

# Wraparound Supervision and Management

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Managing wraparound requires a multi-dimensional approach to management, supervision and leadership. Figure 1 on the next page defines three levels of focus for any wraparound supervisor. These three areas include:

## 1. Working with the Practice Model

Wraparound is an integrative model of responding to people who are suffering. Over the past several years the wraparound process has continued to evolve as practitioners and families have worked together to develop and refine those practices that seem to be most comforting. Because wraparound is a model that borrows from a variety of movements and approaches it is often difficult to describe. Recent developments have included an increased focus on “high fidelity wraparound” in an effort to increase reliability of wraparound practices. A single-minded focus on fidelity, however, can undermine the quality and flexibility of the wraparound process, by encouraging reductionist thinking, promoting an overemphasis on the rituals of wraparound (and an underemphasis on understanding the meaning of the approach), and discouraging innovation to meet family needs. Supervisors play a key role in helping staff accomplish the necessary activities of the wraparound process without sacrificing flexibility and innovation. Key competencies for wraparound supervisors who are trying to be effective within the practice model sphere are described below.

*Knowing What Good Wraparound Practice Is*

Since wraparound is an integrative model that borrows from and resembles many other practices, it can become very confusing for those involved in delivering it. Supervisors generally have to demonstrate the ability to define core activities that need to occur for quality practice. This means supervisors should be able to define not only what they want done but also how they want it done while tying this to the values inherent in wraparound.

*Communicating Good Wraparound Practices*

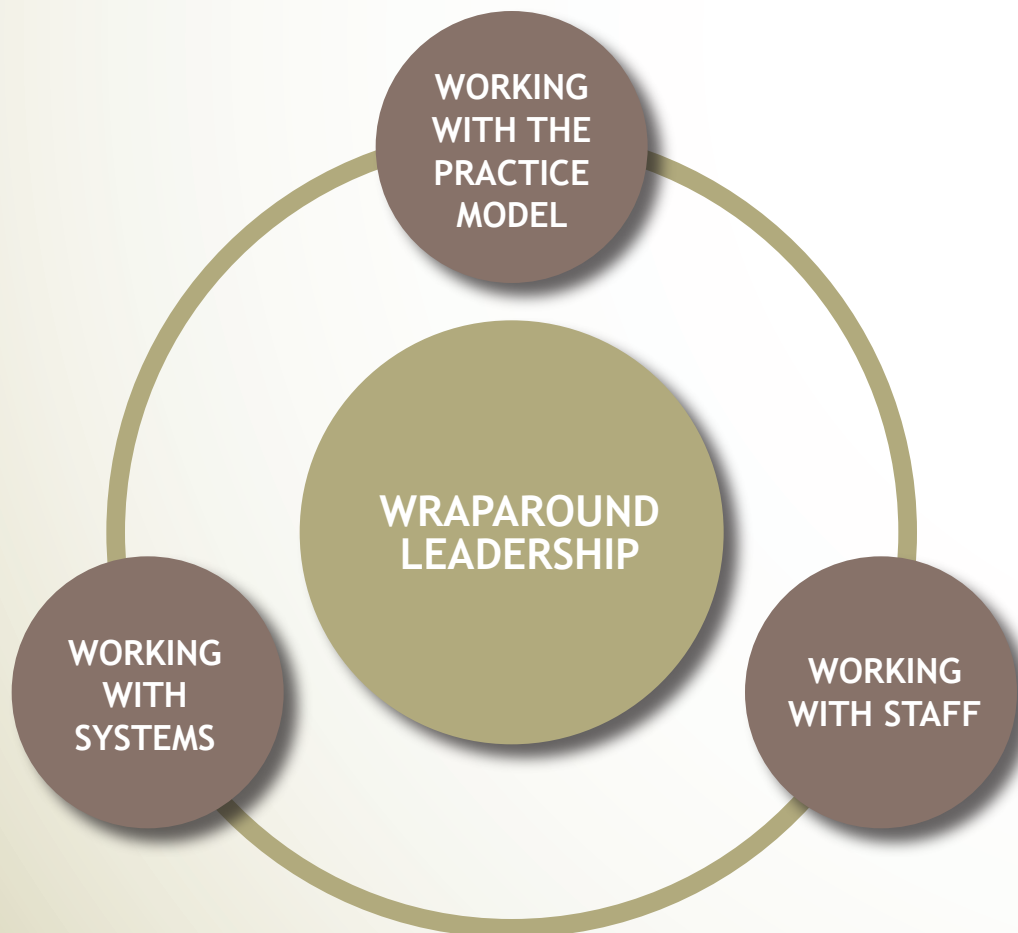
Knowing core practices is different than effectively communicating those practices. The effective supervisor is able to communicate to their

employees and other stakeholders what is expected in a manner that is clear and transparent. This means the skilled wraparound supervisor will need to define not only what needs to happen but how it should happen and why it should happen in this way. The effective wraparound supervisor is able to identify phases or steps as described in a training manual or program brochure and define in detail on how they want these phases to be completed.

