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## Perceptions on Non-traditional Models of Fieldwork Supervision

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## Perceptions on Non-traditional Models of Fieldwork Supervision

### Abstract

Occupational therapy fieldwork education has historically followed the traditional apprenticeship model, which pairs one student with one fieldwork educator for supervision and guidance through the transformational process from student to entry-level clinician. There is an absence of high-level evidence to support this model as best practice in fieldwork education. Despite data published to endorse alternative supervision models, fieldwork educators (FWEs) appear hesitant to embrace these approaches. The purpose of this investigation was to explore occupational therapy practitioners' views on the value and challenges associated with the implementation of non-traditional models of supervision during Level II fieldwork education. The study specifically targeted practitioners' opinions related to the 1:2, 2:1, and group models. A descriptive survey gathered data from 304 participants across the United States. Results indicated that 48% of occupational therapy practitioners have never utilized a non-traditional supervision model. Practitioners identified three primary barriers to usage of non-traditional supervision models in Level II fieldwork education: time commitment, lack of physical resources, and lack of education on the topic. Survey findings revealed that partnering institutions were the primary means by which FWEs received training related to fieldwork supervision. The conclusions from this study highlight the significant need to develop continuing education specific to non-traditional fieldwork supervision models. Practical recommendations are discussed to aid in promoting non-traditional supervision model usage. Collaboration between academic and fieldwork educators is imperative to expanding fieldwork opportunities necessary to ensure best practice in student preparation.

### Keywords

Level II fieldwork, non-traditional supervision, 2:1 model, 1:2 model, group model

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## Perceptions on Non-traditional Models of Fieldwork Supervision

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Occupational therapy fieldwork education has historically followed the traditional apprenticeship model, which pairs one student with one fieldwork educator for supervision and guidance through the transformational process from student to entry-level clinician. There is an absence of high-level evidence to support this model as best practice in fieldwork education. Despite data published to endorse alternative supervision models, fieldwork educators (FWEs) appear hesitant to embrace these approaches. The purpose of this investigation was to explore occupational therapy practitioners' views on the value and challenges associated with the implementation of non-traditional models of supervision during Level II fieldwork education. The study specifically targeted practitioners' opinions related to the 1:2, 2:1, and group models. A descriptive survey gathered data from 304 participants across the United States. Results indicated that 48% of occupational therapy practitioners have never utilized a non-traditional supervision model. Practitioners identified three primary barriers to usage of non-traditional supervision models in Level II fieldwork education: time commitment, lack of physical resources, and lack of education on the topic. Survey findings revealed that partnering institutions were the primary means by which FWEs received training related to fieldwork supervision. The conclusions from this study highlight the significant need to develop continuing education specific to non-traditional fieldwork supervision models. Practical recommendations are discussed to aid in promoting non-traditional supervision model usage. Collaboration between academic and fieldwork educators is imperative to expanding fieldwork opportunities necessary to ensure best practice in student preparation.

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## **Introduction**

Level II fieldwork is a critical portion of occupational therapy education intended to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate professional responsibilities under the supervision of a qualified mentor(s) (Commission on Education [COE], 2012). The American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) COE identifies a variety of fieldwork supervision models that can be utilized, dependent on the preference of the fieldwork educator, learning needs of the student, and nature of the site (COE, 2012). The models exist on a continuum from the traditional apprenticeship model, in which one fieldwork educator is paired with one student, to a more collaborative approach, in which a group of students work with one fieldwork educator. Historically, the 1:1 model of supervision has been the standard for occupational therapy fieldwork education. A study conducted by Evenson et al. (2015) confirmed that this model continues to be the most frequently implemented in the United States.

