

The Wraparound Process Curriculum

The Family Guide to Wraparound:
The Short Version



What is Wraparound?

Wraparound is a family driven, strength-based, solution focused planning and problem solving process. It is individualized, which means that every family gets a unique plan that fits them and their beliefs and values, not the cookie cutter plan that everybody else gets. Strength-based means that Wraparound plans help you build on what is working in your life instead of focusing exclusively on what isn't. Family driven means that the plan is centered on you, your whole family and your choices. Wraparound helps families achieve important changes by helping them meet their unmet needs.

The main purpose of Wraparound is to help children and the adults around them have the kinds of lives they want to have or at least get closer to them. When there is failure in school, the Wraparound goal is success in school. When there is dangerous behavior, the Wraparound plan is to replace it with safe behavior. When there are no opportunities, Wraparound finds or creates them.

In other words, Wraparound offers practical compassion to people who need and want to improve their lives. The people who provide it help families organize what they need to achieve those improvements in a sensible way and bring the appropriate people together to help them do it.

How is Wraparound different from traditional services? Unfortunately, one of the traditions in family services is to treat everybody the same. In a traditional service model, professional service providers who are familiar with the kinds of changes people want to make and what they might need to make them create a program. But many parents have seen the following "treat everybody the same" programs over and over again:

- The group home where everybody is on the same point system that gives them or denies them the same privileges.
- The program that limits what is offered to meet one or two particular needs, often in the same way, for everybody in the



program.

- The residential treatment center that requires children to be there for a specific amount of time before they can see their families and friends, the same amount of time for everyone in the program, no matter what.
- The counseling or therapy program that gives everybody the same kind of counseling and therapy without considering what type best suits each one.
- The parent training program that teaches all the same parenting techniques to everybody who participates, no matter what their circumstances are.
- The drug treatment and rehabilitation program that kicks out participants who relapse despite the research and other evidence which indicates that anywhere from 70% - 90% of recovering people relapse in their first year of trying to stay clean.¹
- The in home program that uses exclusively behavioral interventions, many of them the same for every family that participates.
- The program that lasts exactly the same amount of time for every family it serves, regardless of the complexity of their unmet needs.

Even though these programs are less successful than programs that treat each family as unique, almost all of the people who create them mean well. Many are skilled, smart and compassionate. But still, some of the programs work and others don't. Some of the program designers get it right and others don't.



Here's what happens in traditional, "treat everybody the same" programs:

People find out about a program and decide to try it.



The Family



The Program

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No matter who goes into the program, the program stays the same. It either fits the family, which is great...



Or, it doesn't fit...



In traditional services, if your family doesn't fit in the program – the box – you go to another program.



You keep going from box to box until something fits or you take what they offer even if it doesn't fit. Hopefully it will work but it might not. That's the risk we take when what we offer people doesn't match who they are and what they need.

In Wraparound, the service providers don't design a program. They meet families...



...and design a unique, tailored plan to fit each one:



That makes it much more likely that the plan – and the program that helps you create it - will work.

Why Wraparound



The Parents (including everyone in a parenting role)

Parents turn to Wraparound for lots of different reasons. Some are concerned that something might be wrong with their child or at least different in a way that worries or bothers them. Others feel that their child presents challenges they weren't expecting. Like many other caregivers, the parents believe that their child represents blessings and opportunities that others may not see or appreciate. For all of them, despite their differences, most of the parents believe that there are issues with their child and that help is needed.

Sometimes parents see their child as out-of-control or think the child's behavior is dangerous or destructive. The child may be having problems at school. There may be incidents of stealing, assault, alcohol and drug abuse and unsafe sex. Still other parents watch their children spend time with the wrong kinds of friends or become part of gang-related or criminal activity. Some parents are just plain panicked because their children are harming themselves, starving themselves or even trying to end their lives.

The Youth

Youth also come to Wraparound for different reasons. They sometimes feel like everybody is all over them, all the time, making a big deal about whatever they're doing. Lots of them want to be left alone and allowed to make their own decisions, no matter what those decisions are. Some of the youth are angry at nearly everybody they know.

Other young people are scared, lonely and feel like they don't have a chance to be happy. Some are bullied and some are bullies. Some are sad, socially isolated and feel like they don't fit in. They often blame themselves for everything bad that



happens to them. These youth are failing quietly and although they don't necessarily come to the attention of helpers, they may later because they begin to act out their pain.

