

Supporting Wraparound Implementation: Chapter 5c.2

# An Overview of Training for Key Wraparound Roles: The California Experience

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## You Have to Start at the Top: Administrators and Directors

A community that wishes to introduce wraparound into its continuum of care for high-need youth and their families has many issues to consider and many decisions to make. These choices are best made when they are based on sound information gleaned from the experiences of others who have made the journey and when they are arrived at collectively by the leadership of the departments and agencies that will need to collaborate in the implementation process.

This “top” level of leadership includes heads of the departments, agencies, and community-based organizations (CBOs) that will be involved in the collaboration to implement wraparound. These leaders need to have the opportunity to acquire a foundation of knowledge about what wraparound is and what makes it successful. At a minimum, leaders need training, technical assistance, and/or coaching that covers the following topics.

*A basic understanding of the philosophy, process, target population, and intended outcomes of wraparound*

In order to make informed decisions regarding wraparound implementation, people in key leadership positions must be provided with information about wraparound’s underlying philosophy as a strength-based, family-driven planning process intended to support high-need youth in the context of their home, school, and community. These people need

to know how wraparound works, which youth and families it will serve, how much it costs, and what they can expect in terms of results. They need to know that wraparound may have an impact on their other programs and services.

*A recognition and appreciation of the need for teamwork at all levels to create shared ownership of the program, including its successes, its challenges, its risks, and its rewards*

The words “team” and “teamwork” have special meaning and importance in the context of wraparound. At the child and family level, a unique team is constructed to support the work with that particular child and family. At the program level, staff at the supervisory and management levels must work collaboratively across agencies and systems. And, at the administrative level, agency



directors, including community-based provider agencies, must work together to support the underlying principles, to share resources, and to provide leadership in their respective agencies. Leaders should understand that they will likely be asked to sign on to various policies—such as protocols for shared planning, decision making, conflict management, and crisis response—and to commit resources and/or staff time to support initial and ongoing implementation.

*An understanding of the variety of structures or models that communities have employed in order to implement wraparound*

Wraparound has been implemented successfully through a variety of structures and models. Some communities choose to bring together staff from several governmental agencies to do the direct work with families. Some contract with community-based organizations to take on the implementation of wraparound. And some have devised networked combinations of these to bring a variety of agencies and perspectives together on behalf of youth and families. Each model has its particular advantages to be considered.

*An understanding of the various funding sources that have been “blended” and “braided” across the nation in order to achieve both adequate and flexible financial and staffing resources to provide sufficient support for this approach*

Various communities have succeeded in bringing together a wide range of financial resources and structures in order to yield sufficient funding to provide adequate staffing and flexible funds for wraparound. These sources have included:

- Federal foster care funds
- State foster care funds
- Local/County foster care funds
- Mental Health funds via Medicaid
- State mental health funds
- Local/County mental health funds
- Governmental grants
- Foundation grants
- Private donations

Section 5d of this *Resource Guide* provides chapters that discuss financing options in greater detail.

*An understanding of the initial and ongoing training and coaching needs for managers, supervisors, and direct service staff to support wraparound implementation*

While it is essential that direct service staff are provided adequate training and coaching on the knowledge and skill sets needed for their

jobs, it is equally essential that adequate training be provided for managers and supervisors in order to support the Wraparound core values and principles on a continuous basis. Supervisors in particular need to be able to model these principles in parallel process for their supervisees as well as monitor staff performance in the field.

### **You Have to Count on the Middle: Managers and Supervisors**

Once the fundamental decisions have been made by the leadership, it's the middle managers and supervisors that make any program work. And, keep it working. Or not. These are key roles that are often overlooked by communities anxious to get something up and running. There is great danger in forging ahead without taking the time to build a strong infrastructure of support and commitment throughout the various departments and agencies that must work together effectively in order to implement and sustain wraparound.

The following are areas of essential understandings for which training, technical assistance, and coaching for managers and supervisors need to be considered.

*A basic understanding of the philosophy, process, target population, and intended outcomes of wraparound, and how this plays out within and across different systems*

The management infrastructure must support the concept that key decisions will be made at the child and family team level, driven by the strengths and needs of the family in the context of the community. Collaborative decisions must be made regarding the target population(s), referral and enrollment protocols, and outcome measures to assure both model fidelity and family goal attainment. The fiscal departments of all involved agencies must be made aware of the funding mechanisms provided as well as the expectation of the use of "flexible" funding to support family needs.

