

Coaching Supervision: Introductory Skills for Supervisors in Home and Residential Care

PHOTO: KEVIN MALONEY

Funding for the development of this curriculum was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor through its High-Growth Initiative.

The nonprofit **Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute** (PHI) works to strengthen the direct-care workforce within our nation's long-term care system through developing innovative approaches to recruitment, training, and supervision; client-centered caregiving practices; and effective public policy. PHI's work is guided by the belief that creating quality jobs for direct-care workers is essential to providing high-quality, cost-effective services to long-term care consumers.

PHI's workplace practice and caregiving innovations have been developed in cooperation with a network of direct-care staffing agencies and training programs, including **Cooperative Home Care Associates** of the South Bronx and **Home Care Associates of Philadelphia**, and with **Independence Care System**, a nonprofit managed long-term care program for people living with physical disabilities in New York City. Through its consulting practice, PHI helps providers across the long-term care spectrum adapt these and other field-tested practices to fit their environments and needs.

A recognized leader in long-term care workforce policy, PHI also partners with federal agencies such as the **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services** and the **U.S. Department of Labor** to support research and demonstration programs to help create a more stable direct-care workforce. This work is supported by PHI's **National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce** (www.PHInational.org/clearinghouse), a central "on-line library" of news, research, best practices, and other information for people working to solve the direct-care staffing crisis in long-term care. In addition, PHI staffs the **Direct Care Alliance** (www.directcarealliance.org), a national advocacy group representing long-term care consumers, workers, and providers whose goal is to create quality jobs and quality care.

PHI's expertise in integrating industry practice and public policy has made the organization a valued partner to both industry stakeholders and national foundations. In affiliation with the Institute for the Future of Aging Services, PHI draws on this dual expertise in its role as designated national technical assistance provider for **Better Jobs Better Care** (www.bjbc.org), a three-year research and demonstration project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

PHI's team of state-based policy and practice experts work with providers, consumers, and worker organizations in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Oregon, Iowa, and Vermont. For more information on PHI's consulting services, please e-mail: info@PHInational.org.

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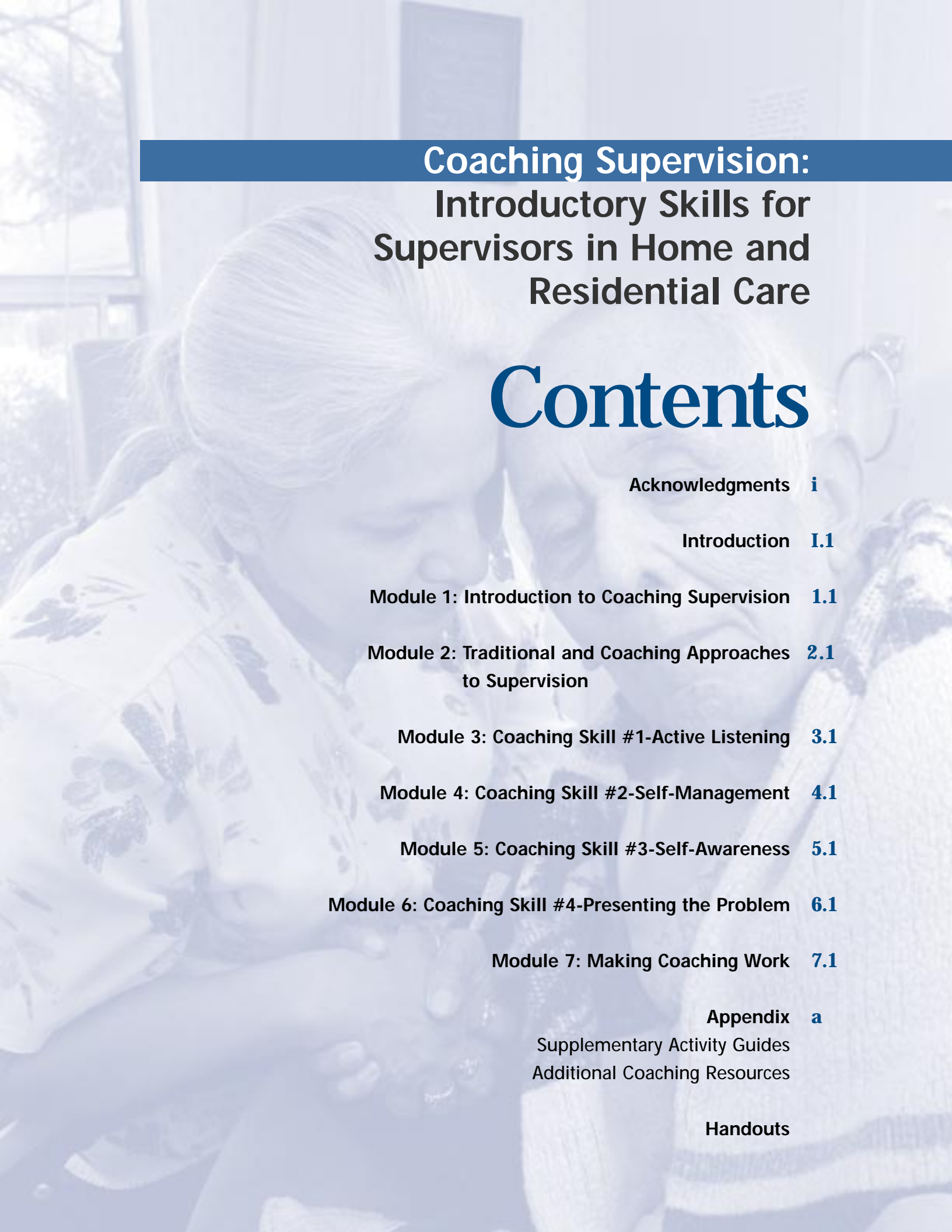
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Acknowledgments