Other young people come to Wraparound because they can't communicate or don't have good relationships with other people; many more struggle with life-altering disabilities and complex medical needs. Lots (if not all) of them want to have better days, better relationships and ways to really express themselves. They want to be optimistic and hope for a great future but they sometimes think that those things, for them, are forever out of reach.



Wraparound for children with complex healthcare needs

In other situations, families turn to Wraparound because they need help but what's available doesn't fit them or meet their real needs. Many deal with complex disabilities, complicated technology, medications and a wide variety of supportive equipment. These parents and children also want change. They want to live together in their homes but they want it to be safer and easier for them to do so. They want to participate in their communities and they'd like to be able to do it without service

interruptions, long waits for the things they need and multiple bureaucratic nightmares. For them, Wraparound provides the structure that turns little pieces of service into coordinated plans by creating and convening teams that include everybody who is helping out.

Mandated Wraparound: When Wraparound is Required

Other times, Wraparound starts with people outside the family asking for and sometimes requiring the child, family or both to change in some way. The child may be at risk of being or was already kicked out of school. The child or the parent may have committed criminal offenses. There may be physical or emotional abuse, neglect or sexual abuse of the child or the child may be assaulting other people, including the parent. Sometimes

these issues are triggered or influenced by mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and addiction or disability in either the child or the adult.

Courts and community agencies have a legal obligation to protect the safety of children, parents and everybody around them. When people are not safe, courts can and usually will require both children and adults to make specific changes in how they act, how they live or both. They monitor whether or not the plans in place to produce the changes actually work. Court officials can force both children and adults to participate in Wraparound or other services and activities. These are usually called mandated services because court officials mandate, or require, people to participate in the services and the people who are required to participate will be in trouble if they don't.

This is fairly new to Wraparound, which started as an approach families sought out and chose. Many of these families were involved in mental health systems, usually because they wanted help for their children, not because they were required to get it. But Wraparound worked so well for so many families, the courts and other authorities adapted it to serve the families in their systems.

Forced Choices

When court orders require that children and families participate in Wraparound, judges, social workers and other court staff may offer the family a choice between Wraparound and something else. This is sometimes called a forced choice: the child can either participate in Wraparound or be placed in residential treatment; the family does Wraparound or risks losing custody of their children.

Forced choices often don't feel like choices to the people who have to make them. It's not the very best way to enter Wraparound but the process usually still works if done correctly.



There are lots of paths to Wraparound and as many different reasons people turn to it as there are paths. It's a flexible process used in lots of different ways. If you decide to try Wraparound, keep reading, make sure

to remember your questions (if your memory works!) or jot down any questions you have, and make sure to get answers that satisfy you.

Community Partners, Inc.

What Should I Expect to Happen in Wraparound?

How it starts depends on whether you have decided to participate in Wraparound or are required to participate:

* Please Note: This list of steps, like most, can only give you an idea about what to expect in your Wraparound plan. What actually happens depends on where you live, who provides your help and your circumstances, especially when you get started, along with a number of other factors. Parents are advised to pay attention to what happens and speak up if you're uncomfortable about anything.

Before Wraparound

INFORMATION AND DECISIONS

Voluntary Wraparound

- You hear about Wraparound somewhere: other parents, online, school, local resource people
- If it sounds interesting or like it might fit you and your family, you find out more by following up on what you've learned and by finding additional sources of information
- If you're interested you usually give someone some basic information about you and your family, by phone, email, surveys or whatever (this may happen more than once)
- They (who it is varies) tell you if you're eligible to be in Wraparound or what you'll need to become eligible.
- You decide if you'll try it and let people know what you have decided.

Mandated Wraparound

- You or your family are required to be involved with courts and agencies that are part of the government because of what is going on (or what they think is going on) in your lives.
- You and your family have to go to court or are required to attend an official meeting of some kind
- Professionals from a variety of backgrounds talk about what they *think is going on* with you and your family and what they think *should happen instead*
- The authorities tell you what you and your family are required to do next or you are offered a forced choice between limited options and you choose Wraparound.

Preparing for Wraparound

LINKING UP WITH WRAPAROUND PEOPLE

What happens next is pretty much the same for everybody who participates, voluntarily or not:

- They (who exactly varies) assign a person to start your Wraparound process and that person will get in touch with you and make an appointment to meet you. Sometimes, more than one person is assigned to you. They may be each others' back up or their roles may be different. They're supposed to fill you in on who does what. The Wraparound person may be called a facilitator, social worker, court counselor, case manager, family specialist, parent partner, family liaison or any other of a number of titles. (The title *Facilitator* will be used throughout the rest of this document.)



