

# Use of Virtual Communication During Level II Fieldwork: A Personal Experience

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## Learning Objectives

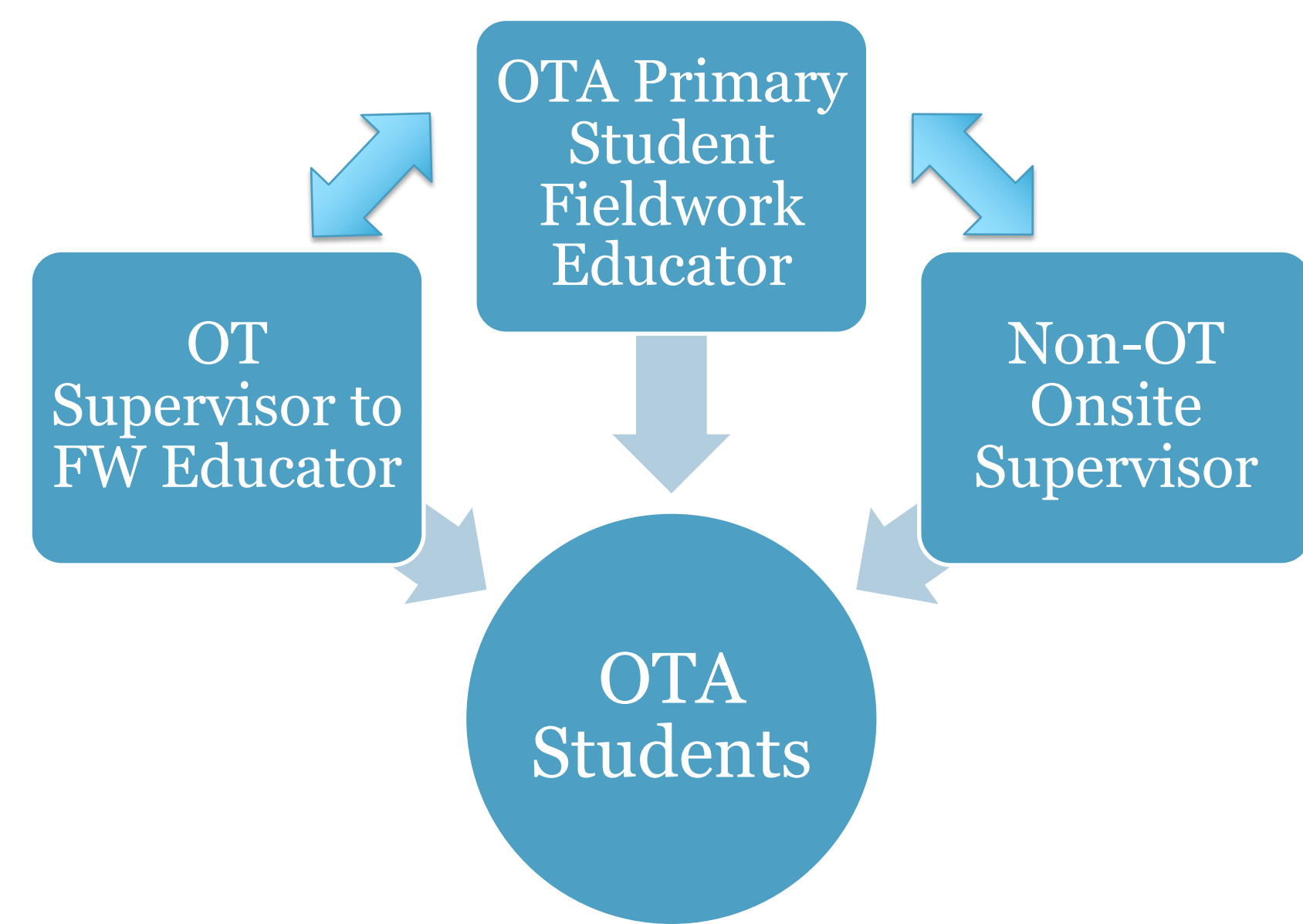
1. Review requirements for supervision in community based fieldwork (FW) sites where no occupational therapy practitioner (OTP) is employed
2. Identify communication barriers during Level II FW in community based settings
3. Identify at least three methods of virtual communication and how it translates into practice
4. Identify strategies for occupational therapy assistant (OTA) supervision from an occupational therapist (OT) while supervising Level II fieldwork students in a community setting

## Abstract

In fieldwork sites where no full time OTP is employed, a fieldwork student requires 8 hours a week of onsite supervision from an OTP. An onsite supervisor of another profession must be available while the OTP is offsite. The other professional is unable to answer questions related directly to occupational therapy (OT) practice. This poster describes virtual communication methods used during a level II fieldwork at a community based wellness program for older adults and how these methods translate to OT/OTA supervision in practice.