Coaching Supervision: Introductory Skills for Supervisors in Home and Residential Care was developed by the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) over several years with tremendous support from the supervisory staff in home and residential care settings, as well as instructors who participated in testing and evaluating the material. PHI thanks the U.S. Department of Labor for its support and vision, which made possible the final development and distribution of this curriculum.

Specifically, PHI would like to thank Director of Educational Programs Sara Joffe for developing the curriculum content and methodology. Ms. Joffe first introduced coaching supervision to PHI's affiliated home care agency, Home Care Associates of Philadelphia, where its effectiveness in reducing turnover of direct-care workers became readily apparent. She further refined the curriculum while teaching a course for home care supervisors at Lehman College in New York City and through a train-the-trainer program sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

PHI also wishes to thank Ellen Murphey for documentation of the curriculum; Mary Ann Wilner and Anne Wyatt for contributions during the early development stages; Sue Misiorski and Carin Tinney for additional teaching materials for residential care settings; Cathie Brady, Sue Misiorski, Aileen Moleski, Afeefa Murray, Peggy Powell, Carin Tinney and Peg Walsh for their efforts as instructors and evaluators; Judith Lorei for content review; and Jill Tabbutt-Henry, Carolann Barrett, and Karen Kahn for editorial assistance.

And, finally, PHI thanks Paxton Communications for their superb design work and their patience.

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Introduction

This curriculum introduces the coaching approach to supervision as it is used in long-term care. It is designed to develop beginning coaching skills in supervisors of direct-care workers¹ who assist people in home and residential care settings. These supervisors may include nurse supervisors, charge nurses, home care managers, and service coordinators, among others. All skills are taught in the context of the realities of work settings. With its focus on communication and problem solving, the curriculum may also be useful to other staff who work with direct-care workers but do not have direct supervisory roles.

Funded through the U.S. Department of Labor's High-Growth Initiative, this curriculum is recommended for training supervisors participating in DOL's certified apprenticeship programs for home health aides and certified nursing assistants. Designed to teach supervisors skills to build positive relationships with direct-care workers, the seminar provides a foundation upon which supervisors can strengthen their ability to mentor new workers and help workers develop personally and professionally.

