

# Field Education: Off-site Social Work Supervision in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

**Therese Jones-Mutton, Monica Short, Terry Bidgood, Temeka Jones**

School of Humanities and Social Science, Charles Sturt University, Australia

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## **Address for Correspondence:**

Monica Short

Email: [mshort@csu.edu.au](mailto:mshort@csu.edu.au)

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## **ABSTRACT**

The practicum has long been acknowledged as a memorable aspect of a student's professional learning in social work education. In rural, regional and remote settings, the opportunities for such learning can be limited as agencies may be operating in a climate of considerable economic constraint and staffing difficulties. In response to the demand for social work placements in these areas, universities often place students in agencies where no social worker is employed and, as a consequence, require an off-site social work supervisor to support the student on placement. This paper reflects on off-site social work student supervision in rural Australia, considers the functions of this form of supervision, and the benefits and challenges for the supervisor. It outlines the findings from a co-operative inquiry, recommending clear contracting of roles and expectations in the initial stages.

**Keywords:** *Co-operative inquiry; Off-site supervision; Supervision; Field education; Social work; Rurality*

## INTRODUCTION

This article highlights some of the diverse supervision skills that exist within social work practice and promotes possible social work student opportunities within rural Australia (Agbim & Ozanne, 2007, p. 79). This purpose of the inquiry is to encourage conversations about the benefits of being a practising off-site student supervisor in rural, regional and remote Australia. At an individual level it has empowered the four authors to reflect upon off-site supervision in rural Australia, including its functions, and in doing so, enhance their own supervision skills.

There is a paucity of social workers practising in rural (including regional and remote) towns in Australia (Alston, 2005; Paliadelis, Parmenter, Parker, Giles, & Higgins, 2012). Organisations within rural Australia which value social work skills may be unable to attract social workers to their town or agency (Zuchowski, Hudson, Bartlett, & Diamandi, 2014). Off-site supervision, also known as external field education supervision, allows organisations within rural Australia to offer indirect placements (for example, in community work, research, policy) to social work students. It allows specific rural agency activities to be undertaken and rural-based social work students to obtain real work experience. The growth of this practice galvanised the authors to inquire into off-site student supervision in rural Australia.

All four authors have experience as off-site supervisors. Two of the authors work as social workers for a large government organisation and are located in rural towns. The other authors are lecturers in social work education at a university with rural campuses. The two lecturers have experience in locating and organising social work student placements with off-site supervisors in rural, regional and remote Australia. Due to this common experience in providing supervision, the four authors participated in a co-operative inquiry. A co-operative inquiry empowers a small group of inquirers to use their own experience, skills and knowledge to generate insights (Heron, 1996). It assists in the sharing of knowledge and experiences.

## BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Social work practice in rural, regional and remote Australia can differ from that in cities (Green & Gregory, 2004; Lonne, 1990). Social work in rural and remote areas can be complex and demanding due to social, health, education and economic disadvantages experienced there (Green, 2003; Mason, Bowles, Osburn, Lees, & Gregory, 2012). There are ethical challenges associated with working in smaller communities, partly due to less access to professional support and the unique nature of social disadvantage or less access to services in comparison with Australian cities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012; Cheers, 1998; Vinson, 2007).

This paper interchanges “rural” with “rural, regional and remote” and refers to these populations as those located outside the Australian capital or major cities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, p. 81). This is a numerically significant group of people as two out of five Australians live outside of capital cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

The term “rural” is often linked to conversations about low population density compared to cities and is defined by distance from major service centres or cities (Green & Gregory, 2004, p. 3). It does not include major urban areas, and denotes it refers to the non-metropolitan areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b; Humphreys, 1998).

Access to professional courses, including social work, for rurally located students can be limited (Green & Gregory, 2004, p. 3). Professional education courses such as social work risk being predominately urban-based and provide minimal reference to rural issues (Green & Gregory, 2004, p. 3). Regional universities, particularly with distance education options, can provide this access to higher education for rural people (Alston, 2007; Oliaro & Trotter, 2010). They have a significant role to play, as they often uphold rural social work and have a unique association with such issues as social work practice in small communities or “remote service delivery” (Alston, 2007; Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2010).

