an efficient employee who performs well his/her job and duties, at his/her full potential. The employees project their frustrations on the beneficiaries. (...) I wish all organizations in the social assistance field, both public and private ones, to become aware of the necessity of supervision and of the fact that each employee in this system shall be provided supervision at least once a month." (M.B., psychologist, supervisor, NGO)

Supervision is the main method for improving the quality of social services, but in order to get better results it should be corroborated with other methods: *"Once a manager is aware of what needs to be done, he/she will properly guide his/her supervisees and this will be reflected on the quality of the services provided to users. We conduct surveys to assess user satisfaction, each service conducts them twice a year. If a person, including a child, is discontent, we try to find out the reason for it and to improve the state of affairs."* (E.C, TSAS manager);



5

The survey results

All 18 respondents who took part in the survey conducted in Moldova were females (100%), most of them are holders of a master's degree (66,6%) and all of them are full-time employed (100%). They work in a range of different fields, most of them in education (50%), social work (22.2%), NGOs (22.2%) and police (5,6%).

	TOTAL	Male	Female	Full-time employed
Number of respondents	18	0	18	18

Sex

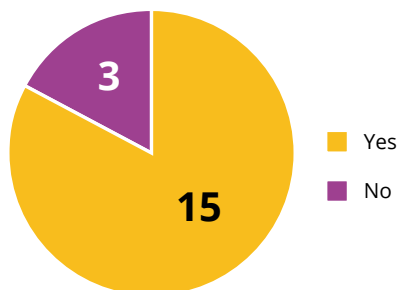
	TOTAL	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree
Number of respondents	18	5	12	1

Highest level of education

	Total	Police	Social work / social care	NGO	Education
Number of respondents	18	1	4	4	9

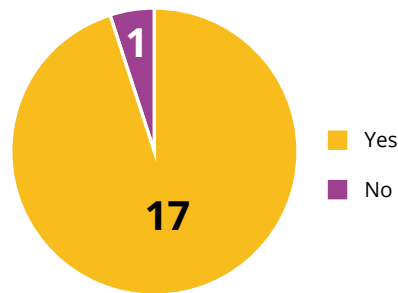
Area of practice

do you work in the field of child protection?

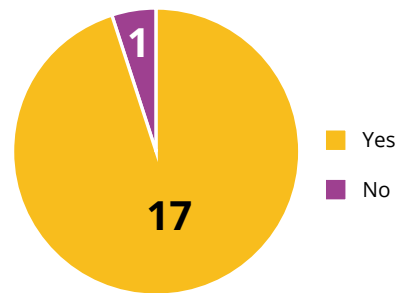


15 out of the 18 participants stated they work in child protection field and 17 in 18 stated that they both receive and provide supervision:

do you receive supervision?



do you provide supervision?



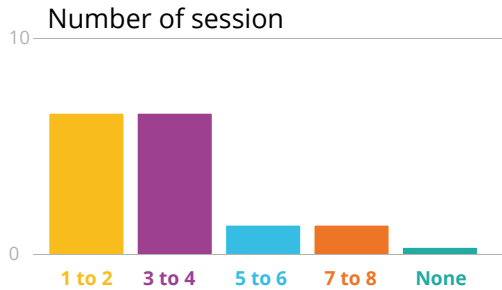
The responses to these two questions, corroborated with the results of the qualitative analysis, raise some questions regarding the correct understanding of supervision as a formalized and regulated process, as explained in the Document analysis (Attachment 1). Given that, as a result of key interviews, we found out that supervision in education and police fields is not implemented according to a formal mechanism and that 10 out of the 18 respondents represent these fields, one could expect 10 “no” responses to the questions about receiving or providing supervision. Instead, there was only one “no” response to each of these questions. This means that, despite the lack of a formal mechanism, from the perspective of the respondents’ understanding of the concept of supervision, supervision exists in their profession. We assume that, since in all these professional fields there are senior staff who provide guidance, some support and control, this process is perceived as supervision, making abstraction of the fact that in some other fields, such as social assistance, supervision is an institutionalized and formalized process.

The definition of supervision was provided before answering the survey’s questionnaire: *“Supervision is commonly used in social work and in other child protection settings, and it usually implies a manager who regularly meets an employee (or a group of employees). During such meetings, the supervisor and the employee talk about the employee’s work and whether his/her work complies with the established standards (accountability), whether the employee has the skills needed to perform efficiently his/her job (development) and a positive relationship between the employee and the supervisor (support) shall be maintained”.*

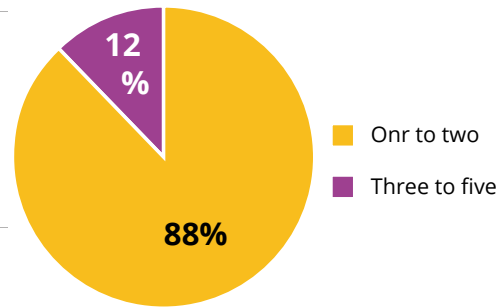
A positive conclusion of this exercise may be the fact that, regardless of the formalities inherent to this mechanism, 94% of respondents consider that they receive and provide supervision in accordance with the definition presented to them. Thus, supervision is a reality without being a compulsory formality. At the same time, we may assume that the results of the survey are not very eloquent, because those who are not much aware of the theory of supervision cannot properly estimate whether they receive or provide supervision. Supervision, as understood by the general population, relates to a labour relation with a superior and it is applicable in all fields.

From this perspective, we propose to look at the results of this survey as to an alternative, but subsidiary source of information, showing some useful tendencies.¹⁰

How many supervision sessions have you had in the past six months?

