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Member of ANSE
Association of National Organisations
for Supervision in Europe

Ethical Guidelines for ÖVS-Supervisors

These guidelines deal with the following areas:

1. Introduction

The Österreichische Vereinigung für Supervision (ÖVS) ensures compliance with practice standards and an adherence to the latest teachings, thus guaranteeing quality assurance in all things supervisory. Our ethical guidelines are a central element in the assurance of practice standards and support the critical analysis of one's own attitude. At ÖVS self-appraisal is a constant process of reflection, evaluation and consideration of those principles, rules, values, standards and interests, which come within the framework of supervision. To promote these ends, both ÖVS-members and organs of the association receive guidance in the following three areas:

- in their choice of identity and self-image
- in the appropriate implementation of such in their supervisory practice
- and in the activities of our association.

We ensure that third parties, institutions, government authorities and clients are always aware of ÖVS's aims, principles and understanding of supervision. All parties will be informed – as defined by consumer protection legislation – of what to expect when working with ÖVS-supervisors.

2. Principles

ÖVS-supervisors consider each human being as an independent and responsible person whose dignity is inviolable and must be protected. They assume that human beings and organisations are, and will remain, capable of learning, growing and developing.

Supervisors respect the dignity and integrity of the people with whom they are in direct or indirect professional relationships, particularly their rights to self-determination and to taking responsibility for their own actions.

Supervisors face ethical obligations in four specific areas of their work:

- in their relationships with their supervisees,
- in their relationships with the contracting authorities and the organisations, where the supervisees work
- in the impact that their work has on the clients/customers of their supervisees
- and in their pursuit of the very latest developments in supervisory practice.

3. Scope

These ethical principles apply to all ÖVS-supervisors.

Addition to item 3: statutory rights and obligations are not affected by these agreements (decided on the occasion of the General Meeting on 17th May 2009).

4. Responsibility

Supervisors bear responsibility for their professional actions and for the personal and social impact of said actions upon their clients.

4.1. They make the necessary adjustments to their behaviour in order to ensure that predictable and preventable damage is avoided.

4.2. They decline commissions, which they are unable to carry out professionally or which contradict the ÖVS's ethical guidelines.

4.3. They end working agreements, in which, in the course of events, it becomes clear that the obligations are ones, which are either impossible to carry out professionally or which contain requirements contrary to the ÖVS's ethical guidelines.

4.4. They also decline or retract themselves from commissions, where it turns out that some or all of the inherent obligations conflict with human rights norms, according to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

5. Professional competence and quality development

The successful fulfilment of supervisory tasks puts particular demands on those involved. It requires the constant, self-critical analysis of one's personal and professional qualifications and competencies, an unflinching drive to improve oneself methodologically, personally and professionally and, moreover, an acknowledgement of one's own limits. All of which lead to the following obligations:

5.1. Supervisors must restrict themselves to providing only that supervision, which has explicitly been agreed upon and which is in keeping with their own competencies. In supervision it is important to clearly distinguish one's own field from other – possibly complementary – neighbouring disciplines (e.g. psychotherapy, management consultancy, mediation, facilitation, but also self-awareness groups or training and organisational development).

If the process reveals that another profession or another offer would be better suited to the supervisees' needs, then the supervisee either has to be informed about such or further recommendations will need to be made. If applicable, a new contracting process can be proposed.

5.2. ÖVS-members are required to attend at least one quality development discussion every three years. In these discussions, colleagues support them in reviewing their supervisory practices, with regard to professional quality assurance and in particular in relation to the ways in which they approach their consulting concepts, the clarification of their tasks, the contracting process, their evaluations, their moments of self-analysis (interviewing, supervision of one's own supervision) and their ongoing professional development (ÖVS supervisors are obliged to undertake at least 60 professional training units within every three year period). (decided on the occasion of the General Meeting on 13th October 2012)

6. Obligation to provide factual and legitimate information to supervisees

Supervisors are allowed to advertise themselves and their services, provided that the information is accurate and relevant to their professional activity. Untruthful and misleading information is inadmissible.