## Supervision in Community Based Fieldwork

The American Council for Occupational Therapy Accreditation (ACOTE) stipulates that in community based fieldwork sites where no full time occupational therapy practitioner (OTP) is employed, level II fieldwork students require a minimum of 8 hours a week of onsite supervision and daily contact with OTP supervisor (ACOTE, 2018). The standard also stipulates that a designated onsite supervisor of another profession be available while the OTP supervisor is offsite (ACOTE, 2018).



### OTA Primary Student FW Educator

- 8 hours onsite per week
- Daily virtual communication with OTA students
- Daily as needed and weekly face to face contact with OT supervisor
- Daily as needed and weekly face to face with onsite supervisor
- Demonstrate role of OTP in setting
- Demonstrate OT/OTA supervisory relationship to students
- Check and respond to daily student journal entries

### OT Supervisor to FW Educator

- Daily as needed and weekly face to face with OTA FW Educator
- Communicate with students and onsite supervisor as needed
- Demonstrate OT/OTA supervisory relationship to students

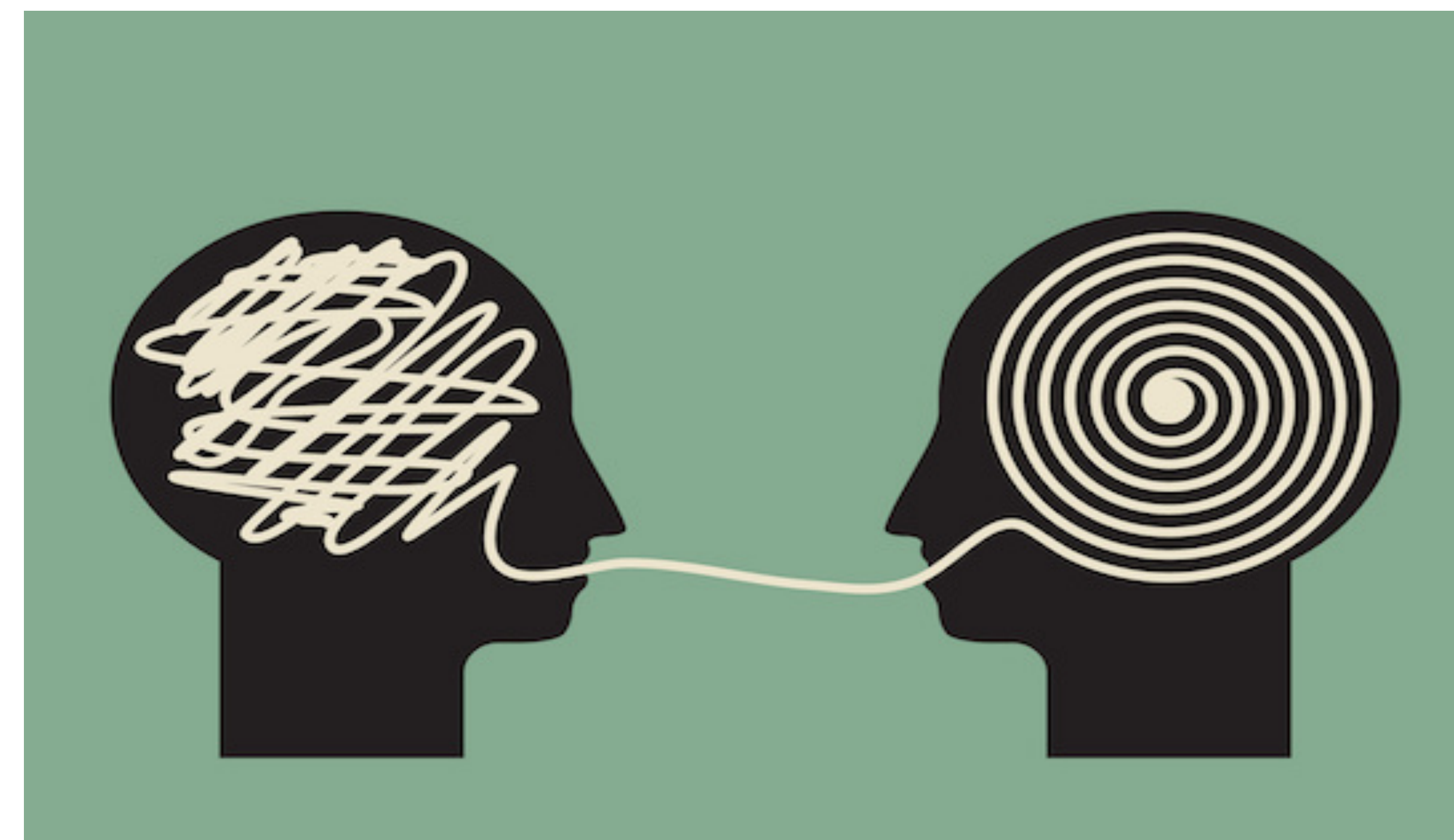
### Non-OT Onsite Supervisor

- Communicates to OTA FW Educator regarding student performance
- Ensure needs of clients/participants are met through OTA student programming
- Assesses student competence with professional behaviors and site expectations

## Communication Barriers

- Written communication is time consuming
- Students need to be aware of tone and professionalism of email content
- Students need to ensure use of proper grammar and spelling
- OT specific questions and dilemmas may be too complicated to be in written form
- Student's discernment of what to communicate to offsite OT/OTA supervisor
- OTP supervisor can't always sense the students' clinical reasoning process in written communication
- Students need for timely feedback

(Kim et. al., 2016)



## Types of Virtual/Offsite Communication Platforms

FaceTime	Skype	Google hangouts	Zoom
Text message	Video message recording	Email	Phone call

Virtual communication platforms that favor face to face or voiced communication allow for ideas to be conveyed verbally and recorded to be accessed by the supervisor at a more convenient time. It gives students an opportunity to practice professional verbal communication, review it and reflect to see if it needs to be re-recorded. Tone and clarity issues are decreased as the platforms allow the supervisor to see and hear the message and how it's conveyed.

## Virtual Communication Barriers

- Poor internet connection and/or poor cell service
- Lack of student access to personal virtual communication platforms
