Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC) Recommendations for Communication

Preamble

Communication between doctoral program Training Directors and Directors of Clinical Training (referred to as DCTs in this document) and Directors of Training of internship programs (hereafter identified as DTs) is of critical importance to the overall development of competent new psychologists. The importance of this communication increases with movement towards the completion of the PhD as the entrance point to licensed practice.

A 2006 APPIC survey highlights a number of problem areas and dissatisfaction with current communication rates and practices (see Table 1). Whereas contacts are likely to occur in the case of training problems and needed remediation, there is insufficient contact regarding information that will facilitate optimal training and competency development. Rather than limiting contact to times of trouble, academic programs are encouraged to send internship programs information regarding the student's status regarding competency development in a number of areas (e.g., individual's most recent outcomes on practicum competencies document), so that the internship program knows where to begin concentrating efforts at the outset of the training year.

Table 1

90% of DTs send mid-year evaluations of the intern to the DCT/doctoral program.
95% of DTs send send-of-year evaluations of the intern to the DCT/doctoral program.
89% of DTs contact the DCT/doctoral program when the intern has significant problems.

19% of DTs request information about the intern's training needs prior to the beginning of the internship
14% of DCTs request information from DCTs (training goals, etc) at the beginning of the internship.
63% of DTs and 39% of DCTs indicated that doing this would improve communication.
16% of DTs contact DCTs about the intern's progress in the absence of significant problems
20% of DCTs requested information from the DTs in the absence of problems.
48% of DTs and 40% of DCTs indicated that doing this would be an improvement.

In summary, these data indicate that approximately half of both DTs and DCTs believe that greater communication would be an improvement, particularly prior to or at the very beginning of the internship experience. Further, CCTC asserts that the lack of such communication creates an artificial and potentially problematic interruption in the development of competencies for psychologists-in-training. Specifically, the failure of DTs and DCTs to discuss intern training needs at the beginning of internship delays their ability to fully benefit from internship training.

CCTC therefore recommends that doctoral training programs and internships adopt a stance of more regular and open communication that increases their mutual contacts and supports the seamless development of trainees. The following recommendations have been written so that they might be directly adopted into training programs' policies and procedures.

<u>Recommendations for communication between graduate programs and internship programs</u>

Communications relevant to integrated planning and trainee development

1) Along with the letter of appointment confirming that the intern is a member of the upcoming internship cohort, the DT is encouraged to request specific information about the intern that may not have been addressed in the application materials from the student's DCT. Both the DT and the DCT are encouraged to include the student/intern in responding to this request. This is understood to be facilitative of the intern's training and competency development (rather than a discovery process), addressing specific areas for training focus and competency development.

2) DCTs are encouraged to reply in a timely fashion with the requisite information (i.e., prior to the start of the internship training year). Recognizing that the DCT may not always have the most thorough

information of an intern's clinical needs, the DCT may appoint an informed supervisor designate to respond to the request. However, the DCT should also take advantage of this opportunity to form a relationship with the DT.

3) The DT should contact the DCT within the first few weeks of the internship. The purpose of this contact will be to report on how the intern is settling into the new environment and confirm the value of the information provided, seek clarification, etc.

4) The DT should send formal written evaluations of the intern to the DCT or other faculty contact person at least semi-annually during the internship. This communication shall occur at or near the mid-point and at the completion of the internship. Concurrent with this, internship staff/faculty should meet in person with the intern to provide detailed feedback. Additionally, the internship training director should provide the intern a copy of the formal evaluation sent to the intern's graduate program.

5) In addition to the contacts noted above, the DT and DCT may communicate informally about interns during the internship at other times to maximize the continuity of training and the positive outcome of training for the trainee. As such, the number of contacts will vary depending on intern needs. Such communication can be by any appropriate means, but in any event, documentation of the communication should be maintained.

6) Graduate program faculty and internship program staff/faculty may, as appropriate, share with the intern any communications they have about that intern, via face-to-face contacts, emails, telephone contacts, or copies of written correspondence, etc. They are also encouraged to solicit intern input about these communications throughout the internship year to maintain a climate of openness and support for professional development in the training of the intern.

Recommendations for communication when problems arise concerning an intern

The following recommendations are recommended to facilitate open communication about intern difficulties and effective problem-solving in response to them. Programs are encouraged to review their Due Process Guidelines and see how these recommendations can be integrated into their Due Process Guidelines.