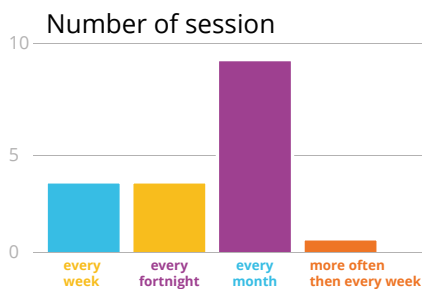


How many families do you discuss in a typical session?

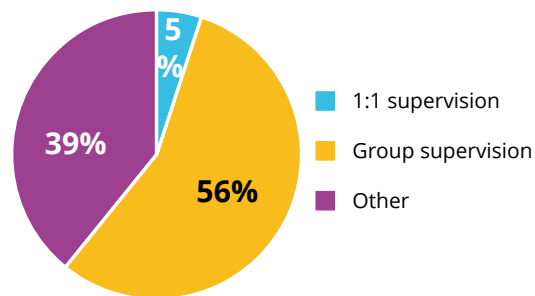


During the survey, 16 out of 18 respondents acted as “supervisors” and 2 in 18 - as “supervisees”.

How often would you like supervision to be?



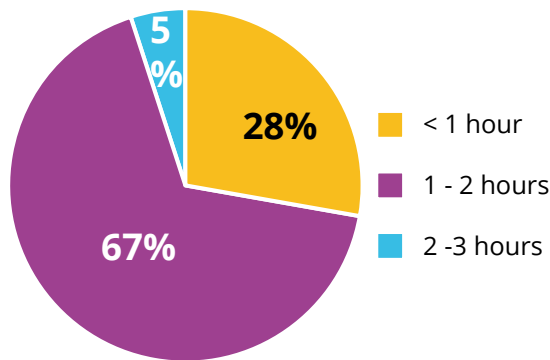
What is the main type of supervision that you receive?



Monthly supervision is preferred by 50% of respondents. Among the respondents who receive and/or provide supervision, the largest share take part in group supervision (56%), a significant minority stated they had 1:1 meetings with a supervisor (5%), while 39% of them specified some other types of supervision, including group and individual supervision. In terms of duration, most of respondents stated that supervision meetings last 1-2 hours (67%), and 28% of respondents - less than one hour.

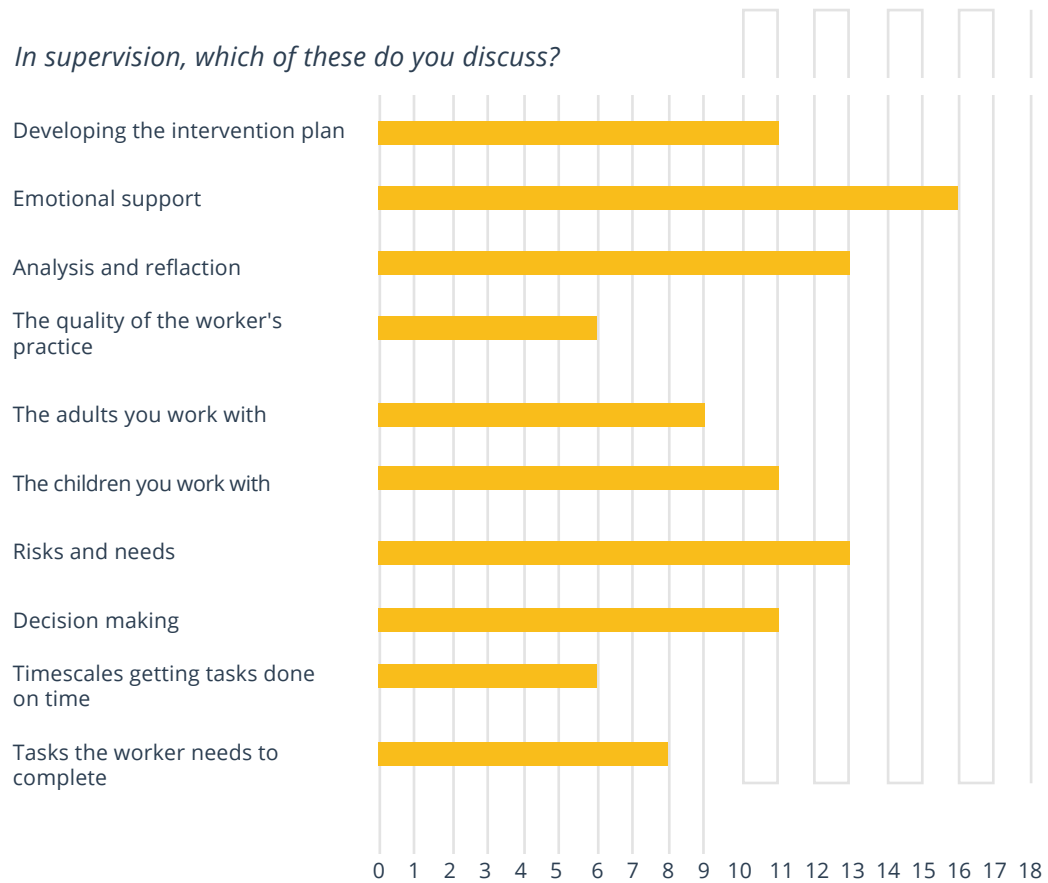
¹⁰ The full results may be provided to those interested, on demand, by the author or by Tdh Moldova.

How long do your supervision sessions last?



15 out of 18 respondents stated they have “face to face” supervision, 2 of them stated they have “virtual video calls”, while one respondent said that all options are valid.

