

Organizational and system support for wraparound: An introduction

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Organizational and system support for wraparound: An Introduction

Collaborative multidisciplinary teams that include family members and youth as equal partners have become an increasingly popular as a way to create and implement individualized plans for children with complex needs and their families. In children's mental health, these teams are often known as *wraparound* teams. Despite the widespread belief that this approach is superior to traditional methods for working with youth and families, consistently delivering high-quality wraparound throughout a system of care has been challenging for teams, for providers, and for communities [1, 2]. At the team level, it is clear that the practice of wraparound is complex and difficult [3]. Moreover, practical experience has shown that teams require many types of support both from their agencies and from the system of care if high-quality wraparound is to be achieved and sustained [4]. But this necessary level of support is often lacking. It appears that people at the agency and system levels are often not aware of the many types of supports that are necessary for wraparound to be effective. Even when they are aware, they may still find it difficult to put the necessary supports into place, since organizations and systems face many pressures and competing priorities [5].

This document briefly describes the types of supports that are necessary for a high-quality wraparound process. We refer to these supports as the *necessary conditions* that must be in place for wraparound teams and programs to thrive. The information provided here is intended to support other materials created via the *National Wraparound Initiative*, including the foundational principles of wraparound, descriptions of the phases and activities of the wraparound process, and handbooks for youth, family members, and team members. Taken together, these materials are intended to be a first step toward meeting our goal: To provide a clearer and more complete description of wraparound. We believe that a clearer description of wraparound will be useful to the youth, families, and communities who participate in wraparound, and that it will also facilitate expansion of the research base on wraparound and similar service models.

You will see that there are a fairly large number of necessary conditions for wraparound, so this brief introduction cannot provide an in-depth description of each of them. Instead, we provide an overview of the necessary conditions and some examples of what it looks like in "real life" when the conditions are, or are not, in place. This booklet also provides a brief description of two assessments that communities can use to gauge the extent to which these supports are in place for their wraparound teams. The section at the end of the document, entitled "To Find Out More," tells you how to get more detailed information about the necessary conditions and the assessments. This section also tells you how to get other resources that you may find helpful.

1. A Framework of Necessary Conditions for Wraparound

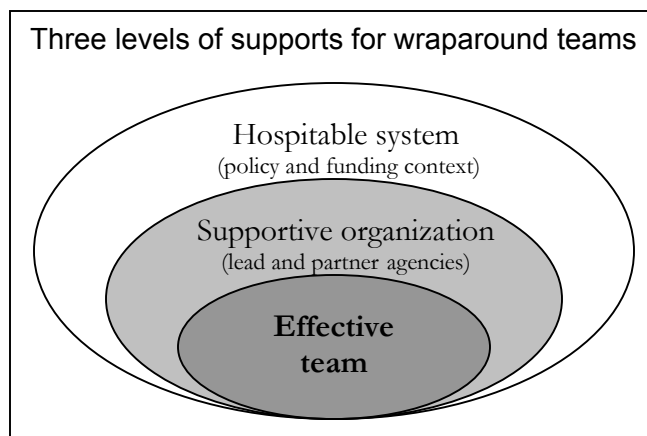
To learn about the necessary conditions that must be in place for successful wraparound to occur, we began with the question:

- *What does it take for wraparound **teams** to be effective?*
- From there, we moved on to the next question: *If wraparound teams are to be effective, **what supports do they need from the organizations and agencies that collaborate to provide wraparound?***
- Finally, we moved on to a third question: *What supports do these organizations—and the teams—need from the **systems of care that surround them?***

Beginning from the team level and then moving “upward” to the organization and system levels is an approach consistent with “backward mapping” [6]. What resulted from our work is a framework that describes the necessary conditions at three levels (team, agency/organizational, and system of care). For each of these three levels, there are necessary conditions within five themes. The table on page 8 shows the necessary conditions at each level for each theme.