7. Mutual trust, obligation to inform and due diligence of supervisors

7.1. Initial talks and supervision contract

During the formulation of a contract the following essential points shall be clarified and agreed upon in a mutually obligatory fashion: the setting, the method of supervision, the participants, the fees, the cancellation policy, the time frame, the confidentiality obligations and the complaints procedure.

Personal attitudes and experience, one's own professional and institutional background and any possible reasons - with relation to the supervisee, the organisation or the supervision topic - for not accepting the commission must also be addressed in this first phase of contact.

7.2. ÖVS-supervisors are to respect and encourage the supervisees' individuality and autonomy and to pay particular attention to responsibly approaching and caring for the mutuality of trust in their supervisory relationships. Any abuse of this bond of trust – no matter whether in favour of the supervisor's economic, social, sexual or other personal interests – is considered unethical and strictly rejected.

Supervisors may neither use information from or about their supervisees, nor the results of supervision processes, for their own interests or those of other supervisees.

7.3. Confidentiality obligation and data protection

All information about persons, facts and institutions that supervisors receive in the context of their professional relationships is considered confidential.

Supervisors ensure that they withhold all confidential written records in their custody from access by third parties and/or ensure that all the data, which they have within their possession remains completely anonymous. Confidentiality obligations remain effective even after the completion of the commissioned activity.

Breaches of confidentiality are only excusable, if in their enaction – as determined by the supervisor's own discretion, but in line with criteria generally perceived as understandable and justifiable – an imminent danger or significant damage to either the supervisor or another person can be averted.

7.3.2. The disclosure of information on the supervision process to the contracting authorities is subject to the triangular contract and is to be discussed and determined during the formulation of said contract.

7.3.3. Where appropriate - in cases of team/group supervision, where multiple parties are involved – additional confidentiality agreements should be determined in respect to discretion towards third parties.

7.3.4. If supervisors are themselves supervised (in supervision, intervision or supervision training), then they are exonerated from confidentiality. If required, the supervisees' anonymity will have to be preserved. In intervision, however, training supervisors as well as colleagues will be required to observe the normal principles of confidentiality.

7.4. The storage and protection of supervisory documentation

Supervisors document data relating to the supervisory process (e.g. the start and end dates of supervisory commissions, the date and duration of each individual session, the fees paid, any changes of location and all requisite information on the various conditions of individual working contracts).

These documents are preserved for at least three years after the completion of a commission. For the purposes of their own self-reflection, supervisors also keep written records of process developments, which they preserve and within which they are required to safeguard the anonymity of their supervisees.

7.5. Principle of selection

Fundamentally speaking, one of the most desirable, and thus strived for, prerequisites for many supervisees is the ability to be able to select their supervisors from amongst a range of possible candidates.

8. Cooperation among colleagues

ÖVS-supervisors treat the work of colleagues with respect and refrain from subjectively criticising the professional conduct of other supervisors and the colleagues in related professions. Competition is not ruled out, but is undertaken in observance of loyalty, tolerance and cooperation for those with whom one works.

9. Ethical principles for training

ÖVS-supervisors also observe these ethical guidelines in supervision training situations and in the relationship between trainers and trainees.

Addendum:

ÖVS-members are not permitted to work as training supervisors or to bear directional responsibility (within organisations or for processes) in non-ÖVS-accredited supervisory training courses taking place in Austria (decided on the occasion of the General Meeting on 9th October 2010).

If members are active in the training or further education of supervisors, they pledge to ensure their active involvement with the ethical guidelines.

10. Research

In the interests of the scientific advancement of supervision and research into the efficacy of its implementation, we highly appreciate it when supervisors are involved in research projects.

Supervisors comply with the rules of good scientific practice and, when participating in research or being involved in publications, they bear in mind the rights of both their clients/customers and the contracting authorities (e.g. compliance with confidentiality requirements through the anonymisation of all related data).

11. Joint responsibility of the ÖVS and its members for professional ethics

ÖVS-Supervisors pledge to support the ethical aims of the ÖVS, as they are stated in the “Ethical Guidelines for ÖVS-supervisors“.

When in receipt of complaints, they promise that they will provide relevant information and help to clarify the matter in question (in accordance with confidentiality and data protection legislation).

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