911 Supervision

Supervisors in emergency communications centers (ECCs) play a critical role in shaping performance, professionalism, and accountability across the team. This course prepares learners to effectively lead, coach, and evaluate telecommunicators while balancing operational demands with personnel development.

Learners explore communication and leadership principles, conflict management, motivation, discipline, and liability reduction through real-world examples and scenario-based exercises. The course emphasizes building a supportive workplace culture and safeguarding the agency from legal risk.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the core responsibilities of supervision and how leadership and communication styles influence team effectiveness.
2. Apply motivational and coaching strategies that enhance telecommunicator performance and accountability.
3. Analyze workplace and interpersonal conflicts to determine appropriate supervisory responses.
4. Evaluate employee performance using fair, consistent, and defensible documentation practices.
5. Implement disciplinary approaches that address performance issues constructively and promote professional growth.
6. Demonstrate supervisory practices that uphold ethics, reduce liability, and strengthen organizational culture.

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Modules

Module 1: Concepts of Communication Supervision

This module introduces the foundational concepts of supervision in the ECC environment. Learners explore what supervision means, why it is essential, and how it supports organizational effectiveness. The module examines the purpose and function of supervision, the traits of effective leaders, and core administrative principles such as chain of command, unity of command, span of control, and delegation.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define supervision and explain its importance in maintaining quality, accountability, and morale within an ECC.
2. Describe the key responsibilities and characteristics of an effective communication supervisor.
3. Apply principles of chain of command, unity of command, and span of control to real-world supervisory scenarios.
4. Demonstrate appropriate delegation techniques to ensure task ownership and efficiency.
5. Evaluate how supervisory behaviors and leadership styles affect team performance and public trust.

Content/Activities

- Video*: Dispatcher Job Overview*. Highlights how supervisory oversight impacts frontline telecommunicator performance.
- Activity: The Supervisor's Role in Quality. Encourages reflection on how supervision influences service delivery and organizational standards..
- Brainteasers (5)**.** Multiple-choice questions to reinforce key terms and concepts such as the definition of supervision, span of control, delegation, and chain of command.

Module 2: The Supervisor's Role as a Leader: Motivating Telecommunicators

This module explores the supervisor's role as a leader and motivator within the ECC. Learners review leadership styles, traits of effective supervisors, command presence, and practical motivation strategies that support telecommunicator performance and workplace morale. The module also examines positive and negative forms of motivation, recognition practices, and the supervisor's responsibility to model professionalism.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify key leadership styles, traits, and behaviors that influence telecommunicator motivation and workplace morale.
2. Explain how command presence and supervisor conduct affect team confidence, performance, and the overall work environment.
3. Apply positive motivation and recognition strategies to support employee growth, engagement, and professionalism..
4. Assess workplace scenarios to determine appropriate supervisory responses that reinforce constructive communication, courtesy, empathy, and accountability.

Content/Activities

- Video*: Command Presence.* Demonstrates professional demeanor, confidence, and emotional self-control.
- Video: *911 Dispatch Morale*. Shows how supervisor–employee interactions influence morale.
- Video: *2013 Police Week Civilian Award*. Provides an example of positive, formal recognition.
- Video: *Motivating Employees*: *Negative Types.* Illustrates coercive or fear-based management.
- Brainteasers (5)**.** Multiple-choice questions to reinforce identifying leadership style, traits of superior leaders, the definition of leadership, and positive motivational

strategies.

Module 3: Counseling and Coaching Employees

This module focuses on the supervisor's role in counseling and coaching telecommunicators to improve performance and workplace interactions. Learners review steps for providing effective feedback, building trust, using active listening, and recognizing perceptual and direct communication barriers. Through videos, role-play scenarios, and reflective exercises, the module reinforces communication strategies that support clarity, accountability, and professional growth.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the essential components of effective counseling and coaching, including preparation, conversational approach, and follow-up steps.
2. Differentiate between perceptual and direct communication barriers and determine how each affects supervisor–employee interactions.
3. Demonstrate appropriate coaching behaviors, including active listening, clarifying expectations, and providing specific feedback.
4. Evaluate workplace situations to determine which supervisory responses best support employee development and performance improvement.

Content/Activities

- Video*: Coaching and Mentoring Employees.* Illustrates the importance of structured coaching and mentoring when addressing performance and developing staff skills.
- Video: *Coaching in the Workplace.* Demonstrates practical coaching behaviors and communication habits supervisors can use to reinforce expectations and guide employee improvement.
- Video: *Bad Attitude in the Workplace.* Highlights the impact of negative behaviors and illustrates how attitude issues affect team dynamics and performance.

- Activity: Supervisor-Employee Role Play. Learners listen to an audio example (Child Caller) and prepare a role-play scenario demonstrating appropriate supervisory counseling and coaching steps.
- Brainteasers (5)**.** Multiple-choice questions to reinforce the steps used in counseling and coaching, key communication concepts, negative motivators, the communication process, and identifying perceptual and direct barriers to communication.

Module 4: Identifying and Managing Employee Stress

This module explores the many sources of stress experienced within an emergency communications environment and the effects stress can have on employee performance, health, and morale. Learners examine types of stress, burnout stages, environmental and operational stressors, and the supervisor's role in stress mitigation. The module emphasizes practical strategies supervisors can use to reduce stress, support employee well-being, and respond effectively to critical incidents.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Differentiate among major types of stress, including anticipatory, chronic, residual, and situational stress.
2. Analyze how stress affects employee behavior, health, performance, and workplace dynamics.
3. Evaluate environmental and operational stressors that contribute to dispatcher fatigue, frustration, or burnout.
4. Apply supervisory strategies to reduce stress, support personnel, and promote resilience following critical incidents.