The apprenticeship program is only one of many opportunities for using the curriculum, which could also be taught in community college nursing programs, advanced training institutes, or employer-based in-service programs. The modular format makes the program easily adaptable to fit the needs of many organizations.

Why Coaching Supervision?

Supervisors face challenging work situations every day. Their jobs require independent thinking and decision making along with the ability to juggle competing priorities and to respond to the urgent needs of both consumers² and the workers who support them. These are demanding, often stressful, and sometimes overwhelming positions.

Supervisors' jobs would, of course, be less stressful if direct-care workers were consistently reliable and responsible and possessed the ability to resolve problems effectively and independently.

¹ The term "direct-care workers" is used throughout the curriculum because such workers have varying titles in different settings. For example, certified nurse assistants or nurse aides provide services in residential care settings, whereas home health aides or personal care assistants work in home care settings. Instructors should use the term most appropriate for participants in their seminars.

² The term "consumer" is used throughout the curriculum to refer to home care clients and residents of long-term care facilities. Instructors should use the term most appropriate for participants in their seminars—for example, "resident" or "client."

But this is not always the case. Supervisors in home and residential care settings spend a great deal of time attending to problems with frontline staff, including repeated lateness, call-outs, behavioral issues, and high turnover. Although it is tempting to blame direct-care workers for poor performance, supervisors must remember that such jobs are also stressful and that workers do not always have the resources to address the sometimes conflicting demands of work and family.

In response to questions about job satisfaction, many direct-care workers indicate that what keeps them motivated are their relationships with consumers. What pulls them away from their work are the complex demands of their home lives and not feeling valued or respected on the job.

The most influential factor in whether workers feel valued and respected at work is their relationship with their supervisors. When supervisors value supervisees as people—for example, by creating and maintaining positive relationships and modeling effective communication skills—workers feel increasingly capable and successful and are better able to solve problems independently. As a result, they are more likely to remain in their jobs when facing personal or work-related challenges.

Unfortunately, the relationship-building and communication skills that supervisors need to effectively manage direct-care workers have often not been formally included in supervisory training programs—if supervisors have had formal training at all. Most supervisors have learned a traditional, fairly punitive, approach to supervision that does not provide tools to successfully support and retain direct-care workers.

This curriculum introduces supervisors to *coaching supervision*, an innovative and highly effective approach to supervising and mentoring direct-care staff in long-term care. This approach to supervision centers on building relationships with supervisees, constructively presenting and addressing problems, and helping workers develop problem-solving skills. When implemented successfully, a coaching approach to supervision results in increased worker satisfaction and retention as well as improved quality of care.

Curriculum Goal and Target Audience

The goal of this curriculum is to introduce seminar participants to a new model of supervision and to teach fundamental communication skills that lay the foundation for improving relationships with workers and developing their problem-solving skills. All skills are taught within the context of long-term care, making the seminar lively and practical for participants.

The target audience for this introductory workshop is supervisors of direct-care workers across all long-term care settings, including nurse supervisors, home care and community-based services managers, charge nurses, and service coordinators.

The four primary skills introduced in the curriculum are:

- **Active Listening:** Using skills such as body language, paraphrasing, and asking clarifying questions to listen attentively and ensure understanding.
- **Self-Management:** Setting aside emotional reactions and other listening blocks that can get in the way of hearing a worker's perspective.

- **Self-Awareness:** Being conscious of assumptions and biases that lead to prejudging workers and others.
- **Presenting the Problem:** Using objective language to identify performance problems and hold workers accountable.

Most of these skills will not be entirely new to supervisors; instructors can draw on participants' existing knowledge and skills to enhance the learning experience. In large part, the seminar is an opportunity to strengthen key supervisory skills in a supportive atmosphere so that participants can use them consistently and effectively on the job. For those who are new to supervision, the curriculum's emphasis on learning through practice is particularly helpful.

Instructors

Ideally, a team of at least two instructors—experienced adult educators, social workers with group experience, or agency administrators with teaching experience—should present this curriculum. Instructors need to be skilled in interactive, participatory education techniques, and at least one needs to be comfortable with performing and conducting role plays (see “Course Approach and Teaching Methods,” p. I.6).

