

Mutual Benefits of Supervising

Becoming a **Board Certified Educational Therapist (BCET)** has many benefits. In addition to the satisfaction and recognition of having attained the highest level of professional accomplishment, **BCETs** are eligible to supervise educational therapy students who are completing their internships in certificate programs. Equally important, they are eligible to mentor and supervise Associate ET members who are advancing to ET/Professional membership, a pre-condition to eventual Board Certification. These Associate ET's have a wide range of experience; some are new to educational therapy while others have years of experience. Thus, the supervision/mentorship relationship varies from person to person and presents an intriguing challenge to the **BCET** in meeting each candidate's needs. Supervision is a natural and logical extension of the work ETs do, with a "benefit chain" that is positive for the supervisor, the supervisee, and the clients and potential clients of both!

During supervision, the **BCET** and the intern or Associate ET are able to pay attention to all aspects of practice. The supervision relationship typically involves a focus on one or more specific cases that are discussed in depth. All aspects of the case are reviewed: assessment, intervention methods, decision-making, progress evaluation, and ethical issues. The intern or Associate ET gets the benefit of the **BCET's** experience and perspective, while the **BCET** benefits from the ongoing practice of analyzing different cases, formalizing and expressing background knowledge, and applying different methodologies as appropriate. Questions can be discussed about the management of a practice, what to anticipate, how not to be blind-sided, etc. Ethical issues inevitably come up, where the experience and perspective of the **BCET** are essential. Let's consider these elements separately.

CASES: Supervision only makes sense as it relates to real situations: the clients and the problems that are encountered in practice. Educational therapy does not operate in a vacuum. The supervisees get the experience of presenting elements of actual cases. **BCETs** collaborate in the case analysis, problem solving, anticipating outcomes, presenting alternatives, and evaluating results. **BCETs** raise questions about the context of the client, the decisions that must be made, and the complexities that must be addressed. This is the ongoing work in all case analyses, and what is learned from other cases informs and improves the handling of new cases, including those of the **BCET** (the "benefit chain").

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Supervisees often need help in selecting instructional materials and methods. They may not be as familiar as the experienced **BCET** with state standards, school textbooks, and the variety of curricular offerings of both public and private schools. They welcome help matching teaching methodologies to specific student needs. The **BCET** can offer perspectives on programs that seem to over-guarantee success or on controversial methods that may have serious flaws. . They may also be introduced to new and promising materials with which the supervisee has had experience.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT: **BCETs** provide advice about practice management, using lessons learned through both the successes and failures in their own practices to provide a framework for decision making. **BCETs** can advise on how to evaluate potential clients and how to interact with clients, parents, and families. **BCETs** alert supervisees to methods of managing a practice effectively and supply practical items such as sample forms and policy statements. **BCETs** discuss billing practices, how to organize student records, and what an office might look like or contain. As a practice grows, **BCETs** can advise about building referral and consulting networks with allied professionals. **BCETs** may recommend bringing in specific allied professionals as needs emerge or are identified. Supervisors address the question of termination of treatment: how, when, and under what conditions.

ETHICAL ISSUES: Perhaps the essence of the **BCET** supervising/mentoring relationship is in the area of ethical issues. Being highly experienced, **BCETs** have encountered many situations calling for wise judgments and decisions, but never all the possible variations that might occur. Solving ethical problems calls upon the **BCET's** use of the best processes of analysis and consideration of alternatives. For those supervised, the **BCET** models how to ask the right questions, how to frame the alternatives, how to recommend solutions that are often complex in nature, and how to advise in difficult situations when advice may not necessarily be welcome. Practicing educational therapy by its very nature involves clients and situations where there are often no easy answers.

THE "BENEFIT CHAIN:" Most of us are educational therapists because it gives us a chance to make a difference. This is self-evident in our relationships with clients. Becoming a supervisor enables us to multiply the benefit in ways we cannot always predict. Those ET interns and Associate ETs whom we coach often go on to become active members of AET, leaders in their communities, and indeed, teachers in our workshops and training programs. That we ourselves benefit from the experience is the "icing on the cake."