
FORENSIC SUPERVISION ESSENTIALS

A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR
SUPERVISORS,
POSTDOCTORAL
RESIDENTS, AND
PREDOCTORAL
INTERNS

DR. DOUGLAS E. LEWIS, JR.

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PROFESSIONAL OVERVIEW

Dr. Douglas E. Lewis, Jr.

Dr. Lewis has served as a consultant for court personnel, training programs, and various industry leaders. He has performed court-ordered evaluations for justice-involved adolescents and adults and has directly supervised post-doctoral residents in forensic psychology across correctional facilities, forensic state hospitals, military behavioral health units, and court-based settings. His approach to supervision and assessment places special emphasis on case conceptualization from an ecological systems perspective, leading to real-world, individualized training recommendations and structured professional development plans. Equally, Dr. Lewis is committed to following the truth wherever it may lead. His foremost research focuses on best practices and innovations for the delivery of jail-based competency restoration services. Dr. Lewis is licensed in multiple states and serves as an expert witness for the Juvenile, State, and Federal Courts.



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IN MEMORIAM TO THOSE WHO *Helped & Inspired*

I curated this guidebook, a collection of information and resources for aspiring psychologists, to honor the invaluable impact of United States Air Force veteran **Aisha Abdul-Rahim** and Distinguished Professor of Psychology, **Dr. Kaprice R. Thomas**. **Aisha**, my maternal cousin, advised me often concerning my pursuits as a military psychologist, and it was her 20+ years of service, to include deployment during the Iraq War, that inspired me to direct commission. **Kaprice**, my longtime mentor and dear friend, was a licensed attorney and psychologist, whom I often depended on throughout my journey to becoming a forensic psychologist. Tragically, I lost both of these trailblazing women on the same day in early 2024. Their work, integrity, wisdom, and fortitude will live on through me and my future works.

Because of them, I intimately understand the benefits of mentorship, and I hope this guidebook will be a useful tool for those considering or seeking to enter this rewarding field.

Dr. Lewis

ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook was developed through a careful synthesis of peer-reviewed literature, structured conversations with trainees, and firsthand testimonials from professionals working in forensic and clinical settings. It is further informed by lived professional experience within forensic-clinical environments, allowing for a practical and applied perspective that extends beyond theory alone. The goal of this resource is to translate complex knowledge into accessible, practice-oriented guidance for those navigating similar professional spaces. While every effort was made to ensure accuracy and relevance, the material presented reflects a curated selection of insights rather than an exhaustive tool for forensic supervision. As such, readers are encouraged to view this guidebook as a springboard for continued learning, critical thinking, and professional development. It is intended to complement, not replace, ongoing education, supervision, and evolving evidence-based practices.

*Special thanks to **Julian Victor Mendoza**, without whom this work could not have been produced.

INTRODUCTION

Forensic psychology tends to occur in **high-stakes environments** where clinical decision-making must navigate distinct operational systems. Best practices in psychological supervision inform us that supervisors should establish clear expectations through a written informed consent document, commonly called the **supervision contract**, from the first day of training. This contract serves as the foundation for ethical, competent, and contextually informed practice.

Without it, misalignment may arise in roles, competencies, boundaries, evaluation criteria, and system-specific demands. This guide equips forensic supervisors with a **practical framework** to draft a robust informed consent document and provides ongoing reference tools for the entire training year.

Supervisors should select a theoretical framework to drive all supervisory activities. For the purpose of this guidebook, I have grounded supervisory activities in the context of **ecological systems theory**. This theory emphasizes culturally and contextually informed case conceptualization. Further, it explicitly differentiates forensic-clinical competencies (psycholegal reasoning, malingering assessment, expert testimony preparation) from institutional and operational knowledge (chain-of-command protocols, security expectations, unit readiness).

By weaving the core features of forensic supervision (distinct professional competency, legal defensibility, ethical gatekeeping, and trauma-informed awareness) directly into the supervision contract, this eBook transforms the informed consent process from a mere administrative checkbox into a **living roadmap**.

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What is Forensic Supervision?

Forensic supervision is a structured, collaborative professional activity in which a **qualified forensic psychologist oversees the training and practice of trainees** (or early-career psychologists) engaged in psycholegal work.

It integrates:

- Psycholegal reasoning
- Legal knowledge application
- Ethical gatekeeping in justice-system contexts
- Clinical skill development

(Adapted from Hunt et al., 2024; Hodges et al., 2025)

Key Objectives

Supervisors and trainees will be able to:

- Define forensic supervision and its core purposes
- Differentiate forensic supervision from clinical supervision
- Articulate why forensic supervision is uniquely demanding and essential
- Use the foundations to draft and implement a clear informed consent document for postdoctoral residents

This guide serves as both a **training roadmap** and a **living reference** you can revisit throughout the training year.