Field education is a “core component of the Australian entry-level professional social work education” (AASW, 2012a, p. 5) and has a significant place within the student learning experience (Cooper, 2007, p. 102). Substantial time and financial resources are invested in this process by the student, the university, and also the host agency. It is estimated that one third of a student’s academic time is on placement (Fernandez, 1998, p. 173). Social work supervision is the process that socialises practitioners into the profession (Egan, 2012, p. 171). It is a developmental approach to learning that allows the student to integrate theoretical knowledge into their practice and to develop professional competencies (Agllias et al., 2010, p. 8).

Traditionally, models of social work field education grew out of the apprenticeship model where students learnt by doing and the social work supervisor acted as a role model (Cleak & Smith, 2012, p. 244). International and Australian literature recognises the vital role of social work supervision in field education (Bennett & Deal, 2012; Maidment & Beddoe, 2012), which often provides the social worker with foundational experience of supervision for their career (O’Donoghue, 2012, p. 217).

The social work placement is a memorable aspect of the student experience and a social worker’s career; it occurs over two years and is 1000 hours in duration (AASW, 2012b; Maidment, 2006). During this period the student must receive 90 minutes’ supervision for every 35 hours of placement from an experienced field educator who is also a qualified social worker with a minimum of two years’ (or equivalent) full time practice experience (AASW, 2012b 2014). If a host agency has no suitably qualified field educator, then an external social worker is engaged to provide the professional supervision required (AASW, 2012b, p. 7). The external supervisor can also be known as an “off-site supervisor”.

External or off-site student supervision is defined as supervision that takes place between a student and a supervisor who does not work for the same organisation (AASW, 2014; Beddoe, 2012). The supervisor is a qualified social worker who has experience in the field of practice and is willing to help a student acquire social work skills (Agllias et al., 2010, pp. 29, 34). They support the student to: make links between theory and practice; contextualise their practice; make linkages between practice and the Australian Association Code of

Ethics (including respect for persons, social justice and professional integrity); meet their educational objectives; and develop a social work identity (AASW, 2010, 2014; Agllias et al., 2010; Zuchowski, 2014). Beddoe (2012) outlines that one advantage of such an arrangement is that it "provides an opportunity to offer emotional support [to the student] that is untainted by power relations" (p. 256).

Other advantages of off-site supervision include: building community capacity, encouraging social work networks, promoting the agency profile in the community, and developing the supervisors' supervision skills and career (Barton, Bell, & Bowles, 2005; Davys & Beddoe, 2000). Supervision is an important tool in providing quality services and accountability and it is something in which all social workers are expected to participate (AASW, 2013, p. 17). It promotes the use of reflective practice and a more *proactive* rather than *reactive* approach. Additionally, it is a space where the supervisee can ask for what they need or want without shame or intimidation (Henderson, 2009). As with all types of supervision, off-site supervision allows social workers to refine their supervision skills, expand theoretical knowledge and reflect on its relation to practice and build confidence in supervision skills (Barton et al., 2005, pp. 309, 310).

Recent research into student satisfaction with alternative models of field education, including external supervision, found students with an off-site supervisor generally reported being significantly less satisfied with the learning experiences they received on placement than students who had a strong on-site social work presence (Cleak & Smith, 2012, p. 256). In the co-inquirers' experience it was acknowledged that on-site student supervision was seen as the ideal and that off-site supervision has generally been sought as a secondary measure in the absence of a social worker.

## THE CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY METHOD

Co-operative inquiry is a participatory, experiential, reflective and action-orientated approach to exploring practice (Reason, 2002, p. 169). It allows co-inquirers' stories to be shared while critiquing ideas, approaches, experiences, research, and theories (Reason, 2002, p. 169). It differs from traditional research, which perceives the "roles of researcher and subject [as being] mutually exclusive" (Peden, 2004, p. 4). A co-operative inquiry instead concerns research *with* people rather than *on* people (Hearn, Short, & Healy, 2014; Heron & Reason, 2013) and it is compatible with the social work belief that theory and practice are related (Fargion, 2007; Healy, 2001). (Ethical approval was not required for this particular research project as rich data in this co-operative inquiry were drawn only from the authors' knowledge.) It is for these reasons that a co-operative inquiry approach was utilised for this investigation into off-site social work supervision in rural Australia.