*An understanding of the staffing patterns and caseload ratios needed to provide effective support for youth with high levels of need and their families*

The wraparound planning process requires skillful and sensitive facilitation. Family Partners have proven to be effective in bridging the relationship between parents and professionals. Direct in-home work with the youth in the context of the school, neighborhood, community, and culture has been essential. Establishing effective caseload standards for each of these roles must be based on the needs of the youth and families, on the challenges of the target population, and on the availability of other supportive resources in the community. The Human Resources departments of involved agencies will need assistance in understanding the recruitment and training needs for each of the key roles of wraparound staff.

*A recognition and appreciation of the need for teamwork within and across agencies and departments*

Communication across agencies and programs at the management and supervisory levels is essential for successful wraparound implementation. Youth and families who are referred to wraparound frequently have experienced involvement in more than one system and coordination of effort will be needed. Good teamwork at this level can avoid interagency misunderstandings and can respond effectively to complex situations.

*An understanding of the stressors and benefits that this work will give to their staff, so that managers and supervisors can provide necessary individual and collective support*

Managers and supervisors must work proactively to avoid burnout and unnecessary turnover

*Communication across agencies and programs at the management and supervisory levels is essential for successful wraparound implementation.*



of staff by supporting the underlying philosophy of strength-based, family-driven practice. Focusing on staff strengths, identifying what is working well, celebrating successes, and acknowledging the hard work and dedication of their direct service staff can build and maintain an environment of optimism and hope to sustain wraparound over the long term. Periodic training can keep their skills up to date, and team-building activities can keep them inspired.

### You Have to Support the Work: Direct Service Staff

While wraparound has proven to be both effective for youth and families and rewarding for staff and their agencies, it has also proven to be challenging, complex, and difficult to maintain.

Table 1 outlines areas of essential understandings for which training, technical assistance, and

coaching for key direct-service wraparound staff need to be provided.

## Challenges, Strategies, and the California Experience

### *Starting At the Top: Administrators and Directors*

**Challenges:** How do you get the key individuals to sit down together; how do you help them understand what it is about the wraparound model that makes it so effective with high-need youth and families; and how do you get them to work collaboratively to make the necessary decisions and resource commitments to accomplish and sustain implementation?

**Strategies:** Three approaches are typically utilized. From a financial standpoint, it must be

Table 1. Essential Training Areas for Direct Service Staff

County/State Agency Referral Staff: child welfare workers, probation officers, mental health workers, and others who might serve on child and family teams	Facilitators of the Wraparound Process (government or private agency)	Child & Family Specialists who do direct in-home work with youth and parents	Family Partners who have personal experience as parents of high-need youth and who build bridges between family and professionals and provide direct support to parents
Basic information about wraparound philosophy and planning process	Basic information about wraparound philosophy and planning process	Basic information about wraparound philosophy and planning process	Basic information about wraparound philosophy and planning process
Referral criteria, knowledge of the roles of other members of the child and family team	Specific facilitation skills: planning and conducting meetings, conflict management, engaging participation, etc.	Specific skills for engaging and working with children and youth and their families.	Skill development in utilizing their life experience and success in coping with human service systems to support the team process
Knowledge of the resources and requirements of their respective agencies in the wraparound process	Knowledge of child development, group dynamics, family dynamics, and family culture	Knowledge of child development and behavioral management strategies	Knowledge of family culture, family dynamics, and parenting strategies for high-need children and youth

demonstrated that wraparound will either increase revenues or reduce costs (and the promise future cost savings is rarely effective). From the perspective of meeting external mandates or requirements, it must be shown that wraparound will be more effective than current practices. And from the perspective of meeting the social responsibility of improving the health and well-being of their respective communities, it must be shown that wraparound will yield better life outcomes for their high-need youth and families.

**The California Experience:** Following the very successful implementation of a pilot wraparound program by EMQ Children & Family Services in Santa Clara County, Senate Bill 163 was enacted to encourage replication of similar programs across the state. It should be noted that in California the social services, mental health, and juvenile probation programs are implemented at the county, not state, level. The primary funding mechanism was to allow counties to use the state and county shares of foster care dollars to provide intensive in-home services called wraparound. Some services could also be claimed to Medicaid where all eligibility requirements were met. No new funds were made available, and both state and county expenditures were to remain “cost neutral.” California is comprised of 58 counties with widely differing populations, economies, and cultures. Populations range from 1,200 (Alpine County) to 10,000,000 (Los Angeles County).