Content/Activities

- Audio Clip*: Rude 911 Call Taker.* Illustrates behavioral indicators of stress and how it appears in caller interactions.
- Video: *911 Dispatchers Coping with PTSD.* Shows the psychological impact of traumatic calls and long-term stress reactions.

- Video: *Sleep Myths and Effects.* Discusses sleep deprivation, its consequences, and the importance of healthy sleep patterns.
- Activity: Stress Inventory Scale. Learners complete a survey to identify personal stress levels and reflect on recent life events that contribute to stress.
- Activity: Audio Behavior Evaluation. Learners evaluate the temperament and attitude of a call taker and identify potential stress indicators.
- Brainteasers (5). Multiple-choice questions that reinforce the different types of stress, short- and long-term stress effects, operational and environmental stressors, stages of stress response, and the behavioral and physiological impacts of unmanaged stress.

Module 5: Dealing with Employee Frustration

This module examines how to identify, understand, and manage employee frustration within the emergency communications environment. Learners explore the internal and external causes of frustration, the visible workplace symptoms that may emerge, and the supervisor's responsibility to address these behaviors early. The module highlights strategies to prevent frustration, foster positive communication, and correct issues before they escalate into performance or morale problems.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify common indicators and workplace symptoms of employee frustration.
2. Differentiate between internal and external causes of employee frustration.
3. Explain supervisory strategies that can help prevent and reduce frustration in the workplace.
4. Evaluate management practices that contribute to or alleviate employee dissatisfaction.

Content/Activities

- Video*: Supervising the Difficult Employee.* Demonstrates how to recognize and manage challenging employee behaviors through consistent supervision.

- Video: *Antz Employee Frustration.* Uses a movie clip to illustrate workplace dissatisfaction and the importance of motivation and perspective.
- Audio Observation Activity: Learners assess indicators of frustration in call-taking behavior and discuss appropriate supervisory responses.
- Brainteasers (5). Multiple-choice questions that reinforce the different types of stress, short- and long-term stress effects, operational and environmental stressors, stages of stress response, and the behavioral and physiological impacts of unmanaged stress.

Module 6: Dealing with Problem Employees: Positive and Negative Discipline

This module examines the supervisor's role in addressing problem employees through both positive and progressive, or negative, discipline. Learners review the purposes and principles of discipline, including instruction, self-control, and behavior modification. The content emphasizes how supervisors can use positive discipline to correct deficiencies constructively and apply progressive discipline when corrective coaching fails to produce change. Practical examples and case-based scenarios help learners evaluate when each approach is most appropriate.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Differentiate between positive and progressive (negative) forms of discipline.
2. Apply the steps of the positive discipline system, including oral and written reminders and decision-making leave.
3. Implement the stages of the progressive discipline process, from informal counseling through suspension or termination.
4. Evaluate employee performance issues to determine appropriate corrective or disciplinary actions.

Content/Activities

- Video*: Cop Arrests Girl.* Used for corrective-action analysis and role-play practice to apply appropriate discipline steps.

- Video: *Dispatcher Fired for Swearing.* Reinforces expectations for professional conduct and progressive discipline outcomes.
- Video: *Amanda Berry 911 Operator Criticized for Insensitivity.* Illustrates how poor call-handling behavior can result in disciplinary review and public scrutiny.
- Activity: Corrective Action Role Play. Learners determine whether corrective action is needed and identify which disciplinary approach should be applied.
- Brainteaser (5). Multiple-choice questions that reinforce knowledge of positive and negative discipline types, steps of the discipline process, management failures that lead to dissatisfaction, and supervisory techniques that reduce frustration and promote fairness.

Module 7: Reducing Liability Exposure

This module provides supervisors with strategies to recognize, prevent, and reduce liability exposure for both individuals and agencies within the emergency communications environment. Learners review the concepts of duty to act, vicarious liability, standard of care, and confidentiality, as well as the importance of sound hiring, training, and supervisory practices. The content emphasizes proactive prevention—through policy compliance, performance monitoring, and ethical conduct—to promote a safe, lawful, and professionally accountable workplace.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how individual and vicarious liability expose telecommunicators and supervisors to legal responsibility.
2. Apply principles of standard of care and duty to act to prevent negligence and ensure professional accountability.
3. Identify administrative and supervisory practices that minimize agency liability, including training, documentation, and performance oversight.
4. Evaluate workplace behaviors and policies that help prevent confidentiality breaches, sexual harassment, and other risk factors for liability.

Content/Activities

- Video*: 911 Dispatch Error Creates Delay in Pittsburgh Fire.* Demonstrates how miscommunication and delayed response can result in increased liability and public safety risk.
- Video: *Dispatcher Fired for Mishandled 911 Call.* Illustrates individual accountability and the importance of following protocol and documentation standards.
- Activity: Corrective Action Scenario. Learners analyze agency policies and supervision failures to identify where liability prevention steps could have been implemented.
- Brainteasers (5). Multiple-choice questions that reinforce key liability concepts including duty to act, standard of care, vicarious liability, and supervisory and agency practices to reduce exposure.

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within one hour.

- CE Hours awarded: 2
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser