

*Supporting Wraparound Implementation: Chapter 5c.1*

# Training, Coaching and Beyond: Building Capacity in Your Wraparound Workforce

Pat Miles, Consultant



As wraparound has continued to grow and expand, so has the variation among wraparound projects. This variation may be driven by political circumstances as they play out in funding and organizational options. It also may be driven by bureaucratic and administrative issues such as those related to Medicaid funding or state licensing requirements. Variation can also be fueled by human resource concerns, such as what sort of workforce is available and/or required to staff wraparound projects. Variation also arises because projects are designed to fit different local contexts and priorities. As a result, projects vary in terms of whom the project is targeted to, what local conditions and sensibilities exist, and where the administrative host environment for the wraparound project is located. Finally, variation among wraparound projects is also driven by differences in the understanding and concerns of local leadership.

Projects choosing to implement wraparound have attempted to deal with this variation in different ways. Some projects respond by placing a heavy emphasis on ensuring that teams achieve the various separate steps or activities that make up the wraparound process. This separation of the wraparound process into an invariant series of specific, separate steps may result a certain uniformity of practice across families; however, many projects find that this focus on achieving the steps of the process must be balanced by the need to individualize the process for each family. These projects come to see that wraparound as a whole is more than the sum of the steps that are its parts. As a graceful waltz is more than the individual steps, so it is true with wraparound.

This line of thinking leads projects to seek out strategies for building a workforce that is able to accomplish the steps of the process while also being able to appropriately adapt those steps on behalf of an individual family. A range of tools are available for creating this capacity including training, coaching, mentoring and supervising.



The successful project uses several of these strategies rather than focusing on only one approach. The first step in designing a sensible approach to developing workforce capacity is to recognizing that wraparound is a complex, integrative approach that must adapt over time to the needs of families and communities in which it is placed. Options available for developing workforce capacity include:

**Training.** Focused on providing an overview and fixing definitions as they relate to the wraparound process, many projects get started with a training focus. Training is most useful for communicating a sense of the whole when it comes to the wraparound process and for introducing participants to the language of wraparound. Additionally, formal classroom-based training sessions can also communicate what not to do in wraparound, especially as it relates to changes in the ways that families are viewed within the system. Some tips for mounting a successful training approach include:

- **Be realistic about the power and limitations of training.** Training, even entertaining training, is not likely to cause behavior

change in practitioners. Training sessions can, however, define certain elements of the wraparound process while communicating values. Wraparound training can be made very powerful by including individuals who haven't historically been included as participants in training and by creating an event that people go through together.

- **Partner with families in providing the training.** Many communities have partnered effectively with families in delivering wraparound training. This has ranged from having families tell their own stories to having families function as co-trainers. In some sites, families are engaged to participate in the training for trainees to practice with as they learn skills and activities that are part of the wraparound process. This kind of training experience also provides a supportive environment for trainees to have a meaningful dialogue with families who have first-person system experience.
- **Build your local training capacity as soon as possible.** Many local communities rely on outside experts to implement their initial training opportunities. This allows wraparound information to filter in from other places. On the other hand, projects that build their own training capacity find that their understanding of wraparound increases as they take over their own training efforts.
- **Use training as a way to create a sensible host environment.** Many wraparound projects focus their training efforts on those who will be hired by the project. Some communities have focused their ongoing training activities more broadly, including all individuals who are likely to participate on wraparound teams. This allows wraparound team members to get oriented in a training environment rather than on the individual team.
- **Tailor your training to your staffing pattern.** As wraparound grows in a variety of settings so does the range of staffing options. Some projects have wraparound facilitators while others use care coordina-

tors. Some projects have family partners housed within the project while others have them housed as adjunct to the facilitation process. Some have no parent or family partner within the project design. Still others hire clinical staff to function as community clinicians or some sort of community support paraprofessional to do direct interventions with the child. While all of these staff roles will benefit from an overall training about wraparound, good projects will also build in more skill-focused training sessions designed specifically for the staff roles in place with the project.