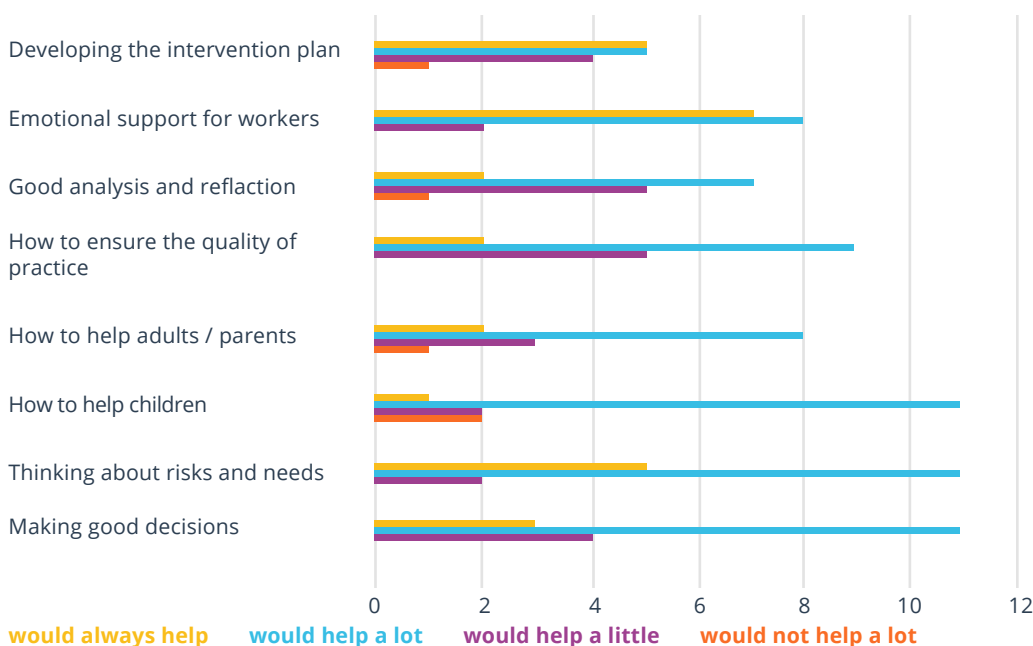
In supervision, which of these do you discuss?



As opposed to the findings of the interviews, which showed that emotional support is the most ignored part by supervision conducted in state-funded services, 16 in 18 participants in the survey stated that emotional support is one of the main subjects for discussion.

The respondents were asked open-ended questions meant to find out which were the most helpful elements of the last supervision meeting for the employee and why? Here are some of the answers: "Methodological support about the prevention and control of COVID-19 in social services"; "Methods for working with beneficiaries"; "Discovering a new situation and solving it"; "Identifying one's own interferences that can be barriers to solving a case. He/she looked at the problem from a different perspective, respectively, it was possible to identify other solutions "; "He/she took time to reflect and find solutions on his/her own."

What things do you think supervision helps with?



When asked "How has supervision made a positive difference (for you, for families)?", the respondents underlined several positive outcomes of supervision they provided/received:

- "1) Methodological support to the staff of social services for successful accreditation of the service provider; 2) Moral support to the personnel of the service in dealing with the pandemic crisis situations; 3) Facilitating the access of the beneficiaries of social services to other community services (especially, medical services)";
- "Decent place to live for the family; Involvement of relatives in children's education; Keeping the family for children, as a place to live.";
- "Half of the team left and the supervisor encouraged us to express our feelings about this situation and about how things will go on, in our opinion";
- "Communication within the family; the superior role of values; non-violent relationships"

Among the most helpful things related to supervision, the following were pointed out: "It provides space for reflection"; "The fact that I can express my feelings, without any fear that I could suffer if my superiors are aware of them", "The counselling and the discussions"; "The supervision process stems from the ongoing need of social workers to have conversations about our practice, to reflect critically on it and to share our concerns about the decisions we work on."

Discussions

Supervision is not uniformly implemented in Moldova. This practice develops in different ways, as there is no guidance and no much involvement or requirements by central authorities. In general, the findings about supervision showed a quite non-controversial picture: views and opinions are not opposite, they do not deny each other, on the contrary, they are complementary, showing the existence of a common general understanding of supervision in Moldova at present.

In this section, we will present a few elements which appeared less common overall, but which bring an interesting insight for the general picture.

One of the NGO's (Concordia) which has a significant number of social services implements the so-called "functional supervision", as opposed to "professional supervision". In their understanding, "professional supervision", which is generally applied in the country, raises the professional competence of the staff and includes professional recommendations, while "functional supervision" creates a space for reflection about complex issues and about the person's feelings, such as burnout, stress etc. In this space for reflection, the team shares problems, difficulties, conflicts. Such a practice is applied through group meetings and it improves all relational aspects and the team dynamic, the operation and the productivity of the team. *"The people I work with have a very difficult work, with a high emotional input, strong feelings. The supervisees have the advantage of the emotional discharge, they speak about emotions in the working context. They don't have other possibilities and contexts to express those emotions and challenges."* (M.B., psychologist, supervisor); *"Supervision was very efficient for me. Before coming to supervision meetings, I was full of negative emotions, sometimes I even was in tears, but after it, I've got the necessary clarity. After such meetings, I knew how I should behave, what decisions to make. It also facilitated my communication with the colleagues. My colleagues helped me to see the situation more realistically, I became more professional."* (T. Z., was provided supervision within the same NGO)

On the opposite side, the largest share of interviewees confirmed that emotional issues are not tackled in state-funded social services.