- Students' ability to discern the appropriate communication platform for the specific issues
- Email cultural or language differences can cause misunderstandings
- Issues with tone and clarity in email
- Time consuming nature of written communication

## Relationship to Practice

- ✓ The experience of a Level II FW student in a nontraditional/community based site mimics that of an OTA who is supervised by an offsite supervisor. These virtual methods can be used to enhance OT/ OTA supervisory relationships and partnerships.
- ✓ Students exposed to these various methods of communication become practitioners who are more comfortable with virtual supervision vs. face to face, which for many is how they will be supervised in practice. They can identify what virtual supervision method works best for them and communicate it to their supervising OT. Finally students gain practice and enhance professionalism in virtual communication skills (Rousmaniere,2014).

## Personal Experiences of Virtual Communication

My fieldwork educators and I used many ways to communicate with each other. Daily we communicated through email. In this email, I was able to write how my day went and if I encountered any problems throughout the day. I think this was a great way to communicate. (...) I also liked that we were able to communicate directly on our group protocols that we uploaded to Google docs. We received direct feedback and suggestions on how to modify or upgrade our protocols accordingly. If any of our fieldwork educators were unable to make it to our weekly supervision meeting, we would FaceTime. I believe this also is a great way to communicate.

*Jefferson OTA Student (A)*

I found email communication to be beneficial for day to day happenings and objective concerns. For instances that were more detailed, I preferred methods of virtual communication that allowed for conversation. Telephone calls, Face Time, and recorded video messages allowed me to express my concern entirely without having the feeling that I left out any details. Personally, I prefer to speak with someone whether virtually or in person for complicated matters. I feel that any questions or concerns I had were better answered when verbal dialogue could be exchanged easily. Although email is an easy way to communicate, it isn't always the most time efficient for achieving desired outcomes.(...) I feel context is sometimes lost in email.

*Jefferson OTA Student (B)*

## References

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- Rousmaniere, T., & Renfro-Michel, E. L. (2016). *Using technology to enhance clinical supervision*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.