Co-operative inquiry involves people (in this research, the authors) coming together as inquirers to form an inquiry group to explore an issue of mutual concern (Reason, 2002, p. p. 170). The inquiry group cycles repeatedly through four reflection-and-action phases (Heron & Reason, 2013; Reason, 2002). In phase one, the co-inquirers identify the focal idea (which in this instance is off-site supervision in rural Australia); in phase two, the co-inquirers become the *co*-subjects where they observe and record their experiences as

off-site supervisors; in the third phase, the co-subjects become immersed in the inquiry idea, identify tasks to be undertaken and begin to develop insights about the focal idea. In phase four, the co-subjects resume being co-inquirers and begin to refine the observations and make links between their experiences and actual practice (Reason, 2002, p. 170). Together, the co-inquirers refine the findings and collate the results (Research Centre for Leadership in Action, 2013).

The four authors utilised this research method due to its participatory nature, its emphasis on critical reflection and its ability to encourage linkages between social work theory and practice. The authors have worked together for approximately six years, have regularly discussed the area of supervision of students in rural, regional and remote Australia and believed there is a need for social work knowledge to continually be evolving within this field. Due to the vast distance between each inquirer's physical location, the four authors met "virtually". It was agreed to meet weekly until the themes were developed and this occurred over a five-month period. In the active inquiry (or immersion) stage phase, all inquirers attended each session. Notes were taken at each session and they were reviewed at each meeting. A Google Doc was chosen for recording information as it could be accessed remotely by all inquirers regardless of location in space and real time (Google, 2014).

The inquiry process ran parallel to the inquirers' providing or supporting off-site supervision to students. This allowed reflection upon the inquirers' own experiences as supervisors between meetings, active critiquing of the related literature and discussion of the emerging themes (Research Centre for Leadership in Action, 2013). At the first meeting it was agreed each of the co-inquirers would be actively involved in all phases of the inquiry as co-authors, co-inquirers and co-subjects (Reason, 2002). Themes emerged from the discussion and were formulated and presented to a group of social workers located within a large government organisation. It was at this meeting that the issues identified were validated and further insights explored and critiqued. Thus the inquiry kept cycling through the co-operative inquiry phases until the inquiry themes were finalised (Reason, 2002).

## **MAIN INQUIRY THEMES**

This section presents the main themes developed from our conversations about off-site supervision in rural, regional and remote Australia. The Australian Association of Social Work Practice Standards for Supervision (2013) and work by Shulman (1982) (as cited in Baglow, 2009, p. 363) were used to group the themes.

In reviewing the emerging identified themes in the literature and in exploration in the discussions, it was recognised over time that many could be grouped under the functions of supervision. According to the AASW (2000, p. 3) these functions are administrative, education, and support, and are known as the "three legged stool of ... social work supervision" (Kadushin, 1991, p. 2). Other researchers have identified additional functions. For example, authors like Morrison (2001) and Shulman (1982) describe a mediation function (as cited in Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Baglow, 2009). Morrison (cited in Davys & Beddoe, 2001) outlined the importance of this function in view of the need to negotiate the different, and sometimes competing, aspects of the supervision encounter (as cited in Davys

& Beddoe 2010). We consider these four functions, highlighting how they are present in the social work learning experience of off-site supervision in rural Australia.

### **The administrative function**

Administration is an accountability, or management, function which includes the clarification of roles, the planning and assignment of work, the review and assessment of work, and responsibility for supervisees' work (AASW, 2014, p. 4). It was generally agreed by the co-inquirers that the administrative function is more significant in the on-site supervision relationship than in off-site supervision. This is due to the off-site supervisor being removed from the organisation and its day-to-day activities. Administration is a function better allocated to the on-site, non-social-work supervisor.

*Terry: It is very different not having a student with you each day. You are often not in control of the activities that the student is involved in and while you have a shared responsibility for the student's learning, you do not always have the power to influence this, being off-site.*

*Temeka: It can take time to have a sense of what the student is doing [in the agency] and the information that you obtain about the agency is largely from the student's perspective.*

*Monica: This can be particularly noticeable if you are traveling long distances to see the student, for example if you are in one rural town and the student is in the next town.*

Addressing or accommodating this difficulty of being off-site requires early clarification about the collaboration, including each supervisor's role. It includes clear role definitions between supervisors, formalised communication and meetings between all parties (Kittle & Gross, 2005, p. 50). The co-inquirers agreed that their capacity to effectively evaluate the student's work was limited by their knowledge of the placement context and that the on-site supervisor was integral to this role. It was recognised that, at times, the collaborative field education relationship was not present between the supervisors and this caused potential difficulties for the off-site supervisor, most commonly manifesting in the student not receiving any day-to-day direction.