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) quickly enacted a process for county participation, a planning template, and Standards for Wraparound implementation. ([http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acin99/l-28\\_99.pdf](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acin99/l-28_99.pdf)). In addition, they executed contracts to provide technical assistance and training to the counties and provider agencies at no cost to them.

In order to manage the challenges identified above, several approaches were developed:

- In order to access state funds, the counties had to bring the key administrators and directors together to engage in collaborative planning processes and had to submit written plans demonstrating their understanding of the standards and how the standards would be met. A planning template was devised to identify key areas

to be addressed (<http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/res/pdf/Acr299.pdf>).

- Technical assistance and training was provided at no cost to assist the counties through their planning processes to support their acquisition of essential understandings.
- Detailed information about the funding mechanisms and the experiences of existing successful programs in the state was provided: reduced costs, reduced lengths of stay, and improved social and behavioral outcomes for youth.
- Following acceptance by the state, formal Memoranda of Understanding were executed between the state and the counties.

#### *Counting on the Middle: Managers and Supervisors*

**Challenges:** How do you assure that management infrastructures will facilitate the identification and referral of appropriate youth and families; how do you make sure that appropriate staff and appropriate caseloads are provided; how do you inspire teamwork among the departments and agencies; and, how do you instill an understanding of the need for on-going support of direct-service staff?

**Strategies:** The primary strategies for managing these challenges have been to provide technical assistance regarding infrastructure and program design, information regarding existing successful implementations, and training for supervisors on coaching and supporting wraparound implementation. Where programs are provided via contracts with community-based organizations, they must be managed as true partners, not merely as vendors. Supervisory support, appreciation, and recognition of staff work are essential.

**The California Experience:** Through its state staff as well as its training and technical assistance contracts, CDSS has provided the following supports:

- Technical assistance throughout the planning and implementation of wraparound programs, whether provided by county staff or by community-based provider

agencies (This has included work with managers and supervisors related to designing infrastructures for youth identification, referral protocols, and interagency oversight of individual child and family wraparound plans.)

- Training for wraparound facilitators that has included supervisors and managers as well as direct service staff from across all participating agencies and departments
- Training for wraparound trainers to support local self-sufficiency in meeting ongoing training needs
- Specific technical assistance for supervisors in coaching, supporting, and nurturing direct service staff to sustain model fidelity as well as to reduce burnout and unnecessary turnover
- Ongoing technical assistance to revisit existing programs to review adherence to the standards and to identify needs for additional technical assistance and/or training
- Modeling the establishment of a “partnership” relationship with counties and provider agencies

### *Supporting the Work: Direct Service Staff*

**Challenges:** How do you assure that every individual involved in implementing wraparound has the necessary knowledge, abilities, and attitude to carry out his or her role effectively; how do you inspire collaborative teamwork among individuals with widely divergent needs, strengths, and perspectives; how do you recruit, select, welcome, and retain key staff?

**Strategies:** Several strategies have emerged as potent means to manage these challenges.

- Training on the key knowledge and skills as identified above is, of course, of foremost importance.
- However, as Wraparound programs have matured across the state, more and more emphasis has been placed on the need to provide supervisors of all key staff (govern-

mental as well as private) with the knowledge and skills to support wraparound implementation by their direct service staff. This includes coaching, field observation, and supervising to the process itself.

- Clarity of the various roles is essential, and requires accurate job descriptions, appropriate expectations, and understanding the essential interplay of each key function.
- Staff recruitment and selection must recognize the actual roles people will play. Not all therapists make good facilitators (but understanding group and family dynamics is necessary). Not all parents or caregivers make good family partners (but understanding the real life challenges of parenting a high-need youth is essential).
- Finally, appreciating staff performance, celebrating successes, and building on staff strengths are ways to support staff retention in a manner parallel to the wrap-around process itself.

**The California Experience:** To support the work in California, CDSS has made available to county staff and the staff of CBOs who are implementing wraparound the following resources.

- Ongoing training, consultation, and technical assistance to direct service staff and their supervisors on a wide range of topics from Facilitation Skills, to Medicaid Billing, to Managing Compassion Fatigue
- Regional workshops across the state covering common implementation issues and specific concerns of various counties
- Consultation to administrators, managers, supervisors, and direct service staff by telephone and email
- Access to Wraparound information at the state website ([http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/Family-Cen\\_318.htm](http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/Family-Cen_318.htm) ) and their TA contractor’s website (<http://www.emq-fpi.org>)
- Bi-annual statewide wraparound Institutes with presentations and workshops on numerous related subjects



- Twice-annual training for wraparound trainers

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