Note: In some places, you'll have a meeting with an evaluator, probably before you meet the people assigned to help you develop your family's Wraparound plan. Evaluators are not in Wraparound. Their responsibility is to measure how well or poorly Wraparound is working. To do that, they have to talk to you before Wraparound starts. You'll be asked to talk to them again from time to time. Evaluators don't tell people what they hear in these conversations. What you say is counted and added to what other people have said but it is always anonymous. Your participation in evaluation helps improve Wraparound for you, your family and everybody else involved.

- Next, the Wraparound Facilitator comes (usually) to meet you and your child and as many others as you wish to include. Here are some of the things that may happen at that meeting:
 - The Facilitator will explain Wraparound in more detail and answer your questions (very likely)
 - You will be asked to sign forms (extremely likely) about who the people helping you can talk to and what records they will be allowed to read (medical files, school records, assessments, evaluations and court reports). This will hopefully be the last time you sign forms but don't count on it.

ASSESSMENT

Strengths and Relationships

- You will participate in a strengths assessment with the Facilitator or the helper who is visiting you (likely) or at least begin one (very likely). This works best when your children and the people close to you participate but that's your choice unless the authorities require otherwise.
- This is often a good experience for families. The main point of this particular assessment is to learn about what you believe, what you like to do, how you cope, who you love, what you celebrate, what you hope for and what's important to you and your family. It can be a little tough to talk about your strengths, especially if you're stressed or concerned about things. Some people even feel a little shy. It's important information for your plan so it's advisable to do your best and help your children do their best to answer the questions in your strengths assessment.
- During the same conversation, you will be asked about who you want to include in your Wraparound team (extremely likely). Again, it's your choice unless the courts say you have to include certain people (probation officer or protective services worker, for example). This group of people will help you develop and implement your Wraparound plan. You should suggest anybody you think could be helpful. You should also be allowed to refuse certain people, but there are exceptions (like the people described above, if you are in mandated services or under a court order).

If you are not comfortable with the idea of having a team, you are not alone.

It's a newer idea in human services and people aren't used to it yet. Make sure the Facilitator and the other people around you know how you feel. You (usually) have the right to refuse the team if you are strongly against it.



Still, it's considered an important part of Wraparound and there are good reasons for that. The team allows the help you and your family receive to be coordinated and easier to arrange. It's also a useful way to bring needed resource people together and it allows participants to share the work that is part of your plan.

- You will be asked (very likely) if you and your family are currently in crisis and whether or not you are all safe. If there is a safety risk of any kind, the Facilitator (and the other people who are working with you) will help you develop a safety plan. If you are in crisis or consider a crisis likely in the immediate future, the Facilitator will help you develop a crisis plan. Many times, big changes in your and your family's life trigger these crises. If that's true for your family, the Facilitator will help you develop a transition plan to help you ease the stress of change.

Crisis, safety and transition plans (and sometimes all three) are important first steps in Wraparound. They're so important, you should speak up right away if your helpers leave them out.

Remember that they are just that, though – first steps. Expect to build on your plans for crises, risks and change as you and your family and the people who are working with you get to know each other. Remember, throughout Wraparound planning, you are always encouraged to bring up risks you or any member of your family may face.



What happens next depends on the program you're working with or on how Wraparound is done in your area. Generally, though, if you or anyone in your family have made mistakes that courts and other government agencies are in charge of, you will have fewer choices. This is true even if you don't think you should have to report to the authorities. If no one in your family is in trouble, you'll have more choices.

As previously noted, in this guide, certain ways of doing Wraparound are identified as best practices for Wraparound and others as Wraparound variations. How they are described represents the author's opinion, which

is based on years of experience as a mom, a clinician, a receptive listener and a Wraparound practitioner.