*Monica: I had a situation where the on-site supervisor at a small regional agency was not providing a lot of direction to the student regarding administrative tasks. The university academic liaison and myself as the off-site supervisor attempted to discuss this with the on-site supervisor but without success. Fortunately, we were able to implement alternative strategies including the student developing networks with other colleagues in the agency who thankfully provided the support and direction.*

### **The education and knowledge function**

The education and knowledge function includes considering the provision of knowledge, the development of skills (AASW, 2014, p. 3) and is a key role of supervision for both the on-site and off-site supervisor. Both types of supervision are informed by the same concepts when reflecting upon knowledge in practice. There are five main forms of knowledge that social workers use: theoretical, empirical, procedural, practice wisdom, and personal knowledge (Drury Hudson, 1997, p. 38). While the location of the supervisor may

influence the focus on these forms of knowledge, there still remains the opportunity for significant input by the off-site supervisor in this function. It was found through the inquiry that the focus on procedural knowledge may be less but the focus on the sharing of practice wisdom can be consistent with an on-site supervision arrangement.

*Therese: In any form of supervision I provide, I constantly reflect upon social work knowledge, skills and related theories. This reflection is the same regardless [of whether] it is off-site or on-site supervision.*

The co-inquirers are also in agreement that field education in rural locations is about preparing the student for professional practice. They concur this includes "socialising students to the profession and transmitting key knowledge, values and skills" (Abram, Hartung, & Wernet, 2000, p. 172). This process of "socialising" the student is made more difficult when social work activities are assigned a generic status within the agency. It is within these agencies that the potential for the off-site social supervisor to be a role model is realised.

*Temeka: If a student is placed in an agency in rural Australia with no social worker then they really need an off-site supervisor who can expose them to social work values and culture.*

*Terry: This is very important, otherwise it risks students passing Field Education with no understanding of social work values, knowledge or theory.*

*Therese: The other reason it is very important is it ensures the student is developing their own professional identity.*

The development of social work knowledge and identity, it was agreed by the co-inquirers, can be more challenging when there is no social worker within the rural agency. For example, there can be confusion about the social worker's role and input when there are other closely aligned professions, such as psychologists, present in the host agency. The off-site social work supervisor must effectively navigate the role for the student to facilitate this challenge.

### **The support function**

This function aims to maintain morale, minimize work-related stresses, build self-confidence, develop self-awareness, consider self-care, and elicit a sense of belonging in the agency (AASW, 2014; Pepper, 1996). Research on practicum learning has identified that students experience considerable stress during their field placements (Agllias, 2010; Maidment, 2006). All of the students supervised by the co-inquirers were living in rural locations and studying their course via distance education. This meant that many were engaged in employment and had a range of commitments outside the student role. Many of the commitments were unique to living in rural, regional and remote locations. In these students' situations, supervision and the support function are very important in assisting the student to manage these demands and to develop good strategies for future practice.

The co-inquirers, in reflecting on this, identified that the support function is best done in collaboration between both supervisors and that the off-site supervisor has a valuable role

to play. In particular, it provides the student with the freedom to reflect with a third party in a different and trusting relationship. This can increase the student's self-awareness within the agency. As the supervisor is located in a separate agency, this can also provide the student with a safe place to process reflections on the placement experience.

*Terry: Students can be quite trusting and will bring forward issues they may not discuss with an on-site supervisor. I am surprised what students share with me, including information about the office politics.*

*Temeka: I agree. If your supervisor is your line manager, than you are going to be very careful about exploring some issues.*

*Monica: Even more so in ... rural Australia where you might have to relate to the manager in numerous settings i.e., work, school, shops.*

Research indicates that omissions exist in social work literature about field education, including with respect to the student experience in the field (Maidment, 2003; Spencer & McDonald, 1998). Additionally, the social work student cohort has changed over the decades (Ryan, Barns, & McAuliffe, 2011; Spencer & McDonald, 1998). Tertiary students can present with diverse learning and personal needs such as work and family commitments, and also access and equity issues that require more flexible field placement experiences (Cleak & Smith, 2012; Hewitt, 2011). This can result in students facing significant pressures as they attempt to manage these demands.