The necessity to have skilled fieldwork educators and quality sites to facilitate educating new practitioners is obvious; however, there continues to be a shortage of fieldwork placement opportunities (Ozelie et al., 2015). Student enrollment and workforce projections indicate that the demand for fieldwork placements will continue to increase for the foreseeable future (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015). The current number of available placements will not support the rising demand, especially if the profession continues to utilize primarily traditional approaches. This shortage has been further complicated by an increase in educational programs and a decrease in available placement slots given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional fieldwork sites such as school systems, hospitals, and skilled nursing facilities, are not accepting occupational therapy students on-site as readily as before the pandemic, stating reasons such as social distancing protocols, vaccination requirements, and lack of personal protective equipment. Not only are sites more difficult to find, but students must also enter fieldwork with more skill than their predecessors as navigating the environment and client populations become progressively complex (Keptner & Klein, 2019).

As traditional placements become increasingly competitive and difficult to secure, alternative, viable and efficient options must be identified. Implementation of non-traditional models of fieldwork supervision, such as the 1:2, 2:1, and the group model offer aid in the solution to the shortage. The purpose of this research study was to explore occupational therapy practitioners' perceptions about the utilization of non-traditional models of supervision in Level II fieldwork education. The survey results demonstrated occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant opinions on the values and challenges within the current healthcare climate. As key stakeholders, fieldwork educators must have a vested interest and confidence in the model being utilized. Support and preparation, through education, may play a crucial role in non-traditional model usage and success. The information obtained from this study could be informative to academic fieldwork coordinators in creating resources and improving support for fieldwork partners. Collaboration between academic and fieldwork educators is imperative to expanding fieldwork opportunities, which is necessary to ensure best practice in student preparation while combating the existing shortage of fieldwork placements.

## Literature Review

Level II fieldwork is a vital component of professional preparation that facilitates the transition from student to clinician through application of knowledge, theory, and techniques acquired in the classroom and Level I fieldwork. “Through the fieldwork experience, students learn to apply theoretical and scientific principles learned in the didactic portion of the academic program to address actual client needs and develop a professional identity as an occupational therapy practitioner within an interdisciplinary context” (COE, 2012, p.1). The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) dictate entry-level occupational therapy standards to require a “minimum of 24 weeks’ full-time Level II fieldwork” in a “minimum of one setting if it is reflective of more than one practice area, or in a maximum of four different settings” (ACOTE, 2018, p. 42). To meet the 24-week requirement, occupational therapy students typically complete two Level II fieldwork placements for twelve weeks, full-time; usually, one student is paired with one occupational therapy practitioner for supervision, guidance, and mentorship in settings such as hospitals, school systems, outpatient clinics, home health, and/or long-term care facilities. The standard reads similarly for entry-level occupational therapy assistant students, the notable difference being a requirement of “16 weeks full-time Level II fieldwork” (ACOTE, 2018, p.42). Regardless of the entry-level degree type, the goal of Level II fieldwork is to develop competent, generalist occupational therapy practitioners prepared to serve various groups across the lifespan, reflective of current practice within the profession (COE, 2012).

### Traditional Model of Fieldwork Supervision

Traditional fieldwork placements have been described as experiences in which students are supervised directly by an on-site occupational therapy practitioner within a well-established role (Mattila & Dolhi, 2016). According to Hanson and Deluliis (2015), “historically, the student learning process has been supported primarily through the use of an apprenticeship model, which is largely dependent on the skills, expertise, and modeling provided by the fieldwork educator” (p. 223). The traditional, 1:1 or apprenticeship approach relies solely on the fieldwork educator to model clinical reasoning strategies, practical skills, and demonstrate task performance within the role. It is suggested that exclusive use of this model “may reinforce student dependency on the fieldwork educator, and impede student initiative for learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking” (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015, p. 223).

### Non-Traditional Models of Fieldwork Supervision

As described in the literature, non-traditional fieldwork placements generally do not involve 1:1, on-site supervision by an occupational therapy practitioner; they are not necessarily situated in a clinical practice setting (Matilla & Dolhi, 2016). The term “non-traditional,” when used to describe a fieldwork placement, refers to a variety of supervisory models and contexts. The following non-traditional supervision models will be detailed further: The 1:2 model, 2:1 model, and the group model of supervision.