**Coaching.** Recognizing the limitations of a training-only strategy, many communities have begun to use a coaching process to build capacity. These coaching efforts focus on developing and elevating expert practitioners. Expert practitioners may have demonstrated skill in past wraparound implementations, but often the wraparound process has not been locally implemented long enough for local expertise to emerge. In those cases, the “expert” is someone who is skilled in the art of analysis, synthesizing and feedback. Some tips for effective implementation of a coaching strategy include:

- **Develop consensus on your expectations.** Wraparound is an expansive model that incorporates a number of process steps. A strict focus on these practice steps may result in a descent into excessive detail. Building consensus among a variety of community members about what steps, when taken together, constitute the entire wraparound “dance” is likely to do several things. These include securing buy-in, creating agreement about your target and remembering why doing wraparound is important rather than focusing on strictly the “how” of wraparound.
- **Create a formal feedback loop.** Tools to summarize feedback to both the practitioner and their supervisor can make coaching much more effective. If coaching involves dialogue only there is a great possibility that much of the learning will be lost. Ad-

ditionally, if a community is well resourced enough to have a coach who is separate from the supervisors, then good tools will make it easier for coaches to summarize information for supervisors as well.

- **Define your coaching process.** Projects that are able to make good use of coaches have defined how the interactive aspects of coaching should happen. This includes introducing and defining coaching process steps to employees as well as providing direct, honest and fair feedback to employees who are not performing in a way that’s compatible with the way you have defined your project. Standardizing the feedback process using adult learning and social learning theories can increase the ability of staff to incorporate feedback from the coaching process.

**Mentoring.** Some sites that don’t have the ability to have a full-time coaching capacity will use a mentoring approach. Creating a mentoring capacity often occurs after the project has had enough time to develop true expert practitioners. These individuals have demonstrated the ability to not only do the process according to the agreed-upon steps, but also to adapt the process to meet the needs of individual families. When sites employ a mentoring strategy, mentees are assigned to a primary mentor who checks in from time to time and serves as a role model. Less directed than the coaching approach, this approach creates the capacity for troubleshooting and assumes that the mentee will take responsibility to seek out feedback from the designated mentor. Tips for successful implementation of the mentoring strategy include:

- **Avoid making mentoring status a rung on the career ladder.** Mentors should be individuals who are seen as very skilled in implementing the process. In sites that struggle with a career ladder there is a tendency to name someone as a mentor because the person has been there for a long period and this is thought of as a way to recognize their service. This can cause confusion among staff members.

- **Be clear about mentoring parameters.** Some sites are able to reduce mentors' other duties to free up time for them to work with mentees. Other sites do not have this flexibility. The mentoring model expects the mentee to seek out the mentor for feedback more than the mentor is expected to seek out the employee. The mentor should stay focused on process rather than getting into personnel issues.
- **Mentor to the job role.** While wraparound implementation is important, it is also important to recognize that different staff roles will interact with the process in different ways. If a project pursues a mentoring approach and has multiple staff roles such as family partner, facilitator, clinician or others, then mentors in each role should be assigned.

**Supervision.** Supervising wraparound can often feel as complex as the process itself. One strategy for creating a strongly resourced workforce involves strengthening wraparound supervision. Good wraparound supervision is multi-dimensional in nature and focuses on personnel and on the process and the context in which it operates. Supervision should be clear, values based and rooted in real-time information about practice. (See chapter 5b.6 in this guide for a more detailed discussion of supervision in wraparound.)

### Summary

Wraparound projects succeed and thrive based

on the ability of managers and leaders to adapt capacity-building strategies to assure that staff have an understanding of what is expected and are able to demonstrate what is expected. Local wraparound leaders often find that they have to define and adapt their strategies for assuring the right skills based on local conditions. An effective workforce development strategy will adapt based on local conditions, incorporate families who are receiving wraparound support into employee development strategies, and frequently remind staff and partners that wraparound is never more important than the families it was designed to help.

### Author

**Patricia Miles** is a consultant who lives in Oregon and helps communities, agencies, schools and others work to improve outcomes with people who are receiving public services.

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