Before adopting this curriculum, it is important to assess the skills of the instructors as well as the particular needs and readiness of the seminar participants. Instructors with different experiences (nursing vs. social work, for example) will bring different strengths and perspectives to the training. Since the seminar relies heavily on sharing personal experience, the material will be shaped in part by those who teach it.

Instructors should be comfortable facilitating open and free-flowing dialogue and able to model honest, open communication throughout the seminar. Self-awareness is critical to becoming a skilled coach supervisor, and some of the activities will raise personal or emotional issues. Instructors must be prepared to help participants work through their feelings while managing their own, modeling self-management, another skill taught during the seminar.

Although this curriculum provides all materials and instructions to teach the seminar, it is highly recommended that instructors participate in a train-the-trainer program prior to conducting the course.³ Such training prepares instructors to use participatory activities to enhance self-awareness, reflection, and problem-solving and to guide participants through emotionally charged discussions.

³ PHI conducts train-the-trainer seminars for teaching coaching supervision. E-mail: consulting@paraprofessional.org or visit www.paraprofessional.org.

Curriculum Structure

The seven modules in this curriculum provide an introduction to coaching supervision and opportunities to develop four basic skills, as follows:

Module 1: Introduction to Coaching Supervision

- Coaching Supervision in Long-Term Care Settings
- What a Supervisor Does

Module 2: Traditional and Coaching Approaches to Supervision

- The Traditional Approach to Supervision
- The Coaching Approach to Supervision

Module 3: Coaching Skill #1—Active Listening

- Listening Exercise—Body Language
- Paraphrasing and Asking Open-Ended Questions
- Communication Game—Back to Back

Module 4: Coaching Skill #2—Self-Management

- Pulling Back
- Pull-Back and Paraphrase Role Plays
- Blocks to Listening

Module 5: Coaching Skill #3—Self-Awareness

- Role Play: Calling Out
- Personal Styles Inventory

Module 6: Coaching Skill #4—Presenting the Problem

- Accountability without Blame or Judgment
- Practice in Presenting the Problem

Module 7: Making Coaching Work

- Putting It All Together
- Coaching Skills Practice: Role Plays
- Requirements for Successful Coaching

Each module begins with a summary page describing:

- Goals of the module
- Teaching methods and time required for each activity within the module
- Supplies and handouts needed
- Advance preparations to help the seminar run smoothly.

Detailed guides for the activities follow the module summary page. Each activity guide includes:

Learning outcomes. Participants should have adopted or be able to demonstrate these concrete, measurable behaviors by the end of the activity. The focus of each activity, they provide a basis for instructors to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Key content. This section contains the basic ideas and important points to be covered during the activity. *This information is not to be read to participants* but rather should be worked into discussions as the activity unfolds. If necessary, the instructors can summarize these points at the end of the activity, but again, they should not be simply read aloud.

Activity steps. These guides help instructors move logically through each activity. A time estimate is provided for each activity and its parts. However, instructors should be mindful of the needs and interests of participants and adapt both the steps and the time to meet those needs.

Teaching tips. Based on experiences with field-testing this curriculum, these are suggestions for optimizing particular activity steps.

Teaching options. These alternatives can replace suggested activities to accommodate time or other constraints.

Ideally, the entire curriculum will be taught from start to finish, as each module builds upon information learned in earlier ones, constantly reinforcing participants' new knowledge and skills. With each successive module, the role plays also become more challenging and complex. The most favorable results will occur from teaching the curriculum step by step rather than expecting participants to leap quickly into complicated case scenarios and role plays.

Keeping in mind the overall structure of the curriculum, instructors should feel free to experiment, make changes, and take risks outside the recommended activities. Each group of participants will possess different needs and dynamics, and instructors should adapt the curriculum to best suit their individual groups. In particular, it is important to be aware of a group's energy and to adjust activities accordingly; in some cases, teaching tips and options suggest possible alternatives.