Research in the United States exploring the profile of "off-site" or distance education students highlights other qualities that contribute to diversity. For example, 60.9% of off-campus students had experience in the social work field, in contrast to on-campus students where only 6.8% had relevant experience (Oliaro & Trotter, 2010, pp. 331, 340). In the present inquiry, off-site supervision was being provided to students who were living in rural Australia and studying by distance.

*Therese: Qualities identified in these students are high levels of motivation, possibly a result of the sacrifices in participating in their studies. I believe there can also be a role for conversations in supervision about managing expectations including about "slowing down/pulling back".*

*Terry: It is great this diversity exists. The challenge as an off-site supervisor is ensuring that each individual student is supported in accordance with their personal situations, including considering where they live. Supervision which is supportive provides a valuable forum for responding to stress and working towards building a resilient professional.*

### **Mediation function**

Mediation refers to the role the supervisor plays between the worker or student and the various systems with which the worker or student needs to engage (Baglow, 2009; Shulman, 1989). The co-inquirers acknowledge that the mediation function overlaps, to an extent, with the support function, but that support alone is not sufficient in addressing system-level



problems or themes. In the practice experience of the co-inquirers, advocacy and mediation have been identified as important and challenging roles of the off-site supervisor.

*Temeka: In my experience this has been a significant part of the role as an off-site supervisor in rural Australia. I also think the mediation role is two ways. It can be supporting the student in developing strategies to deal with such things as unrealistic requests. Alternatively it can be negotiating with the student about abiding with agency policies and procedures and the need to be reliable and accountable for the work they do.*

According to the co-inquirers, the mediation function can be particularly challenging in off-site supervision due to the issue of formal and informal power dynamics within agencies. The off-site supervisor is not an active participant in the power relationships within the agency. This can be both beneficial and problematic. The off-site supervisor needs to carefully negotiate power dynamics and to work towards a positive outcome for the student.

*Terry: Things can unravel in a located agency whilst the student is on placement. Supporting a student in negotiating complex relationships in a rural placement can be tricky.*

The co-inquirers recognised it is important to set boundaries and clarify roles early when establishing an off-site supervision relationship in, or partnership with, a rural, regional or remotely located agency and the university. This provides clear expectations regarding the role of off-site supervision and informs the mediation function. Communication is extremely important as it minimises potential misunderstandings that can lead to tension or conflict in the working relationships.

*Monica: Yes this is important to establish upfront. Also confidentiality works two ways, that is both the rural based agency and the student needs to know their confidentiality is respected.*

*Terry: It is also about boundaries and professional judgement. It is about knowing when to share something and when not to share something.*

It was agreed by the co-inquirers that mediation and advocacy is part of off-site supervision, including around the social work role within the agency. Alongside this, some rurally located host agencies either do not have an identified social work position or their understanding of social work as a profession is limited. The off-site social work supervisor needs to consider this to avoid the risk of being perceived as a potential threat to the host agency. This is exemplified by the following observation:

*Therese: Some rural agencies have very experienced staff with other formal qualifications and they can feel devalued, by the notion of not being "suitably qualified" to supervise a social work student.*

The co-inquirers found that positively reframing beliefs about the role of a social worker allowed potential tensions to be successfully navigated and that critiquing the similarities

and differences between professions was valuable learning for students. This can have a positive effect on the agency and the inquirers found that some agencies have sought to recruit specifically for a social worker after having had the “student” experience.

Furthermore, it was agreed by the co-inquirers that being placed in an agency with no social work employees can be a valuable learning opportunity for a student. This can also be particularly helpful preparation for rural practice where students, once qualified, may be working in professional isolation. It was agreed that one of the strengths of this model is that the student benefits from having two supervisors, on-site and off-site, who they are able to draw on for support and assistance.

*Temeka: It can balance students' perceptions and help them to filter bias. The off-site supervision allows the dynamics to be reflected upon objectively.*

*Therese: The students' learning experience doesn't always have to be around a project or activity. It can be around managing relationships within the agency. Important skills can be learned around conflict resolution and advocacy.*

It was identified that this can promote resilience and confidence in the student by providing the opportunity to workshop ideas and develop strategies around issues present in the agency with an external person.

## **THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN OFF-SITE SUPERVISOR IN RURAL AUSTRALIA**

All four co-inquirers acknowledged that there are considerable personal, professional and career benefits in being an off-site social work supervisor in rural, regional and remote Australia. The inquirers believe it facilitates better working relationships within agencies, provides professional development opportunities, increases supervisory and management skills, provides personal satisfaction, and enhances the development of the profession in isolated geographical locations.