Necessary conditions at three levels

The framework organizes the necessary conditions into three levels: *team*, *organization*, and *system*. We think of the *team* as the caregiver and child or youth and at least two or three other consistently attending core members who collectively take responsibility for creating and implementing a plan to meet the needs of the family and child with an emotional disorder. These team members, whom family members identify as important in their lives, usually include service providers and members of the family’s informal and community support networks.



At the *agency or organizational level*, the picture becomes somewhat more complicated. We find it useful to distinguish between two roles that organizations or agencies can play relative to wraparound teams. In the first role, an agency takes the *lead* in wraparound implementation, and is responsible for hiring, training, and supervising team facilitators. This *lead agency* may also provide training for other team members with specialized roles, such as family advocates or resource developers. In the second role, an agency acts as a *partner* to the team-based wraparound process by contributing services, flexible funds and/or staff who serve as team members.

We think of the *system of care level* as the larger service policy and economic context that surrounds the teams and team members’ agencies. Because many communities have not yet developed a system of care we also use the term *policy and funding context* to refer to this level. Put simply, the policy and funding context includes people and groups at “higher levels” whose actions and decisions impact wraparound

teams and organizations through formal and informal policies, and through decisions about finances. For example, the policy and funding context often includes administrators of child- and family-serving agencies (child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice) at the county, region, or state level. Policies and funding decisions may also be impacted by state and local governing bodies, as well as by other organizations that set policy, monitor or enforce policy, or interpret state or national policies to local service providers.

Within each level, supports for wraparound fall within five themes

The conditions depicted in the table on page 8 are also organized into five rows according to five themes: (1) the wraparound practice model, (2) collaboration/partnerships, (3) capacity building/staffing, (4) acquiring services/supports, and (5) accountability. Each theme maps to a broad question that stakeholders in a community's wraparound program should be consistently and systematically asking.

1. **Wraparound practice** – *Do we understand the principles of the wraparound process and the activities in its practice model? Are we adhering to them?*
2. **Collaboration/Partnerships** – *Do we work together flexibly and cooperatively in a way that supports high-quality wraparound?*
3. **Capacity building/Staffing** – *Do we have the right jobs and working conditions to support high-quality wraparound?*
4. **Acquiring services and supports** – *Do we provide the services and supports teams need?*
5. **Accountability** – *Can we be sure we're doing a good job?*

At each level—team, organization, and system—stakeholders must engage in activities that meet the necessary conditions within each theme. However, the framework does not attempt to specify exactly *how* a program or community should meet each condition, only that there should be some structure, mechanism, policy, or process for doing so.

For example, in the area of accountability, the framework includes the necessary condition that the organization monitors adherence to the wraparound practice model (as well as implementation of plans and cost and effectiveness). Since the practice model is built around the wraparound principles, part of this monitoring must focus on whether or not teams are truly working in ways that promote the principles. However, monitoring adherence to the principles can be done in several ways. For example, one organization might ask family members to rate the level of adherence to the wraparound principles that they experienced in their team meeting. Another organization might ask supervisors to observe team meetings and provide feedback on adherence to the principles. A third organization might review wraparound plans to look for evidence of work that is consistent with the principles. These are three different kinds of activities on the part of stakeholders that satisfy this aspect of the condition. The framework recognizes that it is important that organizations and systems have some flexibility to decide—based on local context and local needs—what sorts of strategies will work best to meet the conditions in their particular community.

2. Interrelationships Across Levels of Support

The organization of the framework according to themes draws attention to the ways in which the three levels of activity are related. Failure to recognize the impact of system-level actions on agencies and organizations, or the effect of organizational decisions on teams, leads to narrow problem definition and ineffective solutions. When this happens, staff at all levels can easily end up blaming each other, being defensive about their own actions, and feeling demoralized. For wraparound to be successful, there needs to be collaboration across the levels to meet the necessary conditions [7].