Timing

The modules are designed for a two-day seminar (see "Two-Day Agenda," p. I.10), but instructors may want to consider presenting them in alternate ways. This agenda is very dense, and participants are often tired after a full day. Other options include spreading the curriculum over three or four days. Although teaching the material on consecutive days is best for reinforcing learning, spreading out the modules over several weeks or integrating them into a full-semester course is also possible.

Supplementary activity guides—for closing Day 1, for opening Day 2, and for the evaluation

—Continued next page

Introduction, continued

and final closing—are provided in the Appendix. Instructors may integrate these activities as appropriate, depending on where they decide to end one session and begin the next.

If time is an issue, instructors should adapt the modules. These difficult choices must be made with great care because of the sequential nature of the activities. Enough time must be allotted for each lesson so that learners can assimilate new concepts and practice new skills. Rather than simply reducing the time spent on each skill, instructors may want to begin with a focus on the first two skills and teach the other two at a later date.

Course Approach and Teaching Methods

Course Approach: Focus on Relationships

At the core of coaching supervision is a supervisor’s ability to develop and maintain a relationship with each worker he or she supervises. *It is through this relationship that problems are addressed.* Throughout the curriculum, the emphasis is on nurturing the supervisor–worker relationship and on modeling in the classroom the importance of interpersonal connections. Given the focus on interpersonal relationships, the curriculum is designed to create an educational environment in which participants feel safe to share personal experiences, ideas, and viewpoints.

In teaching a curriculum in which relationships are viewed as central, how people teach is as important as what they teach. Instructors must model the skills they are teaching by showing respect for participants, valuing participants’ experiences and perspectives, and communicating clearly.

Teaching Methods: Focus on Participation

This curriculum is based on an adult learner-centered approach to education.⁴ At the core of a learner-centered educational program is problem-based learning, teaching strategies that actively engage learners in “figuring things out.” Rather than giving information to passive learners through lectures and demonstrations, instructors facilitate learning by building on what participants already know, engaging them in self-reflection and critical thinking and making problem situations come alive through role plays and other activities. Communication and problem-solving skills cannot be taught by merely lecturing about them; it is crucial that participants practice these skills over and over in a variety of real and simulated situations.

To encourage participatory learning, this curriculum uses a number of teaching methods, some focused on increasing self-awareness and others on building skills through practice. The primary modes of instruction include the following:

Case scenarios: Coaching skills are better learned in a reality-based context rather than as abstract concepts. Case scenarios are real-life examples used to illustrate a point or to challenge participants to devise effective solutions. These exercises present brief explanations of problem situations—usually ones that supervisors commonly experience—and ask participants to

⁴ See PHI’s *Guide to Implementing Learner-Centered Direct-Care Training* (forthcoming, 2006). PHI also offers train-the-trainer workshops on creating learner-centered, participatory training programs.

propose appropriate responses. Case scenarios and accompanying role plays (see below) become increasingly complex over the course of the curriculum, challenging participants to stretch their coaching abilities.

Role plays: Role plays make case scenarios come alive as participants act out situations they are likely to encounter on the job. In this curriculum, two types of role plays are used: demonstration role plays and practice role plays. Demonstration role plays, by showing common supervisory situations and various types of responses, provide excellent material for analysis and discussion. These role plays may be previously scripted.

During practice role plays, participants draw on prior knowledge and experience while also developing coaching skills. Participants try out different responses to a given situation and then are given feedback about which responses were most effective. Role plays are also used to reinforce new skills—for example, by asking participants to pull back from an immediate emotional response when confronted by an angry worker.

Role-playing encourages participants to take risks in a safe environment, where they can learn from mistakes. Although not all participants will be comfortable performing in front of others, risk taking is an essential part of learning. One way to lower the risk level, especially early on in the seminar, is to conduct role plays in small groups rather than in front of the whole group. Instructors can also demonstrate a role play, sharing their own thoughts and feelings about role-playing in order to make them feel comfortable.

Small-group work: Small-group work helps ensure that all participants remain actively engaged in learning. It also facilitates cooperation and community building among participants. For small-group work, the instructor separates people into groups of four to six who sit together at a table or arrange their chairs in a small circle. Periodically changing the composition of the groups is recommended. Participants benefit from working with people with differing personalities, strengths, and weaknesses.