"There are cases which affect us a lot and nobody takes care of our emotions, how to resist in difficult situations. I suffer a lot and feel affected in various cases. When we take children from families, I suffer for a long time, thinking if children will have a better life outside the family and if they won't judge me for that decision. I only calm down when I see them joyful and cared for at their new place. (...) The salaries are so small that we hardly survive, people leave the job, the country etc. If they offered to us vacations with the family, it would be an important emotional support and recovery for us." (S.B., community social assistant, supervisee)

A number of supervisors expressed discontentment with the formalism that the supervision Mechanism implies and with the amount of work to be done in order to comply with the guidance: *“I would review the supervision mechanism and the individual plan, the periodicity and the templates. The supervision mechanism needs to be individualized for each specific social service. For instance, there are people who provide assistance to bedridden persons with disabilities. They don't have any technical knowledge and do not possess the necessary gadgets to participate in online supervisory meetings. At the same time, if they attend meetings in person, they put in danger the people they look after. (...) The mechanism should be simpler. It is difficult for supervisors to identify the short-term and long-term objectives for the supervisees. (...) The supervision itself is necessary, but its bureaucracy and complexity are overwhelming for us. We have a big amount of work to do and too many documents to fill in for each individual meeting. This formalism is demotivating. The substance of the mechanism is good, likewise its purpose, but the formal side is hard. We can handle the substantial part, but we are less successful at paperwork.”* (A.P., manager at a Territorial Social Assistance Structure, supervisor)

The issues of formalism and paperwork gave rise to controversies:

“I know that social assistants always want to avoid paperwork, but there is bureaucracy in the good sense of the word, as papers are a proof of quality. Papers also ensure the institutional memory, especially in the context of the high turnover. When supervisors become dedicated to people, paperwork tasks won't seem so excessive.” (V. H., project coordinator, NGO)

Nevertheless, there are potential good solutions for simplifying the procedures, keeping, in the same time, the most necessary part of documentation: *“With regard to paperwork, minutes, I would propose to simplify them, so that we can tick and write less. For instance, the minutes need to have three parts: the first part has to refer to theory and we are supposed to be able to tick in a form, the second part has to cover the case-management and again we have to be able to tick in the respective form and only in the third part we are expected to write the specific objectives, recommendations, proposals. So, 80% of the written work may and should be reduced and replaced with a more efficient procedure.”* (N.R., head of a community social assistance service, supervisor).

In social services managed by NGO's, supervision has determined the conduct of various capacity building courses, based on the needs identified during supervision. Differently from the NGOs, for whom this fact appears as natural, the representatives of state social services stated that supervision replaces the initial and continuing training which is necessary, but usually not available.

A particularly important discussion should be conducted around **the (non) binding character of the supervision mechanism**. The supervision mechanism was regulated by ministerial orders issued in 2008 and 2017, but we could not find these orders in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova (Monitorul Oficial). According to the legislation in force of the Republic of Moldova, all regulatory acts, including those issued by central public authorities, shall be published in the

Official Gazette. Relevant provisions in this sense are stipulated in Law No. 173 of 06.07.1994 on the publication and entry into force of official acts¹¹ and in Law No. 100 of 22.12.2017 on regulatory acts¹².

As the Mechanism was not published in the Official Gazette, it means that, in light of the provisions of the Law on regulatory acts, it cannot be considered as a “regulatory act” which is “a legal act adopted, approved or issued by a public authority, which has a public, binding, general and impersonal character and which establishes, modifies or repeals legal norms governing the establishment, the modification or the termination of legal relations and are applicable to an indefinite number of identical situations” (Art. 2). In conclusion, from the legal point of view, the supervision mechanism is recommendatory.

To make it mandatory, two requirements shall be met: 1) supervision shall be regulated by a law, at least at the general level¹³; 2) the order for the approval of the supervision mechanism shall be published in the Official Gazette. At present, none of these two requirements is met. An appropriate law for the establishment of the supervision practice would be Law No. 123/2010 on social services¹⁴.

The (non)binding character of the supervision mechanism shall be seen as a problem, but it is not the only one: although the Ministry approved this Mechanism, it is difficult to find the respective document. It is only available on the webpage of an NGO¹⁵, but not on the official website of the Ministry. Thus, it is almost impossible to access it, therefore it is quite surprising that supervision is implemented in Moldova. An interviewee described this situation as follows: “Our central authorities approve various orders, but do not ensure that these orders are publicized and easily accessible. Sometimes, we find out after a long period that there is an order which regulates a certain aspect.” (E.C, TSAS manager)

¹¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=129566&lang=ro

¹² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105607&lang=ro

¹³ Article 16 (2) of the Law on regulatory acts stipulates: “The regulatory acts of specialized central public administration authorities and of the autonomous public authorities shall be issued or approved exclusively on the basis and for the enforcement of the laws and decisions of the Parliament, of the decrees of the President of the Republic of Moldova, of the decrees and ordinances of the Government.”

¹⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=129352&lang=ro

¹⁵ Partnership for Every Child website: English translation: [file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervizare%20\(1\).pdf](file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervizare%20(1).pdf) or the information accessed on 14.11.2017 on: <http://www.p4ec.md/en/projects/reports/default.aspx> ; in Romanian: [file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervizare%20\(1\).pdf](file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervizare%20(1).pdf) or the information accessed on 14.11.2017 on: <http://www.p4ec.md/ro/projects/reports/default.aspx>

7

Overall findings

Supervision is a quite new reality in Moldova, likewise the field in which it is applied – social assistance. Social assistance, in its contemporary understanding, started developing after the proclamation of the independence of Moldova in 1991. This professional field was developed step by step, with the support of various international projects. One of the development stages consisted in the establishment of the concept of supervision in 2008, in compliance with the needs of the social assistance field. Two documents were approved - the first document regulated the Mechanism, followed in 2009 by a guide for its application. In 2017, the decision was made to develop a single document covering both the mechanism and the application guide.

The Guide developed in 2008 focused on community social assistants and social workers, which were the only supervised categories, while in 2017 the scope of application was extended to all employees of territorial social assistance structures who interact with the beneficiaries.