A good example of the impact of one level on another can be found within the collaboration/partnership theme. Support across all three levels is necessary to ensure that key team members will attend meetings. For example, suppose a child welfare worker from a partner agency is told by her supervisor that she can no longer attend an individual child's team meetings because she needs to use her time investigating child abuse cases. Her regular presence at team meetings is critical to the team's ability to make appropriate decisions. This organizational decision is sparked by a recent child death and increased community pressure on the child welfare agency.

In a community with low organizational and system support for wraparound, the team facilitator is left to negotiate directly with the child welfare worker or her supervisor to assure some level of involvement in team meetings. If the facilitator is well respected or has a strong network of friends, he may manage to get the child welfare worker's supervisor to allow the worker to attend the next meeting for this specific child. Alternately, the child welfare worker may begin attending team meetings on her own time. However, neither of these solutions changes the general policy that continues to restrict child welfare workers' involvement in other (and future) teams. In a community with stronger organizational and system supports, the team facilitator might enlist the help of a supervisor or program manager who will negotiate directly with the manager of the child welfare agency to work out a different policy that does not restrict workers' participation on wraparound teams. Further, a strong interagency body at the system level could examine the problem of increased scrutiny of child welfare and seek ways to resolve this issue that do not undermine the collaboration and partnership that is necessary for wraparound.

Another example comes from the area of acquiring services and supports. One of the key tasks of the wraparound team is to integrate community services and natural supports into the plan. However, teams are rarely successful in building plans that are not primarily reliant on formal services. Our research indicates that this is in large part due to a lack of support from the organization and system levels. For example, teams require knowledge about specific strategies for attracting and retaining community and natural support people to the team. Ensuring that team members acquire this necessary knowledge and then have adequate time and resources to apply it is a responsibility at the organizational level. In reality, organizational pressures often work the other way, to encourage teams to develop plans that rely on formal services that have already been contracted. Again, it is the responsibility of organizations to ensure that teams are able to develop plans based on the family's expressed needs and strengths, rather than on the services that are "on the shelf."

If many teams within a program are successful in integrating community and natural supports into the plan, another problem may well emerge: There may now be more demand for community services and supports than capacity to provide them. This would be the case if a number of teams in a wraparound program suddenly “discovered” a high-quality after-school program at a local church that combines mentoring, tutoring, and social skills development. The program might have openings for only one or two additional children. Or suppose a team wants to provide respite for a child’s mother by paying a neighbor who has a good relationship with the child to have the child at her home every other weekend. This creative and relatively inexpensive solution is derailed because there is no existing way to certify or pay a non-traditional respite provider. If plans are to be truly individualized and community based, the organizations that collaborate to provide wraparound must devise strategies for developing community capacity to provide the services and supports that tend to be requested by teams. Developing community capacity and informal supports will also require support from the system level. For example, the policy and funding context must allow organizations the flexibility and autonomy that are necessary if they are to develop the specific services and supports that will be successful within a particular community context.

3. Assessing Necessary Supports for Wraparound

We have developed a series of assessments as a companion to the conceptual framework described briefly here and presented in the table on page 8. These assessments—for team process, organizational support, and system context—are designed to provide stakeholders with a structured way of examining the extent to which the necessary conditions for wraparound are present in their local implementation. The assessments are not designed to provide an absolute rating or ranking of the implementation. Rather, they are intended for use in discussions of the strengths of the implementation, and to help clarify and prioritize areas for further development.

The assessments were designed to promote mutual accountability across the various levels of implementation of wraparound. Traditionally, we think of people at the service delivery level as accountable for the quality of the services that they provide. When programs fail to deliver desired outcomes, the blame is often laid at the provider level. However, as our research has made clear, high-quality work in wraparound cannot succeed where the necessary organizational and system level supports are not in place. But how are people at these levels to be held accountable for providing an acceptable level of support? We believe that assessing the necessary conditions at the organizational and system levels provides a means for pushing accountability upward as well as downward. The assessment of organizational and system support are tools for this sort of *upward accountability*. In contrast, the team level checklist can be seen as a more traditional sort of tool, of the type that is used for supervision in a more familiar form of *downward accountability*. The idea is that a balance of upward and downward accountability actually builds a culture of *mutual accountability* that encourages focused problem solving over defensiveness and blaming.