Small groups will work most effectively if given a clear task and roles (e.g., recorder, reporter, timekeeper) and a defined time limit. Instructors can help keep participants on task by walking around the room and checking in briefly with each group. The added benefit of small groups is that they teach about teamwork by embedding it in the learning process.

Interactive presentations: Rather than using a traditional lecture format, we recommend involving participants in interactive presentations, in which the instructor draws on participants' knowledge. This kind of participatory dialogue is much more engaging than a traditional lecture, wherein the lecturer provides all the information. The interactive presentation builds confidence and keeps participants interested, breaking down barriers between the teacher “expert” and the learner. One challenge is ensuring that the discussion stays focused on the topic at hand; instructors must continually guide participants back to the subject material and weave in participants' comments to deepen learning.

In an interactive presentation, the instructor starts by asking participants what they already know about the topic, then draws out participants by asking them to contribute their own experiences and explain what the experiences taught them about the topic under discussion. Participants are also encouraged to ask questions, and instructors provide concrete examples of how the material being taught is relevant to particular situations supervisors encounter.

General Teaching Tips

Planning and Preparation

- Given the level of interaction and practice in this seminar, the ideal number of participants is twelve, with two instructors; activity steps and time are based on these numbers. Teaching options are offered in those activities that might require more time, additional instructors, or a different approach, if there are more than twelve participants.
- To keep participants engaged, interactive presentations should be limited to 15 minutes or less. Facial expressions, varied voice tones, and movement by instructors will keep activities dynamic.
- In the afternoon, groups often become lethargic. A brief, energizing activity in which people move their bodies a bit can shake off sleepiness and keep participants focused on learning. For example, participants can stand and shake out their arms and legs or stand in a circle and bounce a ball across the circle to one another. The idea is just to get the blood moving again, so energizers can be brief (2 minutes or less).
- Before teaching each module, instructors should review the activities and consider the arrangement of chairs that will work best for each. For example, activities involving role plays require a stage area that is easily viewed by the group. Check-ins and closings have a more intimate quality with chairs arranged in a circle. Participants can help rearrange chairs between activities.
- This curriculum is written with detailed instructions useful for new instructors. Experienced instructors will be able to draw from their own “toolbox” to vary some activities.
- Instructors unfamiliar with coaching may want to look at some additional resources. A reference list is included at the end of the manual.

Teaching Materials, Supplies, and Equipment

This curriculum requires a flip chart pad and easel, colored markers, masking tape, pens or pencils, paper for participants, nametags, and three-ring binders for participants. Instructors who want to use overhead projection—either transparencies or LCD computer—as a visual aid during presentations can easily adapt the recommended flip charts and handouts for overhead use.

In general, for all visual materials, it is important to:

- **Write large:** Printed words on flip chart pages should be large and clear. Using colored markers for different concepts can help to delineate and highlight specific points. Likewise, with typed overheads, it is important that words be legible and easily seen from the back of the room. The Arial font at a minimum size of 14 points is recommended.
- **Provide handouts:** Each module’s advance preparation steps indicate which handouts to copy for participants. Some handouts are designed to review concepts, while others are worksheets to be completed during activities. These will become important reference sheets for participants when they apply their new skills in the workplace.

Two versions of a handout are sometimes included: one for residential care settings, where direct-care workers are supervised on site, the other for home care settings, where direct-care workers have little, if any, on-site supervision. Instructors will only need the version appropriate for their setting and participants.

If new handouts are created, instructors should keep pages simple (lots of white space) and use large fonts.

- **Build a resource guide:** One desired outcome is to create a resource guide that participants can refer to after the seminar is completed. Every participant should be given a three-ring binder in which to keep handouts distributed for each activity. Passing out materials as they are used ensures that the information taught in each activity is fresh and provides participants with a sense of accomplishment as each activity or module is completed.