### **1:2 Model**

The 1:2 model describes a situation in which one fieldwork educator is responsible for two students (COE, 2012). This model, also referred to as the *collaborative model*, may involve two occupational therapy students, two occupational therapy assistant students, or one of each.

### **2:1 Model**

The 2:1 model describes a situation in which two fieldwork educators share the supervision of one student (COE, 2012). This non-traditional supervision model, also known as *multiple mentoring* or *shared supervision*, is characterized by a team of two occupational therapy practitioners supporting one fieldwork student (Graves & Hanson, 2014).

### **Group Model**

The group model describes a situation in which one fieldwork educator is responsible for a group of three or more students but maintains the traditional fieldwork educator-as-expert role (COE, 2012). The students may be occupational therapy students, occupational therapy assistant students, or a combination of both.

It has been suggested, through the literature, that fieldwork educators are tentative to implement non-traditional approaches given a misapprehension regarding the amount of time required to be spent with two or more students (Graves & Hanson, 2014).

“Therapists have expressed concern that working with more than one student at a time would drastically increase their workload and that they would have difficulty attending to the learning needs of more than one student at a time” (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015, p. 224). Additional documented concerns include incompatibility or student competition, increased time required to prepare for student arrival, and increased stress for the fieldwork educator (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015).

Lack of understanding and unfamiliarity are cited as the greatest barriers to implementation of non-traditional models of supervision in fieldwork education (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015). Most occupational therapy practitioners, now serving as fieldwork educators, completed their own Level II experiences within an apprenticeship model and therefore may not even consider an alternative method. Despite misconceptions, there are many benefits to utilizing non-traditional models described in the literature. The 1:2, 2:1, and group models are more collaborative in nature, facilitate communication skills, and foster a team approach (Overton et al., 2009; Wilske, 2016). Advantages include an increase in the number of placements available, opportunity to supervise students for occupational therapy practitioners who work in part-time positions, and student exposure to multiple areas of practice/practitioners (Graves & Hanson, 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

There is lack of high-level evidence to support the 1:1 model as best practice in fieldwork education. Although it is reported that non-traditional models of fieldwork supervision have been implemented for over twenty years, a perception remains that these placements are inferior to their traditional counterparts. The evidence indicates these models have advantages (Graves & Hanson, 2014; Hanson & Deluliis, 2015; Overton et al., 2009); however, there appears to be a reluctance to employ non-traditional supervision models. Data is lacking on why alternative supervision models are not being implemented regularly. This investigation was designed to explore occupational therapy practitioners' view on the value and challenges associated with the implementation of non-traditional models of supervision during Level II fieldwork education. The purpose of the study was to obtain a further understanding of occupational therapy practitioners' current knowledge, receptiveness to employ, and perceived benefits and challenges related to the 1:2, 2:1, and group models.

### **Method**

This study utilized a thirty-five question, descriptive survey developed and distributed online via Microsoft Forms software. The Institutional Review Board at American International College approved this study.

Occupational therapy practitioners were recruited to participate in the online questionnaire, through a combination of convenience, snowball, and purposive methods (Dickerson, 2017). The sharable survey link was posted to occupational therapy-related Facebook and LinkedIn pages; the link was shared via snowball method on social media to seven occupational therapy related pages between 10/22/20 and 2/22/2021. Potential respondents were intentionally contacted, via email, with the questionnaire description and link; *CommunOT*, state and regional occupational therapy associations, and personal/colleague contacts assisted in the recruitment process.

All prospective participants were provided information about the purpose of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and a means to contact the lead investigator. Inclusion criteria required the participants to have a valid occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant license and to have an expressed interest in the provision of fieldwork student supervision. Inclusion criteria was verified, and informed consent was obtained through the first survey question. Occupational therapy practitioners without experience or future interest in student supervision were excluded from participation in the questionnaire.