4. To Find Out More...

More detailed information about the framework of necessary conditions and the assessments is available a report entitled *Implementing high-quality collaborative Individualized Service/Support Planning: Necessary conditions*. This publication is available from the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. The report can be downloaded for free from www.rtc.pdx.edu. Click on "Publications" and search by the report's name. If you wish to use the assessments, please contact the authors of the report to get the most recent versions.

A variety of further resources on wraparound is also available from the National Wraparound Initiative's website: www.rtc.pdx.edu/nwi. Resources include an annotated bibliography of research on wraparound, a listing of practice-oriented resources, and summaries of research articles.

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NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR WRAPAROUND

TEAM LEVEL	AGENCY AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	POLICY AND FUNDING CONTEXT (SYSTEM OF CARE LEVEL)
<p>Practice model</p> <p>i. Team implements a well-defined practice model that promotes effective planning in a manner consistent with the principles of Wraparound.</p>	<p>Practice model</p> <p>i. Lead agency provides training, supervision and support for a clearly defined practice model.</p> <p>ii. Lead agency demonstrates its commitment to the principles of Wraparound.</p> <p>iii. Partner agencies support the core values underlying the principles of Wraparound.</p>	<p>Practice model</p> <p>i. Leaders in the policy and funding context actively support the Wraparound practice model.</p>
<p>Collaboration/partnerships</p> <p>i. Appropriate people, prepared to make decisions and commitments, attend meetings and participate collaboratively.</p>	<p>Collaboration/partnerships</p> <p>i. Lead and partner agencies collaborate around the plan and the team.</p> <p>ii. Lead agency supports team efforts to get necessary members to attend meetings and participate collaboratively.</p> <p>iii. Partner agencies support their workers as team members and empower them to make decisions.</p>	<p>Collaboration/partnerships</p> <p>i. Policy and funding context encourages interagency cooperation around the team and the plan.</p> <p>ii. Leaders in the policy and funding context play a problem-solving role across service boundaries.</p>
<p>Capacity building/staffing</p> <p>i. Team members capably perform their roles on the team.</p>	<p>Capacity building/staffing</p> <p>i. Lead and partner agencies provide working conditions that enable high quality work and reduce burnout.</p>	<p>Capacity building/staffing</p> <p>i. Policy and funding context supports development of the special skills needed for key roles on Wraparound teams.</p>
<p>Acquiring services/supports</p> <p>i. Team is aware of a wide array of services and supports and their effectiveness.</p> <p>ii. Team identifies and develops family-specific natural supports.</p> <p>iii. Team designs and tailor services based on families' expressed needs.</p>	<p>Acquiring services/supports</p> <p>i. Lead agency has clear policies and makes timely decisions regarding funding for costs required to meet families' unique needs.</p> <p>ii. Lead agency encourages teams to develop plans based on child/family needs and strengths, rather than service fads or financial pressures.</p> <p>iii. Lead agency demonstrates its commitment to developing culturally competent community and natural services and supports.</p> <p>iv. Lead agency supports teams in effectively including community and natural supports.</p> <p>v. Lead agency demonstrates its commitment to developing an array of effective providers.</p>	<p>Acquiring services/supports</p> <p>i. Policy and funding context grants autonomy and incentives to develop effective services and supports consistent with the Wraparound practice model.</p> <p>ii. Policy and funding context supports fiscal policies that allow the flexibility needed by Wraparound teams.</p> <p>iii. Policy and funding context actively supports family and youth involvement in decision making.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Accountability</p> <p>i. Team maintains documentation for continuous improvement and mutual accountability.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Accountability</p> <p>i. Lead agency monitors adherence to the practice model, implementation of plans, and cost and effectiveness.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Accountability</p> <p>i. Documentation requirements meet the needs of policy makers, funders, and other stakeholders.</p>
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