Supervision is not uniformly implemented throughout the country: in some institutions, it is totally unplanned and informal. Supervision should be performed in accordance with all the formalities: group and individual meetings shall have a plan, an agenda, minutes, reports, but such documents lack in many institutions. The quality of this process totally depends on the competence and the sense of responsibility of the involved human resources, starting with the heads of TSAS, managers etc. In some districts, supervision is well-implemented, but not in all of them. This process has improved after the accreditation of services started (2012-2014).

Supervision within the system is performed by many categories of staff, starting with managers to community social assistants or similar-level employees. As for the managers, in fact, they benefit from supervision in theory. Supervision in social assistance field covers the totality of the work done by the staff: the work with children, as well as with the elderly, the disadvantaged people etc. Supervision is not specifically adapted to a certain area of work, for example, to child protection. Professionals of multidisciplinary teams for child protection cases, who are not part of the social assistance system, such as medical, education and police staff, do not benefit from supervision, in the formal understanding, as provided by the existent mechanism.

The high staff turnover seems to be the main challenge for the good implementation of the supervision practice. The system accepts unprepared people, who have no relevant educational background, therefore supervisors have to do much additional work, as a new professional demands a lot of time. At the same time, supervisors have their job tasks to fulfil. People could be motivated to do this big

amount of work, if they were given financial incentives, such as an appropriate salary supplement, but the financial reward either lacks, or is totally symbolic.

A recent assessment, conducted in the context of a research on the quality of data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes, made the following snapshot of supervision, underlying both the challenges and the good practices: *“In some districts, the process of professional supervision is rather formal, ad hoc and rare (one meeting or a site monitoring visit every several months) and it may be limited to discussions on issues related to case management or on changes in the regulatory framework. In other districts, the process is more advanced, aiming to improve the case management efficiency, to enhance the accuracy of data collection at the community level, to improve the analysis of the social situation at the district level or to optimize the social service network. For example, in Făleşti district, professional supervision meetings (including online meetings) are held monthly, following an approved plan and agenda. They are organized individually or in small and large groups, depending on the needs. During such meetings, the participants talk about the professional performance, challenges in case management and caseload. Issues are analysed from the viewpoint of their compliance with case management procedures for different risk levels. To avoid the loss of cases throughout the system and to ensure the accuracy of primary data, each head of service within a TSAS is assigned the task of case monitoring at the community level. Thus, each case opened, closed or referred by CSAs is communicated to the heads of the respective services, who correlate and corroborate them. At the same time, the data that TSAS collects and aggregates at district level are used to conduct analyses and optimize the services. For example, in the districts of Făleşti and Cahul, when data show a reduction in the number of people with disabilities who are provided home care services, the resources are reallocated to increase the number of personal assistants for these people”¹⁶.*

According to certain experts representing the Moldovan NGOs, supervision is not provided by the appropriate people. In their opinion, supervisors should be people fully dedicated to this job, possibly experts from outside the system, who are very aware of the child protection system and can provide relevant support to specialists, raising their professional level.

Supervision is not covered by the NSAA training curricula. Some training and promotion activities were only conducted when the mechanism was established. After the completion of the project which supported the establishment/review of the Mechanism, training on this subject stopped.

NSAA, which is not involved now in implementing the supervision mechanism, should play an active role in guiding and improving the supervision practice. It should be responsible for organizing training, preferably ToT, so that knowledge is further transmitted more quickly, following the cascade method, in the respective district.

The supervision policy should be published accordingly and should be accessible on the MOLSP website.

¹⁶ Current data review and data use practices to inform supportive supervision in child protection in Moldova, 2021: <https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/current-practices-on-data-review-and-data-use-to-inform-supportive-supervision-in-child-protection-in-moldova/>

Recommendations

Supervision is necessary and has the potential to significantly improve the state of affairs in child protection area and in social assistance field, at large. The implementation of supervision in Moldova is affected by a long series of challenges. Challenges which impact on the functionality of supervision in Moldova are both general, related to the whole social assistance field, and specific, concretely related to the mechanism of supervision.

If the following objectives are achieved in the social assistance field, the impact of supervision will inherently raise and its implementation will reach another quality level:

- *Reduce the staff turnover;*
- *Ensure “decent” salaries;*
- *Motivate people to improve their knowledge and further share their knowledge;*
- *Introduce a system of rewards in social assistance (Supervision should play a central role in identifying the beneficiaries of the rewards);*
- *Build good webpages of central and local authorities and publicize the policies and make them easily accessible.*

As far as supervision is specifically concerned, the following actions should be implemented in order to improve the state of affairs:

- *Conduct a training programme for supervisors: both initial and continuing training. To ensure the efficiency, training could be organized following the ToT method: training of TSAS administration on supervision; sharing the knowledge following the cascade method;*
- *Change the current practices and assign the role of supervisors to employees who are exclusively in charge of supervision and do not have any other job duties. The group of supervisors should consist of people who were provided relevant and sufficient training on the appropriate matters;*
- *Develop clear supervision procedures for each specific social service;*
- *Define the role of NSAA in supervision; at a minimal, it should be responsible for organizing the training process;*
- *Reduce the amount of paperwork in supervision as a result of maximizing the automatization, introducing pre-completed forms, easy to be filled in;*
- *Regulate the supervision practice by the means of a Law. (Law No. 123/2010 on social services could be appropriate for this purpose). Make the supervision Mechanism binding by publishing the respective regulatory act in the Official Gazette (“Monitorul Oficial”).*

Appendix No. 1: Document analysis framework¹⁷, Moldova: Mechanism of Professional Supervision in Social Assistance

Is there any distinct policy document and/or practical guidance related to supervision for child protection professionals?

Yes, in the field of social assistance.

If you could specify a relevant policy document/practical guidance, who has written it and who has published it?

