

Oregon Traditional Health Worker Commission: Recommendations on Support and Supervision for Traditional Health Workers

Policy

OAR 410-180-0300

http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_400/oar_410/410_180.html

Rationale

The ability of Traditional Health Workers to be effective and satisfied in their work depends to a large degree on the quality of support and supervision they receive. Support and supervision for THWs is important for at least three reasons.

1. Many THWs bring unique perspectives based on life experience as members of communities most affected by inequities. As such, they are often new to the norms and expectations of positions within community based organizations and health systems. Many THWs have experienced systematic discrimination and historical and personal trauma.
2. Excellent support and supervision can provide a buffer and bridge between THWs and systems, which are often unfamiliar with and even doubtful of their skills and potential contributions. Further, excellent supervisors can provide the mentoring which supports THWs to develop as ethical professionals, and the support that helps THWs deal with potential re-traumatization and vicarious trauma.
3. Excellent support and supervision promotes retention of THWs and increases their effectiveness, thus promoting health and well-being in the communities THWs serve.

Qualities of Effective THW Supervisors

Effective supervisors do not necessarily need to possess ALL the recommended qualities; however, supervisors who are a member of the community served with more of the recommended qualities are more likely to be successful in their work.

- Experience as a THW
- Understand, value and respect the role of THWs and the life experience they bring to their roles
- Creative
- Supportive/mentor-coach mindset
- Non-judgmental
- Flexible
- Patient
- Active, reflective listener
- Team-oriented
- Willingness to grow, change and learn

- Available

Skills

- Problem-solver. Able to identify and resolve problems before they grow.
- Able to create a safe environment
- Conflict resolution/mediation skills. Able to resolve conflicts in a productive rather than a punitive way. Able to advocate for THWs and the THW professions
- Organizational skills
- Documentation skills
- Pro-active. Able to take appropriate action decisively when needed.
- Communication skills
- Ability to stay present and not get triggered
- Ability to practice shared leadership
- Ability to remove organizational barriers that limit THW effectiveness
- Ability to find resources for THW job continuity and advocate for program sustainability

Knowledge

- Awareness of THW certification and other THW types, in order to be able to promote coordination
- Intersectional analysis of power and privilege:
https://www.sfu.ca/iirp/documents/resources/101_Final.pdf
- Have an equity and empowerment lens
- Awareness of different systems, i.e. Coordinated Care Organizations, Local Health Departments, Community Based Organizations, etc.
- Familiar with the full range of THW roles and the socio-ecological model
- Knowledge about the community or communities of focus
- Understanding of historical trauma, vicarious trauma, and trauma-informed supervision

Standards of Excellent Practice

- Cultivate a network of resources to share with the THW team, or assure that the team creates such a network
- Act as a link between the THW team and larger health and social service systems
- Support the team to maintain ethical standards
- Foster and/or support the development of peer networks for THWs (e.g., through participation in CHW professional associations, etc.)
- Foster and/or support the professional development of THWs and encourage their involvement in system change opportunities
- Practice cultural humility and openness to learning about other communities, beliefs and practices