It provides an opportunity to develop supervision skills where the focus is on education and support functions which can be more rewarding for the supervisor than administrative functions.

*Therese: In rural Australia, we do not always have access to professional development and this allows social workers to begin to develop supervision skills .... Increasingly agencies are asking for supervisors to have recognised experience and/or training in supervision and managing staff. Off-site supervision is a way to start to develop supervision skills.*

Isolation is a significant issue in rural Australia. Providing off-site supervision allows social workers to develop relationships within their local community. It also develops their knowledge of local resources and services.

*Therese: Social workers can become isolated in rural Australia, focusing on day-to-day urgencies and neglect doing tasks that energise and renew them because they are not seen as urgent*

Temeka: *The off-site supervisor obtains an in-depth knowledge of local services.*

## **LIMITATIONS**

In reviewing the themes included in this paper it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this empirical inquiry. This research collected together like-minded colleagues who focused on their experiences and on forming linkages between relevant literature and practice. Consequently, the research themes generated cannot be generalised as they may not necessarily represent the full spectrum of experience. This is because the themes are drawn from a small, purposeful sample (Hostick & McClelland, 2002). The value of this type of research is in four social workers coming together to contribute professional wisdom about off-site supervision. It also discusses how to enable rural located social work students to have a meaningful, valuable and quality field education experience. It provides a valuable launching pad for the development of further research, ideas and discussion. This could include further research utilising other methods such as semi-structured interviews.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The co-authors recommend that further conversation about off-site supervision in rural Australia will benefit the profession and enrich rural social work practice. Such discussion may increase the opportunities and maintain the quality of social work placements in rural and remote locations. Additional exploration of the themes contained in this paper will further generate insights into the field teaching relationship. Widening the scope of inquiry to include other supervisors and key people in rural agencies will provide valuable reflections and contribute to the development of a formal model.

The co-authors recommend the development of a model or framework for off-site supervision that facilitates the process of collaboration with all parties involved. Such a model could be included in the set-up phase of the placement as this requires focus on roles and expectations. The initial stages of placement provide the opportunity to establish the working relationship and lay the foundations for the co-supervision arrangements.

We also recommend an ongoing field education conversation regarding the importance of written documentation, which may be included in the student's learning agreement or plan. Contracting has the potential to ensure clear communication between on-site and off-site supervisors in isolated locations, ongoing critical reflection around the process, early identification of boundaries, conflict-resolution strategies, and greater clarity around the expectations of the AASW.

Additionally, the authors recommend that the four functions of supervision, as identified in this paper, continue to be utilised within supervision. It is considered this will provide a clear understanding of how the off-site supervisor fits within the supervision relationship in rural, regional and remote Australia and could minimize any confusion ensuring a positive experience for all involved. This approach, potentially, could encourage more quality, geographically diverse, indirect social work placement opportunities for students.

## CONCLUSION

Rural, regional and remote Australia has unique challenges in being able to provide indirect field education placements for social work students necessitating off-site supervision. The co-authors acknowledge that the off-site supervision arrangement is a potential risk to the success of a placement. However, the risk can be minimised with good contracting and management of the placement process.

Whilst recognising possible risk, this inquiry indicates that administrative, education and knowledge, support, and mediation functions were all present in the off-site supervision relationship. It highlights the importance of utilising these principles in clarifying the roles of both supervisors and the expectations of all parties. Good communication ensures that both the on-site and off-site supervisors are working with the student on the same content, minimising the potential for conflict through misunderstandings.

As co-inquirers we argue that off-site supervision benefits the student, agency, university and supervisors. The student receives a trusting, flexible and diverse learning supervision experience from someone who is independent of the agency. The agency and university have opportunities to access both student social work and supervision resources, while the off-site supervisor has the opportunity to develop supervision skills and contribute to the social work profession.

This is possible because, first, off-site supervision increases placement opportunities in areas where there is a scarcity of placements. Second, it can introduce the value of social work practice to an organisation. Third, it can improve networks within communities and build positive working relationships across agencies and education facilities. Finally, it has the potential for producing social work graduates who have increased resilience and flexibility because of their need to navigate the more complex dynamics present in an off-site supervision arrangement. The co-authors believe supporting social work students in agencies where there are no social workers through off-site supervision is an opportunity to be realised.

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