THE MECHANISM FOR PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE and THE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE (further "The Mechanism") were developed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, with the support of the USAID-funded project "Children in Moldova are cared for in safe and secure families", implemented by Partnerships for Every Child NGO, in collaboration with Government of the Republic of Moldova. The guidance was published by the USAID-funded project after the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family had approved it by Order No. 74 of 10.05.2017.

Link to the document:

English translation: file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/Ghid_supervision.pdf
or information accessed on 14.11.2017: <http://www.p4ec.md/en/projects/reports/default.aspx>

in Romanian: file:///D:/Users/Office/Downloads/GHID_supervizare%20(1).pdf
or information accessed on 14.11.2017: <http://www.p4ec.md/ro/projects/reports/default.aspx>

When was it published?

In 2017

When was it last updated?

The above mentioned is the version in force which updated and replaced the first documents on the concept of supervision in Moldova: The Mechanism of supervision in Social Assistance, approved by Order No. 99 of 31.12.2008 of the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child (Link in Romanian: <http://old.mmpsf.gov.md/file/documente%20interne/Mecanismul%20de%20supervizare.rom.pdf>) and the Implementation Guide for the supervision mechanism in social assistance, approved by Order No. 15 of 10.11.2009 of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (Link in Romanian: <http://old.mmpsf.gov.md/file/documente%20interne/Final%20Ghid%20in%20supervizare%20rom..pdf>).

The Guide developed in 2017 describes the methodology for the implementation of the professional supervision mechanism. This is the reviewed version of the mechanism cumulated with the guide developed in 2008-2009 as a result of the process of piloting and countrywide implementation. The professional supervision mechanism is implemented nationwide since 2009, at different levels and to a different extent of involvement in different regions of the country.

¹⁷ An analysis made by Olivia Pirtac-Goaga

Who is it meant for?

The mechanism is meant for those who are formally integrated into the social assistance sector, mainly for the staff of “TSAS” – the acronym for “territorial social assistance structures”.

P. 1.4. of the guide – The organizational framework for the implementation of the professional supervision mechanism, stipulates:

„The implementation of the professional supervision mechanism in social work implies the need to ensure an appropriate organizational framework and to assign the supervision responsibilities by administrative levels.

At the national level, the MLSPF is responsible for developing the methodologies and the informative aids, and for training the staff of TSAS and social assistance services on professional supervision.

At the regional level, TSAS shall ensure the implementation of the professional supervision mechanism by all TSAS staff. In this context, the head of TSAS and the managers of social services shall identify the people to be entitled with supervision responsibilities, provide them training on the supervision methodology, set up the required conditions for the fulfilment of those responsibilities and monitor the supervision process within the subordinated structures. The head of TSAS shall provide supervision to TSAS specialists and managers of the services provided by or subordinated to TSAS (for example, community social assistance service, foster care service, homecare service, mobile team service, etc.). The main goal of professional supervision **within the community social service** is to improve the professional skills of community social workers and to support the members of local multidisciplinary teams in the delivery of quality social services at the community level. The need for professional support for community social workers is explained by the fact that they are in direct contact with the community population, are the first contact persons in community social work. Moreover, they make up one of the largest groups of TSAS staff members. Considering this, the quality of the relation with the beneficiaries and the quality of the work done by this group of staff are crucial for building trust and respect-based relations with the community members.

Social services subordinated to TSAS employ different categories of staff: social workers, educators, psychologists, legal experts, etc. The supervision process should be organized by types and groups of staff, or based on the principle of multidisciplinary activity (for members of multidisciplinary teams).

During the process of professional supervision, the head of TSAS is responsible for organizing this process and for delegating the supervision responsibilities to managers of branches or services subordinated to TSAS (mid-level managers): responsibilities for the organization of the supervision process, for identification of staff members to be assigned supervising responsibilities, for setting up the required conditions and monitoring of the supervision process.”

What is the definition of supervision?

“**Supervision is a process of professional support provided to the staff of TSAS.** Professional support is focussed on effective case management, skill development and strengthening towards the improvement of the quality of services provided to beneficiaries, strengthening the practical application of the theoretical knowledge.

Professional supervision is an important component of the social assistance system. This is a form of professional support and collegial consultation which contributes to the improvement of the staff's professional competence. Professional supervision is a method for support provision, professional competence evaluation and monitoring of the staff's performance. Supervision is integrated into the context of clearly defined professional relations: head of TSAS – subordinated service managers – supervisors – supervised staff.” (p. 1.1, Mechanism)

What is the purpose of supervision? (Why to do it?)

“The primary goal of professional supervision is to improve the quality of social services provided to beneficiaries, to ensure opportunities for professional and personal growth of the staff, to understand their roles and responsibilities and to contribute to organizational or service development.

The achievement of the primary goal of supervision enables the staff to clearly know their roles, responsibilities and job tasks, and the TSAS representatives – to have a clear understanding of the limits of authority and of the boundaries in their work, to know when, how and on what issues they can call on their superiors.

The professional supervision process aims at the following **objectives**:

- on-going development and strengthening of professional competence of the staff;
- ensure the compliance with the regulatory framework and achieve the TSAS objectives;
- ensure the quality of social services provided to beneficiaries;
- encourage the constructive communication between the staff involved in common tasks;
- set up a favourable climate for sharing positive practices;
- reduce stress and prevent the professional burnout of the staff;
- ensure the access of the staff to all necessary resources for performing their professional assignments;
- analyse the progress and the difficulties faced by the staff in working with the beneficiaries.” (p. 1.1, Mechanism)

How does supervision make a difference? For whom or for what and how?