7) It is suggested that when significant problems, e.g., those that are identified by the internship program as requiring remediation consistent with their due process guidelines, arise that are resolvable and/or resolved at the internship site that the faculty contact be informed about the problem and the action(s) that have been (will be) taken.

8) It is recommended that the DT communicate with the DCT or designated faculty member in a timely manner when problems arise with an intern that are **not** readily resolvable at the internship site, that are recurrent, or that may lead to the institution of due process procedures or an alteration in the intern's program. The mode of communication will vary to suit the circumstance, but may include formal letters or emails, phone or conference calls, and on-site visits. It is recommended that the graduate and internship programs keep written records of all communications between them. It is suggested that this communication include: (a) a clear statement of the problem, remediation plan, and expected outcomes needed to resolve the problem; (b) what the internship program's response has been to date; and (c) what role, if any, the internship program would like the graduate program to play in addressing the problem.

9) Once communication about a problem is initiated, it is suggested that the graduate and internship programs maintain ongoing contact until the problem is resolved. It is recommended that this include discussions of the remediation plan and plan for monitoring and evaluating the intern's performance.

10) When problems have been sufficiently resolved, the DT should notify the DCT, and the DCT should ensure that documentation of this resolution is also included in the student's record.

11) The intern may request and should receive copies of all written communications regarding his or her performance. The intern should also be given the opportunity to append a response to the communication.

Recommendations for documentation of communication

12) Academic programs and internship programs are encouraged to include in their program materials (e.g., policies and procedures manual) a statement to the effect that they will be in regular communication with all training partners, including the DCT and doctoral program faculty and DT and supervisory staff at the internship site. In fact, programs are encouraged to adopt the CCTC Recommendations for Communication in entirety. The purpose of adopting this policy is to inform students, at or prior to the point of admission, that such communication is normative and that its purpose is to support training goals and competency development throughout developmental levels. Two examples of such policy statements are provided at the end of this document.

13) DCTs and DTs are encouraged to develop a system for documenting all communication about each intern, in such a fashion that it can be included in the individual student/trainee's record for future reference.

General communication issues

14) If either party has difficulty contacting someone from the other site, it is recommended that they be persistent in their efforts.

15) If there is a change in the contact person at either site, that the other contact person should be notified and provided with new contact information.

16) When major changes in the structure of the internship occur (e.g., alterations in rotations or available placements), internship program staff/faculty are encouraged to inform the graduate program faculty contact.

Model Statements

These Model Statements are provided for program to use and adapt as appropriate. The examples may be modified to fit individual program needs

Model Statement – Internship Specific

Communication between doctoral training programs and internship programs is of critical importance to the overall development of competent new psychologists. The predoctoral internship is a required part of the doctoral degree, and while the internship faculty assess the student performance during the internship year, the doctoral program is ultimately responsible for evaluation of the student's readiness for graduation and entrance to the profession. Therefore, evaluative communication must occur between the two training partners.

Given this partnership, our training program has adopted the following practices:

- All students will be informed of the practice of communication between the doctoral program Training Director/Director of Clinical Training (or faculty designate) and internship Training Director (or designate). It should be emphasized that this communication is consistent with discussion among trainers throughout the students graduate training (e.g., practicum supervisors)

- Once a student has been matched with an internship site, the internship and doctoral program Directors will communicate about the specific training needs of the student, so that the internship

Director has sufficient information to make training decisions to enhance the individual student's development.

- During the internship year, the Directors of the two programs will communicate as necessary to evaluate progress in the intern's development. This will include a minimum of two formal evaluations (one at mid-year and one at the end of the year), and may also include regular formal (written) or informal communication.

- The student/intern has the right to know about any written communication that occurs and can also request and should receive a copy of any written information that is exchanged.

- In the event that problems emerge during the internship year, i.e., an intern fails to make expected progress, the Directors of the two programs will communicate and document the concerns and the planned resolution to those concerns. Both doctoral training program and internship program policies for resolution of training concerns will be considered in developing necessary remediation plans. Progress in required remediation activities will be documented and that information will be communicated to the doctoral program Director.

Model Statement – general

Doctoral training involves collaboration and partnerships with multiple training sites, including practicum placements, doctoral internship training programs, and others, such as research labs and other academic departments. Communication between doctoral training programs and these training partners is of critical importance to the overall development of competent new psychologists. Therefore, it is the position of our training program that regular communication about students' performance and progress must occur between the program faculty and other training partners, and that the content from this communication will contribute to regular evaluation of the student's progress.