Best Practice Wraparound	Wraparound Variations
<p>In some programs, you pick the initial team and start out with them. The team develops over the first 12 weeks or so. More people join when your developing plan includes them and what they do. For example, if it turns out that your plan includes a mentor for your child and a job coach for you, both the mentor and the job coach may join your Wraparound team. They also may not. Two months after you begin, you and your team (or just you) may decide that a family member needs a special type of support. When that happens, the person who provides the support is usually invited to be part of the team. By then, you may not need a job coach anymore so the job coach leaves the team. In best practice Wraparound, every team is different and every team changes over time.</p>	<p>In some programs, picking your team is sort of like saying “okay” to a list of people the professionals suggest. It may be the only team you get. That’s one of the ways Wraparound is offered, even though it’s not exactly Wraparound.</p>
<p>In some programs, people are considered team members if they participate in the meeting by giving their ideas to somebody who is there, being on a cell phone speaker or by any other means. Similarly, they are team members if they do something in the plan so the emailing relative who lives 2000 miles away is a team member. So is your best friend who participates electronically because she’s stuck in bed with severe Multiple Sclerosis.¹⁸</p>	<p>In some programs, only the people who attend meetings are counted as team members¹⁹</p>
<p>In some programs, the assessment conversation you have when you first meet your helpers will allow you to select and eliminate Life Domain areas earlier in the process. You may also begin to describe how you’d like things to improve in Life Domain areas (we’re coming to that) that are important to you and what you think you’ll need to achieve those improvements.</p>	<p>In some programs, the planning occurs at the first team meeting and the ones that follow. Life Domains are selected and eliminated at the first meeting</p>

Life Domain Areas

Life Domains are words that help you remember the parts of your and your family's life that you want to change and improve. There are lots of them and they are different in different programs. A few examples of Life Domains:

Safety
Place to Live
Emotional/Psychological
Education

Spiritual
Health
Behavior
Work

Family
Culture
Legal
Social

As mentioned previously, you choose among these – and more – as the areas in which you'd like to see improvement.

Wraparound planning starts

THE FIRST MEETING



- The first meeting is scheduled at a time that works for you and your family and for as many of the other people who are invited as possible, in a place you find reasonably comfortable. In most areas, you can have the meeting in your home if you like. If you do, try not to treat it like an opportunity to conduct the cleaning of the century. Everyone you identified (or who was included because of external requirements) is invited to the meeting.
- The meeting typically begins with introductions that include why each person came, along with their names and when they are relevant, titles. Sometimes the Facilitator also briefly describes Wraparound. More frequently, the Facilitator has already described Wraparound to everybody at the meeting over the phone or via email when they were invited to come.

Note: Facilitators are usually trained and required to run efficient meetings. They will make every effort to keep things moving along. Plan for a meeting that lasts about an hour and a half. You will be able to work on your plan further after the meeting and at the meetings that follow.

- Some Facilitators propose ground rules – what people are and are not allowed to do at the meeting (like keep private matters private or be constructive instead of critical). Sometimes, other participants suggest ground rules when someone’s behavior bothers them (like no swearing, yelling or name calling). There are times when team members do both: set upfront rules and add rules that become necessary because of something someone does at a meeting.
- Next, your and your family’s strengths are presented to the group and whatever else was learned during your strength assessment. This is an important step. It’s the only way the people on your team will know you for yourself, not just your difficulties. Make sure that what is said is accurate and important. If you are said to enjoy TV and to have a lovely smile, congratulations but more specific descriptions about what’s really important to you are needed.

There are several ways to present strengths – just the Facilitator presents, other participants add their ideas about your strengths, or you can present your strengths yourself. It’s okay to feel a little embarrassed during this. A lot of people do. It usually takes at least 5 and not more than 10 minutes to describe your and your family’s strengths, unless you have a large family.



LIFE DOMAINS, OUTCOMES, NEEDS & STRATEGIES

Program Differences, continued

Outcome, Mission and Vision Statements

Best Practice Wraparound	Wraparound Variations
<p>In some programs, you and the people on your team will review the life domain areas you selected or add to them. For each life domain area selected, the group helps you come up with outcome statements that specifically describe the changes and improvements you want for yourself and your family in each area and how progress and success on each of them will be measured.²⁰</p>	<p>In some programs, you'll work with the people on your team to create a vision statement. ** Vision statements define optimistic views of where your family wants to be in the future. **</p> <p>In other programs, a mission statement is created instead. A mission statement defines where the person or family is going now and describes the purpose of the team.²¹</p> <p>Both vision and mission statements tend to be general but are not always so.</p>

** Note: There's no way to be sure that vision statements are better than outcome statements or that outcome statements are better than mission statements and vice versa. Sometimes vision and mission statements are specific and measurable and sometimes outcome statements are optimistic views of the future or are focused on where the family is going. The important thing is that you know what is supposed to be accomplished for you and your family, that it's stated clearly and that you can tell if the improvements (outcomes) are being achieved.