“The implementation of the professional supervision mechanism provides to TSAS staff a series of opportunities for the management of complex social and human issues. The professional support gives advantages by increasing the effectiveness under the conditions of limited resources, including human resources in the social field, and by improving the quality of social services provided to beneficiaries. The availability of motivated and competent staff, working in line with the current policies and procedures and having a clear understanding of their roles, competence and level of accountability within the TSAS, ensures the quality of the provided social services.

The staff in the social assistance system need supervision to check their understanding of their responsibilities and of the methods of intervention, to reduce the stress caused by the shortage of time and resources, etc. As a result of the implementation of the supervision mechanism, the employees are provided informational support, get answers to their questions from trustful colleagues, identify the best solutions for difficult cases in their work, have a shared understanding of various issues related to their professional activity, have the opportunity to follow the developments of cases (case management). The professional support gives encouragement, the possibility to exchange experience in professional growth, to share opinions and emotions, thus reducing and preventing the professional burnout.” (p. 1.1, Mechanism)

Who should get supervision?

All TSAS (territorial social assistance structures) staff. (p. 1.4, Mechanism)

Who should provide supervision?

“The head of TSAS and the managers of social services shall identify the persons to be entitled with supervision responsibilities, provide them training on the supervision methodology, set up the required conditions for the fulfilment of such responsibilities and monitor the supervision process within the subordinated structures. The head of TSAS shall provide supervision to TSAS specialists and to managers of the services provided by or subordinated to TSAS (for example, community social assistance service, foster care service, homecare service, mobile team service, etc.).

(...)

The TSAS head shall take the responsibility for organizing the professional supervision process and delegate supervision responsibilities to managers of branches or services subordinated to TSAS (mid-level managers): responsibilities for the organization of the supervision process, identification of staff members who could fulfil supervising responsibilities, setting up the required conditions and monitoring of the supervision process.

The supervision responsibilities for the support provided to TSAS staff can be delegated to a TSAS specialist or to an experienced social worker (depending on the number and types of staff) who will be assigned supervision responsibilities (Annex 1).

While identifying the staff to be delegated supervising responsibilities, the competent managers (head of TSAS and managers of services subordinated to TSAS) shall apply the following selection criteria:

(a) Education: university degree in social work or social-humanitarian science/secondary specialized education in social work/completed training course in social work.

(b) Experience: preferably, 2 years of experience in social work.

(c) Other: ability to work under pressure; communication competences; moral qualities; computer skills and practical use of Windows applications.

At the same time, while selecting the supervisors, attention shall be paid to the employee's readiness to take supervision responsibilities and his/her willingness to share experience, knowledge, and practical skills in the respective area.

*Professional supervision within the TSAS shall be organized following the **cascade method**, by levels, as follows:*

- The head of TSAS shall supervise the service managers within and subordinated to TSAS and the professionals working within the TSAS;*
- Service managers within the TSAS and those subordinated to TSAS shall supervise the supervisors identified among staff members;*
- The supervisors shall provide professional supervision to groups of staff members (community social workers, mobile team members, foster carers, other categories of staff).*

The supervision sessions shall be organized by groups of staff members. As a rule, most of TSAS staff members are social workers. However, some social services may also include other staff categories: educators, psychologists, legal experts, etc. Supervision sessions are also important for these categories of employees. These are usually one-to-one sessions or group meetings with specialists from several similar services (for example, a group of psychologists or a group of educators).” (p. 1.4, Mechanism)

How often should supervision take place?

“The schedule of supervision sessions

Based on the current practice, when a supervisor combines the job tasks with supervision responsibilities, the following periodicity of supervision sessions is recommended:

- monthly: one group session at the regional level (for example, all community social workers and the head of TSAS or specialists and the head of TSAS; all staff of a social service within or subordinated to TSAS with their direct manager);
- monthly: a sub-group session at the regional level, with 7-10 staff members (for example, the supervisor with the group of supervised community social workers; the supervisor with supervised psychologists of specialised social services);
- whenever necessary– individual sessions;
- whenever necessary – monitoring field visits.” (p. 1.4, Mechanism)

What topics should be discussed during supervision?

“2.1. Standard procedures for staff supervision

The largest groups of staff in services within and subordinated to TSAS are social workers, foster carers, mobile team members, and TSAS specialists. Case management is the main working method used by these employees. In this context, the core aspects of professional supervision are related to building and strengthening the competences related to the conduct of case management, the creative use of the available resources, personal development, and effective worktime management.

The **goal** of professional supervision is to provide professional support to the employees for the effective accomplishment of their tasks included into their job descriptions, as well as for the conduct of case management and for raising the awareness of the roles and responsibilities of each type of staff categories.

(...)

2.1.1 Competence building for conducting case management

This block of procedures helps in carrying out the case management in line with the established standards and according to the case management stages (Case management: practical guide, approved by the MLSPF, Order No. 96 of 18.05.2016).

(...)

The periodicity of supervision sessions related to the above procedures:

- a) monthly – group sessions;
- b) once in 2-3 months – individual sessions;
- c) more often, when necessary.

(...)

2.1.2 Personal development of the supervised staff

A) In order to provide emotional support to staff members, the supervisor:

- shall support the supervisees in self-evaluation of stress and professional burnout, shall enhance their knowledge of professional stress symptoms;
- shall analyse the risk of professional burnout caused by the work conditions and the specific issues (lack of resources, conflict relations, lack of information, overwhelming workload, lack of feedback and appreciation, sanctions, conflict of values, tension caused by the failure to achieve the expected outcomes by groups of beneficiaries, etc.);
- shall apply the techniques for mitigating professional burnout and stress management, individual stress prevention techniques to provide emotional support to the supervised staff;
- shall prevent and contribute to the settlement of conflicts that may emerge in the group of employees because of the insufficient understanding of their job tasks and contradictory perceptions, the disagreement with the colleagues or the supervisor, the shortcomings caused by the workplace and the shortage of resources for effective professional activity performance;
- Periodicity: whenever necessary.
- Work methods: individual or group sessions.