The lead investigator created a thirty-five-question online survey with consensus editing (Kielhofner & Coster, 2017) and distributed it using Microsoft Forms. The survey questions were created based on a review of current literature regarding best practice in fieldwork education. The aim was to collect data regarding demographics and practitioner perceptions toward the implementation of non-traditional supervision models during Level II fieldwork education. Seven questions targeted demographic information including professional designation, years of experience, primary and secondary practice setting, as well as geographical practice region. The remaining questions included a

combination of open and closed ended items; they were focused on prior experience with student mentoring, continuing education related to fieldwork, and practices and preferences associated with a variety of supervisory models. The items were branched; therefore, not all respondents were required to answer every question, reducing the burden of participation.

The survey was piloted with seven colleagues who provided feedback on how accurately the questionnaire measured its intended topics. The questions were refined and reorganized based on observations made during the pilot study; ranking questions were reformatted to Likert scales and duplicate questions were removed for more effective data collection. The tool was determined to have face validity via experts in the field (Kielhofner & Coster, 2017); a thorough review of the survey was completed to ensure the topic under investigation was captured sufficiently. Every effort was made to obtain a large enough sample to generalize findings.

Because it was not known how many individuals were reached via social media sampling efforts, the researchers could not calculate an exact response rate. Of the 309 practitioners who responded, 304 agreed to participate in the online survey indicating a 98% participation rate.

Anonymous response data from the online questionnaire was exported from Microsoft Forms to Excel for further analysis. Results were examined utilizing descriptive and inferential statistics including frequencies, percentages, and *t*-test calculations.

### **Results**

The majority of survey participants were occupational therapists with > 20 years of experience practicing in the Northeast region of the United States (see Table 1). Academia was the largest primary practice area identified, with 23% of responses occurring in this category. Given the potential bias of academic educators to increase placement opportunities and demonstrate innovative methods compared to practitioners focused on productivity and clinical guidelines, the data for each group was analyzed separately and then compared.

**Table 1***Demographic Information*

		Frequency (n)	Percent %
Professional Designation:	OT	277	91
	OTA	27	9
Years of Experience:	<1	5	1.6
	1-4	38	12.5
	5-10	61	20.1
	11-15	45	14.8
	16-20	40	13.2
	>20	115	37.8
Primary Practice Area:	Academia	69	23
	Community	7	2
	EI	9	3
	Outpatient	21	7
	Home Health	14	5
	Hospital	54	18
	LTC / SNF	41	13
	MH	10	3
	Schools	58	19
	Other	21	7
Practice Region:	Northeast	134	44
	Midwest	122	40
	South	30	10
	West	18	6

Respondents had a range of experience with fieldwork-focused continuing education in preparation for student supervision. On average, academics had more continuing education when compared to clinical practitioners; 50.7% of academic practitioners reported having taken AOTA's Fieldwork Educator Certification Program, contrasted with only 28% of clinicians. A total of 39% of respondents stated they had participated in some form of continuing education related to fieldwork. AOTA courses and conferences were the primary means of fieldwork related continuing education for academic respondents while continuing education offerings from partnering academic institutions were the primary means reported by clinical practitioners.

Occupational therapy practitioners were queried on their prior experience with and perception toward the implementation of non-traditional models of supervision in fieldwork education. Questions were focused on eliciting clinicians' attitudes on how varied supervision models prepared students for entry-level practice, receptiveness to employ non-traditional approaches, and associated challenges. Data indicated that 48% of practitioners had never utilized a non-traditional supervision model with Level II

fieldwork students. Respondents who identified as academics had 30% more experience in implementing non-traditional models of supervision in comparison to clinical practitioners for both occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students.