Core Features

- Distinct professional competency (not an add-on to clinical supervision)
- Focuses on producing work that is both clinically sound and legally defensible
- Emphasizes the supervisor's dual role as educator and gatekeeper to the profession and the courts



Supervisor vs. Trainee

Supervisor

- Teacher, mentor, evaluator, gatekeeper, and supporter
- Ensures legal defensibility of all trainee work
- Models objectivity, bias management, and courtroom readiness
- Monitors for secondary trauma and ethical drift

Trainee

- Active learner who integrates psychological science with legal standards
- Develops competencies in forensic interviewing, report writing, risk assessment, and testimony preparation
- Engages in reflective practice and self-monitoring of personal reactions

Primary Goals

Competency Development

- Mastery of forensic-specific knowledge and skills

Legal Defensibility

- Production of reports and testimony that withstand Daubert/Frye scrutiny and cross-examination

Ethical Practice

- Navigation of dual loyalty, objectivity, and APA Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology

Professional Identity Formation

- Development of a forensic psychologist identity that balances clinical expertise with legal-system demands

(Hunt et al., 2024; Hodges et al., 2025)



Forensic vs. Clinical Supervision

| ASPECT | CLINICAL SUPERVISION | FORENSIC SUPERVISION |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Primary Client | The therapy client | The court / retaining party / justice system |
| Focus | Therapeutic alliance & client welfare | Psycholegal question & legal admissibility |
| Documentation | Progress notes, treatment plans | Detailed, transparent, defensible reports |
| Adversarial Context | Rare | Routine (cross-examination, opposing experts) |
| Emotional Demands | Moderate | High (trauma exposure, moral injury risk) |
| Legal Knowledge Required | Minimal | Extensive (case law, statutes, evidentiary rules) |

(Hunt et al., 2024 – “Forensic psychology is different”)

Why Forensic Supervision is Unique

Forensic work occurs at the intersection of psychology and law, creating demands not present in clinical settings:

- High-Stakes Scrutiny (reports and testimony subject to public, judicial, and ethical review)
- Legal Complexity (must align opinions with specific legal criteria)
- Dual-Role Tensions (balancing therapeutic empathy with objective evaluation)
- Adversarial System (every opinion may be vigorously challenged)
- Trauma Exposure (routine contact with violent, sexual, or victim-related material)

(Adapted from Hunt et al., 2024; Hodges et al., 2025)



Supporting Evidence

Hunt et al. (2024)

- Forensic supervision requires **tailored competencies** in legal standards, courtroom communication, and adversarial navigation.

Hodges et al. (2025)

- Survey of 90 forensic supervisors/supervisees identified **10 core competency domains** and **15 performance outcomes** unique to forensic practice (quality of forensic report writing ranked #1).

Goldenson et al. (2025)

- Highlights the need for **trauma-informed supervision** due to routine exposure to traumatic material.

Current clinical supervision models are necessary but insufficient for forensic training.

Key Components to Include

- Explicit statement that this is forensic supervision (distinct from clinical)
- Supervisor's dual-role as educator and gatekeeper to the profession/courts
- Expectations for legally defensible work, courtroom readiness, and bias management
- Acknowledgment of routine trauma exposure and supervisor's duty to monitor secondary trauma
- Trainee responsibilities such as reflective practice, self-monitoring of reactions, and openness to feedback.
- Limits of confidentiality (e.g., ethical gatekeeping may require reporting concerns to training directors or boards)
- Evaluation process, remediation pathways, and due process rights

Sample Opening Paragraph (adapt to your jurisdiction):

"This informed consent outlines the unique nature of forensic supervision, which differs from clinical supervision in its primary allegiance to the court, emphasis on legal defensibility, and exposure to adversarial and traumatic material. By signing, you acknowledge these demands and agree to engage fully in the supervisory process."

Guidance for the Training Year

- Revisit the informed consent and primary goals at every quarterly review.
- Schedule dedicated time for reflective practice and secondary trauma check-ins.
- Use the “Core Features” and “Forensic vs. Clinical” tables as ongoing self-assessment tools.
- Model and require documentation that is transparent and court-ready from day one.
- For residents/interns, keep a supervision journal noting how you apply psycholegal reasoning and manage dual-role tensions.



Key Takeaways

Forensic supervision is a distinct competency requiring purpose, precision, and awareness. A strong informed consent document protects everyone and sets the stage for ethical, defensible practice.

Refer to this guide monthly. Going beyond the checklist begins with clarity from the first day.

(Adapted from Hunt et al., 2024; Hodges et al., 2025; Goldenson et al., 2025)



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- Issues related to forensic supervision
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Development of Jail-Based Competency Programs

- Design, implementation, and oversight of competency restoration programs
- Program evaluation, monitoring, and outcome improvement
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