(...)

B) In order to effectively organize the worktime (time management), the supervisor:

- shall analyse, together with the supervised staff, the effectiveness of using the worktime and shall specify the existing problems (overload, inefficient organization of audience hours, transportation of the documentation, unscheduled home visits, attendance by beneficiaries, etc.);
- shall estimate the work conditions of the supervised staff (availability of an office or of a workplace, availability or access to equipment (phone, supplies, computer, copy machine, fax, internet, etc.)), access to the mayoralty's facilities and means of transport, and shall inform the head of the service about the improvements;
- shall support the supervised staff in the effective worktime organization (task prioritization and combination, involvement of local stakeholders in certain activities, delegating to the beneficiary the responsibility for dealing his/her situation);
- shall support the supervised staff in removing and coping with the distraction factors (unscheduled visits and sessions, excessive phone calls, correspondence).

(...)

The supervisor shall inform the supervisees about the methods for effective worktime organization (task prioritization, task combination, polite refusal when one cannot fulfil a task, etc.), and about the techniques for removal and coping with the current factors of distraction (unplanned visits, excessive phone conversations, correspondence).

Periodicity: once a year – for information purposes, and whenever necessary – for support purposes.

Work method: individual and group sessions.

(...)

2.1.3 Monitoring the development of the professional skills of the supervised staff

The supervisor, together with the supervisee:

- shall assess the professional development needs of the supervisee and develop an individual professional development plan (Annex 4);

Periodicity: once a year.

- shall review the individual professional development plan, based on performance evaluation, and make amendments to the individual professional development plan;

Periodicity: every 6 months after the date when the plan was developed.

Work method: individual sessions.

- shall recommend subjects for the continuing training of the supervised staff, submit recommendations to the head of TSAS/service managers within or subordinated to TSAS;

Periodicity: once a year.

(...)

A special component of the Mechanism is dedicated to supervision of supervisors:

“2.2. Standard procedures for supervision of supervisors

Supervision of supervisors is performed by services managers within or subordinated to TSAS. The head of TSAS is responsible for the conduct and monitoring of this process. Building the capacity of supervisors with the aim to enable them to perform the supervising responsibilities implies a series of issues:

2.2.1 Capacity building for enabling the staff to perform supervising responsibilities

(...)

2.2.2 Capacity-building for the monitoring of the case referral process

(...)

2.2.3 Personal development of the supervisors

(...)

2.2.4 Monitoring and development of supervision competences”

The third part of the guidance includes practical organizational details. It stipulates: “The content of supervision sessions varies, depending on the agenda and on the issues proposed for discussion. An ordinary supervision session includes: the approval of issues in the agenda, discussion about the progress made since the previous supervision session, discussions to review the work with the beneficiaries, providing constructive responses and problem solution, allocating time to reflect on the experiences and the feelings related to the professional activity, identification of professional objectives, knowledge and skill development, sharing internal organizational information, setting the timeline, the date and the issues to be discussed during the following session.

By the end of the session, the supervisor shall get the supervisees’ commitment to accomplish the tasks and the activities discussed about.”

How should records about supervision be kept?

“Accountability for the conducted supervision sessions: the supervisor shall report to the subdivision manager/social service manager within or subordinated to TSAS, if the managers are subordinated to the head of TSAS. Reporting on supervision activities conducted within the services which are part of or are subordinated to TSAS shall be done using the template in Annex 5.” (p. 1.4, Mechanism)

The third part of the guidance includes practical organizational details and explains how a supervision meeting should be prepared, organized and conducted. The “records” of the meeting shall be enclosed into a report:

“A supervision session report should be written at the end of the session, according to the template in Annex 3. The supervisor shall use the current reports for the development of the annual plan.

Supervision session report:

- it is a formal tool helping to monitor the progress and the development of the supervised staff;
- it follows a standard template (Annex 3);
- for each action of the report, a person in charge shall be appointed and a time limit for fulfilment shall be established;
- the time, the date and the venue of the following session shall be specified;
- the report shall be signed by all participants in the session and by the supervisor;
- the head of TSAS shall establish the rules for the access to the reports on supervision sessions and the limits of confidentiality”.

Annex 3 provides a template for the REPORT on the supervision session which includes information about the supervisor, the supervisee(s), the type of session (individual session, group session, field monitoring visit (when necessary)), the date of the supervision session, the venue of the supervision session, the agenda (the objectives and the issues discussed; the actions recommended and the resources involved; the person in charge; the time limit for fulfilment, the signatures of both parties and the date of the next supervisory meeting.

Appendix No. 2: List of the interviewees (anonymized¹⁸)

	Initials	Job title
1.	L.A.	Child protection officer, NGO
2.	E.C.	Head of territorial social assistance structure, supervisor
3.	V.H.	Project coordinator, NGO
4.	M.S.	Academic, university & programme manager, NGO, supervisor
5.	D.P.	Senior specialist, public authority
6.	I.R.	Senior specialist, public authority
7.	O.H.	Consultant, public authority, donor-funded project
8.	M.B.	Psychologist, NGO, supervisor
9.	T.Z.	Child protection officer, NGO, supervisee
10.	A.P.	Deputy chief of territorial social assistance structure, supervisor
11.	N.R.	Head of community social assistance service, supervisor
12.	N.S.	Community social assistant (village), supervisee

¹⁸ The full results may be provided to those interested, on demand, by the author or by Tdh Moldova.

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¹⁹ The titles were translated into English by the author. Most of the original sources are in Romanian language.

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COUNTRY REPORT SUPERVISION FOR CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONALS IN MOLDOVA

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