Academic and clinical practitioners agreed that the 1:1 model of supervision prepared both occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students for entry-level practice. The academic and clinical respondents had a statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) difference in opinion related to how the 1:2, 2:1, and group models prepare students for entry-level competency. The most remarkable variation in viewpoint was regarding the group model of supervision; 87.3% of academically focused practitioners thought this model prepared occupational therapy students for entry-level practice whereas only 44.7% of clinical respondents shared this belief. Table 2 summarizes the statistically significant variation in viewpoint between academic and clinical practitioners on model-specific preparation for entry level competency.

**Table 2**

*Variation on Viewpoint Between Academic and Clinical Practitioners on Model-Specific Preparation for Entry-Level Competency*

<b>Model of Supervision (Fieldwork educator: student)</b>	<b>Student Type</b>	<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Percent %</b>	<b>p-value</b>
1:1	OT	Academic	98.5	0.78
		Clinical	97.4	
	OTA	Academic	97.5	
		Clinical	97.9	
2:1	OT	Academic	98.5	<.01*
		Clinical	89.5	
	OTA	Academic	97.5	
		Clinical	83.8	
1:2	OT (2)	Academic	98.4	<.01*
		Clinical	81.9	
	OTA (2)	Academic	97.5	
		Clinical	76	
	OT/OTA	Academic	94.8	
		Clinical	73.2	
Group	OT	Academic	87.3	<.01*
		Clinical	44.7	
	OTA	Academic	79.5	
		Clinical	44.1	

\* Indicates statistical significance at  $p < .01$

Respondents were asked to state their current receptiveness to implementing each of the supervisory models with Level II fieldwork students in their respective practice area. The 1:1 traditional model received high ratings with 99.6% of clinically focused and 100% of academically focused practitioners stating receptiveness to implement the model. Overall, the academic practitioners were more receptive to the use of non-traditional supervision models. Clinically focused respondents were more responsive to the 2:1 model than the 1:2 or group models. Academic and clinically focused practitioners had a statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) difference in opinion regarding their current receptiveness to implement non-traditional models of supervision which is summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Variation on Viewpoint Between Academic and Clinical Practitioners on Receptiveness to Utilize Specific Models*

<b>Model of Supervision (Fieldwork educator: student)</b>	<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Percent %</b>	<b>p-value</b>
1:1	Academic	100	0.59
	Clinical	99.6	
2:1	Academic	96.5	<.01*
	Clinical	78.3	
1:2 (2 OTs)	Academic	94.2	<.01*
	Clinical	60	
1:2 (2 OTAs)	Academic	85.5	<.01*
	Clinical	53.9	
1:2 (1 OTs, 1 OTAs)	Academic	91.3	<.01*
	Clinical	51.9	
Group	Academic	75.4	<.01*
	Clinical	24.3	

\* Indicates statistical significance at  $p < .01$

Academic and clinical practitioners consistently identified the same benefits associated with the supervision of fieldwork students using non-traditional models. 99% of academic practitioners and 82% of clinical practitioners indicated that non-traditional supervision models facilitate active learning and independent thinking. Additionally, 99% of academics and 88% of clinically focused respondents reported that non-traditional supervision models facilitate communication skills and teamwork. Table 4 provides a summary of practitioner opinions on the benefits related to non-traditional models of fieldwork supervision.

**Table 4***Perceived Benefits Associated with Non-Traditional Supervision Models*

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>1:2 Model</b>	<b>2:1 Model</b>	<b>Group Model</b>
<i>Decreased workload for FWE</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Allows for part-time clinicians to be FWEs</i>		✓	
<i>Exposure to diverse documentation, treatment, communication, and supervision styles</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Exposure to collaborative learning</i>	✓		✓
<i>Development of effective communication and teamwork skills</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Positive net effects on FWE productivity</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Increased placement availability</i>	✓	✓	✓

Note: FWE= Fieldwork Educator

The entire sample was examined to identify perceived barriers to implementing non-traditional supervision models; the top three challenges were: time commitment, lack of physical resources, and lack of education. The responses of the clinicians who had actually experienced utilizing non-traditional supervision models were then analyzed separately. The top three barriers experienced were: time commitment, lack of physical resources, and student preparation. To ensure confirmability of barriers, this section was addressed with open-ended statements (Dillaway, Lysack & Luborsky, 2017).