Teaching Techniques

- Throughout the seminar, it is important that instructors consciously model the material presented, using the four basic coaching skills in interactions with the participants.
- If two instructors are coteaching, it is often effective for one to facilitate discussion while the other writes key points on a flip chart page or overhead.
- Instructors should draw out the quieter people in the group so that everyone speaks during a discussion. More talkative participants should not be allowed to dominate discussions.
- There are several opportunities in the seminar for participants to share stories from personal experience. Because this is a rare pleasure for many, such conversations can take on a life of their own. The instructor should keep stories focused on the main point of the activity and watch the time so that all participants get a chance to share.
- Participants' sharing may elicit questions or issues that cannot be tackled during the activity's allotted time. In such situations, the instructor may want to track these issues in a visual way by creating a "parking lot"—an ongoing list on a flip chart page. As time and interest allow over the course of the seminar, these issues can be addressed.
- The role plays are critical to the effectiveness of this curriculum but may be new to many participants. Some may feel reluctant to participate. Instructors should explain that the role plays involve *practice*, not performance, and that participants will not be judged negatively for their efforts. Participants will learn the most from the role plays if they take their roles seriously and do their best.
- Role plays may also be new to instructors. Instructors who feel nervous about them will pass on their nervousness to participants. Therefore, it is essential that instructors practice the role plays prior to the seminar until they are comfortable with them and can support participants in taking risks to participate.
- Participants sometimes pose questions for which instructors don't have answers. If this happens, instructors should acknowledge that the question is new to them and that they may be able to locate an answer before the next session. A willingness to research the question will demonstrate instructors' investment in participants and in the seminar.

Coaching Supervision: Sample Agenda for Two-Day Seminar

Day 1: 6 Teaching Hours (e.g., 9:00-4:00)

Module 1: Introduction to Coaching Supervision total 1 hour

9:00–10:00

Group Introductions. 10 minutes

Coaching Supervision in Long-Term Care Settings. 15 minutes

What a Supervisor Does. 35 minutes

10:00–10:15 Break 15 minutes

Module 2: Traditional and Coaching Approaches to Supervision total 50 minutes

10:15–11:05

The Traditional Approach to Supervision 20 minutes

The Coaching Approach to Supervision 30 minutes

Module 3: Coaching Skill #1—Active Listening total 1 hour, 55 minutes

11:05–12:10

Listening Exercise—Body Language 35 minutes

Paraphrasing and Asking Open-Ended Questions (set up) 30 minutes

12:10–1:00 Lunch Break 50 minutes

1:00–1:50

Communication Game—Back to Back 20 minutes

Paraphrasing and Asking Open-Ended Questions (practice). 30 minutes

Module 4, part 1: Coaching Skill #2—Self-Management. total 1 hour, 45 minutes

1:50–2:35

Pulling Back. 45 minutes

2:35–2:50 Break 15 minutes

2:50–3:50

Pull Back and Paraphrase Role Plays 60 minutes

3:50–4:00

Day 1 Closing 10 minutes

Day 2: 6 Teaching Hours (e.g., 9:00-4:00)

Day 2 Opening	25 minutes
9:00–9:25	
Sharing thoughts and feelings and reviewing homework.....	25 minutes
Module 4, part 2: Coaching Skill #2—Self-Management	total 55 minutes
9:25–10:20	
Blocks to Listening	55 minutes
10:20–10:30 <i>Break</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>
Module 5: Coaching Skill #3-Self-Awareness	total 1 hour, 30 minutes
10:30–12:00	
Role Play: Calling Out.....	20 minutes
Personal Styles Inventory.....	70 minutes
12:00–12:40 <i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>40 minutes</i>
Module 6: Coaching Skill #4-Presenting the Problem	total 1 hour, 10 minutes
12:40–1:50	
Accountability without Blame or Judgment	15 minutes
Practice in Presenting the Problem	55 minutes
Module 7: Making Coaching Work	total 1 hour, 30 minutes
1:50–2:10	
Putting It All Together: Skills Review	20 minutes
2:10–2:20 <i>Break</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>
2:20–3:30	
Coaching Skills Practice: Role Plays	55 minutes
Requirements for Successful Coaching.....	15 minutes
3:30–4:00	
Evaluation, Getting Support, and Final Closing	30 minutes