

Foreword

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It has been over twenty years since the term “wrap-around” was used to define an intervention approach that surrounds a youth and family with customized services and supports. Since that time perhaps no other term used in the field of mental health has been more praised or embraced, redefined or misunderstood.

The wraparound concept is one of the cornerstones of the Children’s Mental Health Initiative, which started in the 1980’s with the advent of the Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP), and continues on today with system of care grants and cooperative agreements across the nation and in the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. The concept of wraparound permeates this incredibly successful federal initiative to improve services for youth with mental health challenges and their families.

During my tenure as Chief of the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch at SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), we have seen an impressive increase in the understanding of how to operate from a family-driven, youth-guided perspective when designing services for youth and families. Yet we still suffer from empty rhetoric and misinterpretation of what it means to be family-driven and youth-guided; to fully operationalize the concept of “one family, one plan”; and to fully implement the principles of wraparound in practice.

We know *why* the wraparound process is important. This field is blessed with a rich complement of leaders in the wraparound movement who have written volumes over the past twenty years making the case for why a wraparound approach is an effective strategy for working with youth

and families. What we have yet to learn is *how* to consistently apply the principles of wraparound in practice.

The field of children’s mental health is benefiting from more and more evidence about how to deliver treatments that work, and the field is also learning that children with the most complex needs and their families require more than just one specific evidence-based practice. Practice-based evidence affirms that a more comprehensive approach to meeting complex needs must include additional elements, such as those that are part of the wraparound process—additional coordination, more flexible supports, and a team approach.

Fortunately for our field, we have this *Resource Guide*, put together with painstaking love and great attention to detail by Eric Bruns and Janet Walker, the co-coordinators of the National Wraparound Initiative. Compiling over fifty articles and a large number of resources on the wraparound process was no easy task. Bruns and Walker recognize the living and ever-changing nature of the wraparound process. The more that families and practitioners become involved with the process, the more we learn. The more we learn, the more refinements and enhancements are made. This guide describes the current state of the art in wraparound, offering information and resources that you can apply in your work with youth and families.

What is also important to understand about this *Resource Guide* is the unwavering honoring of the original intent and vision of the early pioneers of the wraparound process. In the 1980’s, the wraparound process was being developed in states like North Carolina, Kansas, Alaska and Illinois, with the philosophy of doing “whatever it takes” to meet the needs of the families being served. These guiding principles remain steadfast. Nowhere else is there a resource guide like this that cuts through the rhetoric and misinterpretation of wraparound and gives you clear examples of the wraparound process, solid research to support the effectiveness of the approach, and specific tools you can use today.

The National Wraparound Initiative strives to be flexible and collaborative. This *Guide* is evi-

dence of that commitment. I encourage you to embrace this resource guide in your practice. Share the information with colleagues and contribute your thoughts and ideas to the National Wraparound Initiative. If we are to improve understanding of the wraparound process and expand its practical application in the field of children’s mental health, we need an active dialogue and interchange among families, practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

This resource guide continues to take us on that path.



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Gary M. Blau, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist who currently serves as Chief of the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch of the Center for Mental Health Services. In this role, he provides national leadership for children’s mental health and for creating “systems of care” across the country. In his former role as a clinician, he was fortunate to have provided services using a wraparound approach, and later, as an administrator, he had the opportunity to train others in the use of wraparound. In his current role as Branch Chief, he feels privileged to support the National Wraparound Initiative, as well as other efforts to bring wraparound to all children and youth with serious mental health challenges and their families.

Suggested Citation:



Blau, G. (2008). Foreword. In E. J. Bruns & J. S. Walker (Eds.), *The resource guide to wraparound*. Portland, OR: National Wraparound Initiative, Research and Training Center for Family Support and Children’s Mental Health.