### **Discussion**

Non-traditional models of supervision offer the potential to provide students with valuable learning opportunities while expanding fieldwork capacity. The 1:2, 2:1, and group models are more collaborative in nature, facilitate communication skills, and foster a team approach (Overton et al., 2009). Survey respondents agreed with current literature that these supervision models provide students with a more diverse, cooperative experience, reflective of the skills necessary to enter the workforce (Overton et al., 2009; Wilske, 2016).

When the 2:1 model is employed, students are able to observe, assess, and apply varied approaches to the occupational therapy process, which encourages self-reflection and the development of a student's own personal, therapeutic style. This model facilitates increased opportunity for development of communication skills, time management, and flexibility. The role of the student requires autonomy, self-directed

learning, and assistance in coordinating the structure of the placement. One respondent pointed out the parallel experience of the 2:1 model to the working world, given staffing limitations and productivity demands; it is rare that one occupational therapy mentor is assigned to one new graduate practitioner. Newly employed therapists must be able to communicate their needs and questions as a mentee, develop flexibility when learning from multiple colleagues, and demonstrate their time management skills in balancing work responsibilities with educational experiences. The 2:1 model, therefore, may positively facilitate the skills necessary to transition from student to entry-level practitioner, and help develop confident new members of a collaborative therapy team.

Study participants reported value in the collaborative nature of the 1:2 and group models. A stated benefit of the 1:2 model was the ability for students to cooperatively practice evaluation and treatment skills prior to attempting independently. This collaboration facilitates development of communication skills in a professional setting and prepares students for co-treating/evaluating as a member of an interdisciplinary team. Additionally, survey respondents identified that a benefit of the 1:2 model is that students can further refine their peer reviewing skills, by assessing their partner's strengths and weaknesses. This extra practice with assessment may develop the student's professional communication and clinical observation skills. The group model offers similar benefits to those discussed with the 1:2 model; but adds further range of diversity among peers and supervisor interaction. In a group model, the students are able to observe and interact with multiple personalities and styles within the dynamics of the group which replicates being a team member.

While respondents to this study identified many benefits of utilizing non-traditional supervision models, the results also highlighted why these methods are not frequently implemented. To further understand occupational therapy practitioners' current knowledge, readiness to implement, and perceived challenges associated with non-traditional supervision models four key findings will be detailed further; the difference in opinion between academic and clinical respondents, the discrepancy between viewpoint on supervision model and receptiveness to implement, barriers to model usage, and lack of available training and resources.

### **Academic Versus Clinical Practitioner Viewpoints**

There was a significant disparity in opinion between academic and clinical occupational therapy practitioners on student outcomes related to the 1:2, 2:1, and group models. Overall, the academic practitioners felt that non-traditional models adequately prepare students for entry-level competence. The clinical respondents were less confident in use of the 1:2 and group models with regards to student preparation. Generally, academic practitioners were more experienced and informed on non-traditional approaches allowing for programs to utilize creative models; however, it is not enough – non-traditional supervision models need to become more mainstream. To truly expand the use of non-traditional supervision models and provide an increased number of fieldwork opportunities in traditional practice settings more clinical practitioners need to be

knowledgeable and comfortable regarding their use. The field of occupational therapy has become comfortable with the status quo. Faculty continue to teach students the way they themselves learned, and their mentors before them. It is time to disrupt the status quo and emerge with newer, exciting learning opportunities.