Needs

- After that's done, most Wraparound teams discuss what you and your family need to achieve the outcomes, move closer to the vision or fulfill the mission. It's important that the team focuses on actual needs as in "he needs safe friends" or "she needs to make better decisions" or "they need a way to disagree without yelling or hitting". What you don't want is "he needs peer to peer support," "she needs parenting classes" or "they need family therapy." These are service statements and strategies. The best way to make sure that the plan will be individualized is to state needs as needs and then move to strategies.



Strategies

- Strategies (or whatever they are called where you live) are the plans you put together to meet the needs defined in the last step. They are mostly action oriented, involving exactly what each team member is going to do after the meeting and before the next one. Some will be collecting insights and information, others contacting resource people and doing all sorts of things that get you and your family closer to how you want things to be. Volunteer to do what you feel able to do and feel free to ask others to help you if you need it.

MORE CRISIS, SAFETY AND TRANSITION PLANNING

- Next, you and the team will talk about any crises, safety risks and changes you and your family face. It won't happen at every meeting but it should continue until you feel prepared for any bad things you think might happen.

This is a little different from the first discussion of risks and how you and your family and the people around you planned to respond to them at the very beginning of Wraparound. It's more comprehensive and specific and you have the benefit (hopefully) of assistance from the people on your team.

It's not unusual for crisis and transition plans to be changed after people



try them out. Most teams talk about what worked and what didn't after a plan is used for the first time. Team members work together to fix whatever didn't work. You may not have the best possible crisis or transition plan until several have been tried and adjusted to really fit your situation.

Safety plans are – or should be – very carefully designed. They are used most often when there are problems like assault, fire setting, suicide, sexual assault or any other dangerous behaviors. They are supposed to be conservative, which in this instance means that they

deal with risks like they are expected to happen rather than likely to happen.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND NEXT MEETINGS

Now you are at the end of the first Wraparound meeting. Hopefully, everybody knows what they are supposed to do between now and the next meeting. Facilitators almost always schedule the next meeting at this point. Some schedule several meetings and many create phone, text or email “trees” so that meetings can be scheduled quickly to deal with emerging problems and cancelled when they are not needed. Remember, though, a lot of the real work of Wraparound goes on between meetings.

Evaluating your Wraparound Meetings

Wraparound is evaluated – that is, checked to see if it’s working or not – in several different ways. It is frequently evaluated at the end of the first and sometimes at later meetings as well. You may be asked to give your opinion on what happened at the meeting and on how you and your family were treated. Someone may ask you questions or you may be asked to complete a questionnaire. You may be asked to participate in interviews at intervals throughout your Wraparound plan.

These evaluation and other research activities are not your personal responsibility nor should they be. If you don’t want to participate, refuse. In most Wraparound programs, your decision will be respected. Please keep in mind, though, that the evaluation work is vitally important. Consumers and families have a real opportunity to make a contribution to all of the other people who rely on Wraparound as well as influencing the people and the programs they are working with in a positive way. In most programs, people try hard to keep evaluation and research as painless as possible.



As your Wraparound plan continues, there will be other meetings. In some places, meetings happen every month; in others, twice a month. In best practice Wraparound, teams meet whenever they decide to meet so each team’s schedule is different.

Wraparound continues with ongoing meetings

OTHER MEETINGS

When crises or other difficult events occur, Wraparound teams meet on an emergency basis even if the meeting is on the phone at first. When crisis plans are in place, teams often meet after a crisis to adjust or fix the plan. This continues until crisis events stop, get shorter, less frequent or less intense.²²

In best practice Wraparound, planning continues until you and your family achieve the changes you defined (or the changes you were required to make) when the process began. In Wraparound variations, as noted previously, the process ends when the team agrees that it should end²⁵, when a certain amount of time has passed or when a certain amount of money has been spent.



Wraparound ends

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED & GRADUATION

As things improve and you and your family achieve the changes you set out to achieve, you should be talking with your team about how and when you'll graduate. Like everything else in Wraparound, graduation works best when it is planned and the resources you need to maintain your achievements are in place. If you want to do extra crisis or safety planning, let your team know. Graduation is a positive change, but it's still a change so feel free to ask for what you and your family need. Feel equally free to ask how to reconnect with Wraparound if you think you need it in the future.

Mary Grealish, M.Ed., founder of Community Partners, Inc.
and author of The Wraparound Curriculum



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www.tfc-solutions.com
www.theassessmentssolution.com

Community Partners, Inc.
105 Robinhood Lane
McMurray PA 15317
724.941.9454
724.941.9556 fax



**Community
Partners, Inc.**
Eileen Mary Grealish, M.Ed.