### **Discrepancy Between Viewpoint on Supervision Model and Receptiveness to Implement**

The results demonstrated a discrepancy between the percentage of practitioners who believe a model prepares students for entry-level competency and those receptive to implement said model. Occupational therapy professionals generally agree that non-traditional supervision models prepare students for entry-level competency, however they are not as consistently open to the actual usage. For example, 81.9% of clinically focused practitioners agreed that the 1:2 model, when used with two occupational therapy students, adequately prepares students for entry-level practice whereas only 60% stated they were receptive to utilize it with their fieldwork students. This inconsistency proved true for views on the 2:1, 1:2 (2 occupational therapy assistant students and 1 occupational therapist/1 occupational therapy assistant), and group models. If occupational therapy practitioners agree that non-traditional supervision models adequately prepare students for entry level practice, then why is there a disparity in receptiveness to instruct students using these formats?

### **Barriers to Model Use**

The barriers identified in this study were consistent with those named in the literature (Hanson & Deluliis, 2015). In 2015, Hanson and Deluliis reported lack of understanding and unfamiliarity as the greatest obstacles to the utilization of non-traditional supervision models. The respondents who were inexperienced with non-traditional supervision models confirmed that lack of education was among the top three barriers interfering with implementation. This confirms the need for formal education and training on the topic. It appears that fieldwork educators desire specific education and knowledge to feel adequately prepared to successfully implement alternative models.

It is disappointing that the same obstacles have been discussed in occupational therapy literature for many years, but still a lack of resources exist. If there is an established, formalized training, then it is not accessible enough or adequately advertised. AOTA's Fieldwork Educator Certification Program (FWECP) briefly touches upon non-traditional models of supervision; the manual specifically, offers one slide stating 1:1, 1:2, 2:1, and group models as *OT-Specific Supervision Formats* (Costa, 2014). Non-traditional supervision models are a small part of the broad material covered in the course; therefore, participants may not retain information as effortlessly in comparison to a more extensively covered topic. Likewise, the AOTA website lists alternative supervision models under the *Recommendations for Expanding Fieldwork* section (AOTA, 2020), but no specific guidelines are provided.

### **Lack of Available Training and Resources**

The results of this research study highlight the significant lack of formal education surrounding non-traditional models of fieldwork supervision. Surprisingly, less than half of all study respondents (39%) reported having participated in continuing education related to fieldwork supervision. Of the participants eligible to accept fieldwork students in a clinical setting, even less (28%) had taken AOTA's Fieldwork Educator Certificate Program. These figures indicate that not only is education lacking concerning non-traditional supervision, but participation in any fieldwork or supervision related training is limited.

For alternative models to be applied successfully, there must first be awareness, followed by education and guidance demonstrating model application. Academic fieldwork coordinators have been attempting to bring attention to this issue for over twenty years with minimal impact. We must call our national and state organizations to action. Academics understand the imperative nature of thorough training including benefits, challenges, and expectations of a supervision model prior to participation – this education must start from the top. Improper preparation may lead to a negative experience for all involved – students and fieldwork educators alike, thus perpetuating the cycle of non-use.

### **Limitations**

Findings from this study should be interpreted in light of its limitations. Although we aimed for a wide diversity among participants, an even greater range in terms of geographic location and occupational therapy assistant response rate may have further supported the generalizability of the findings; an expanded sample size including more practitioners from the South and Western regions of the United States would have led to a more comprehensive representation.

### **Implications for Occupational Therapy Education**

Fieldwork educators need to feel adequately prepared and supported for non-traditional supervision models to be effective. Such preparation will increase the likelihood that fieldwork educators will be comfortable and consider using non-traditional supervision models. Clinical practitioners reported educational offerings from partnering academic institutions as their primary means of fieldwork-related continuing education; fieldwork partners are relying on academic fieldwork coordinators to provide the education and guidance necessary to feel successful in mentoring students using non-traditional supervision approaches. Three practical recommendations will be detailed further.

### ***Promoting Non-Traditional Model Usage***

At a minimum, academic fieldwork coordinators need to spread positive awareness, celebrate successes, and advocate for usage of non-traditional supervision models. Hosting webinars, distributing articles, and writing up “success stories” to share with fieldwork partners are simple ways to promote these non-traditional models. Given time constraints and management of multiple job responsibilities, fieldwork coordinators could recruit student assistance from the Student Occupational Therapy Organization (SOTA), current fieldwork students, and/or alumni in sharing their positive experiences

with non-traditional models. Individual institutions, fieldwork consortiums, and/or state associations could aid this cause by posting brief “supervision spotlights” on social media pages highlighting a variety of supervisory methods. Given their national audience, AOTA should take a similar approach via social media, their webpage, and annual events to promote non-traditional supervision models with increased visibility.

### **Conducting Site Assessments**

It is recommended that academic fieldwork coordinators work with already existing fieldwork partners to evaluate if sites are able to accommodate students utilizing non-traditional models. Certain programs and practice settings may be more conducive to implementing such approaches given staffing patterns, the volume of clients, intervention philosophy utilized, and space/resource allotment. For example, an inpatient psychiatric hospital unit may easily accommodate multiple students as there is typically a large, varied caseload and therapy primarily takes a group approach. Understanding the philosophy and capacity of partnering sites provides valuable information for fieldwork coordinators. A thorough assessment, in collaboration with the site, may reveal potential to increase placement volume and to aid in student preparation for fieldwork at the facility.

### **Developing Educational Materials**

There are limited published resources and continuing education courses focused specifically on the successful implementation of non-traditional supervision approaches. Development of educational materials is vital to the success of implementing non-traditional supervision models.

**Fact Sheets.** It is recommended that a series of fact sheets defining each model be created; fact sheets can be easily distributed (both virtually and physically) and used as quick-reference guides for fieldwork educators. Information highlighting the benefits of the specific model, strategies for success, the role of the involved parties, and fieldwork assignments should be included. In addition, a model-specific suggested progression, laid out week by week, would be useful in guiding fieldwork educators to ensure students are on target with expectations.

**Short Courses.** AOTA’s Fieldwork Educator Certificate Program offers extensive, valuable information on increasing one’s skills to provide high-quality fieldwork opportunities; fieldwork educators should be encouraged and supported in completing the certification program. However, given the expansive amount of material requiring coverage in this course, minimal time is spent, and limited information is provided on non-traditional supervision models. It would be beneficial for supplemental short courses or “special interest” topics to be created to compliment the certificate program. Modules may include such topics as implementation of non-traditional supervision models, working with students with disabilities, addressing the needs of challenging students, among other topics. Perhaps completion of modules could equate to an “advanced” fieldwork educator certificate as the units would delve deeper into more intensive fieldwork related topics.

**Manual of Non-Traditional Models.** Ideally, a manual of non-traditional models with guidelines and specific examples would be created and disseminated with the support of our national organization.

### Future Research

The results of this study provide a significant contribution to fieldwork education. Understanding the barriers to implementing non-traditional supervision models from a fieldwork educator perspective is critical to the usage of these models. Results indicate the need to develop educational modules to better support fieldwork partners in successfully utilizing non-traditional supervision models. Additional research is needed to determine how providing continuing education specific to non-traditional models will influence the willingness of clinicians to accept and mentor students using such styles. Research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of learning modules once created. This type of research would aid in the ongoing advancement of educational programming for fieldwork partners.

### Conclusion

For non-traditional fieldwork supervision models to be successful, there must be adequate preparation, clear expectations, and effective communication. All key stakeholders, including the academic program, fieldwork coordinators, fieldwork educators, and students, must be equipped with education on the benefits and thorough training regarding the process of participation in non-traditional supervision models prior to implementation. The results of this study indicate that clinical practitioners, serving as fieldwork educators, rely on partnering academic institutions as their primary means for continuing education offerings related to fieldwork. Academic fieldwork coordinators, with the support of state and national occupational therapy organizations, must take responsibility for educating fieldwork partners on the use of non-traditional fieldwork supervision models to promote success and positive student outcomes. For this to be possible, academic programs must support their fieldwork coordinators through release time and physical resources.

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