*Recognizing Good Wraparound Practice*

When wraparound is accomplished effectively it can often look like an accident of good social work. Wraparound supervisors often find they have a great deal of information about individu-

Figure 1. Three Levels of Focus for Wraparound Supervisors



al families who are participating in the process. This can lead to a model of staffing and expert consultation to staff who are struggling to master a process while meeting the needs of a family. The effective wraparound supervisor is able to move conversations in working with their staff from how the family behaves with the process to how staff follow the process with families. This allows wraparound supervisors to recognize good practice when they see it while coaching to reliable delivery of the steps they've defined in the process.

### *Adapting the Process for the Benefit of Individual Families*

Good wraparound supervisors recognize that the point of wraparound is not just to do wraparound. Rather, the point is to do wraparound so as to help people find ways to meet their needs. Ultimately, as each family joins the process, good facilitators are able to adapt certain elements of wraparound to best fit the family and its situation at that time. Good supervisors create the capacity for that adaptation while still maintaining the basic integrity of process. Wraparound fidelity should not be about everyone delivering wraparound uniformly. Instead it should be about the workforce delivering wraparound reliably.

## **2. Working with Staff**

The second dimension of wraparound involves working with staff. This includes not only communicating the mechanical and implementation aspects of the practice model, but also managing all aspects of what is often a very diverse workforce. Some wraparound projects have a range of staff assigned including wraparound facilitators, wraparound clinicians, parent partners, peer youth partners and, in some locations, youth specialists who provide direct interventions between team meetings. Some wraparound projects operate with facilitators only while others may have one or two of the roles listed above. What is clear is that wraparound supervisors are often faced with a workforce whose members may be more different than alike. This may range from parent partners who have first-person experience within

the system to facilitators who are starting their career in Social Services. Wraparound supervisors who lead a diverse workforce should be prepared demonstrate a variety of skills, described below:

### *Conflict Resolution*

The more diverse the workforce the greater the likelihood that there were be multiple perspectives. The wraparound supervisor should manage conflict creatively in assuring that all of those perspectives are blending into a holistic experience for families.

### *Coaching Staff*

As the range of staff roles grow within the wraparound project, the wraparound supervisor has to develop a capacity to provide proactive, behavioral, field- and office-based coaching and instruction to staff. Coaching and supervising staff is different than maintaining fidelity to the practice model. Instead this is the process by which staff are given clear directives defining how they should perform their duties in a way that adds value to the comprehensive wraparound package.

### *Correcting Staff*

No matter how much proactive coaching has occurred, supervisors will find it necessary to correct staff behavior and practice patterns. Wraparound supervisors have to translate staff behaviors back to the values base that is articulated in a wraparound model and assure those behaviors are being demonstrated in everyday interactions with families and communities. When there is not a fit, wraparound supervisors should provide clear, consis-

*Wraparound supervisors are often faced with a workforce whose members may be more different than alike.*



## Wraparound Staff Roles

Developing a wraparound workforce has become more complicated as wraparound has matured. Initial projects essentially required hiring someone in a facilitator or care coordinator role with basic educational skills. As differences in positions have developed within wraparound, developing an effective workforce has become more challenging. A range of positions exist within wraparound projects across sites. Typical positions include:

### **Wraparound Facilitator/Care Coordinator:**

*This position is typically responsible for organizing the steps of the wraparound process, documenting the plan, hosting and facilitating team meetings, and troubleshooting and organizing support, interventions and services to achieve outcomes.*

### **Parent Partner/Family Partner/ Family Support Partner:**

*This position is typically filled by someone who has first-person experience within the service system on behalf of their child or loved one. The role of this person varies somewhat from site to site but typically those in this role provides peer-to-peer support for family members and consultation about family perspective to the organization and team. The parent partner also participates in activities within the wraparound-implementing agency, including utilization and quality review meetings.*

### **Child & Family Specialist/Community Support Specialist/Intervention Specialists:**

*Some sites have found it helpful to have direct, hands-one practitioners who are available to provide specific interventions as agreed on in the wraparound plan. These individuals will work flexible hours in various locations to provide support and interventions, especially to young people who are participating in wraparound. Support activities can include recreational activities, transportation, and socialization, while more structured interventions might include crisis response, skills building and intensive behavioral intervention.*

### **Wraparound Clinicians:**

*Some projects integrate a clinical perspective by creating unique roles for clinicians within the wraparound project itself. That does not mean that all families get clinical services from that project clinician. Instead the person in that role may do a variety of things including providing clinical consultation to the wraparound staff and team, providing direct clinical interventions as requested by the team, providing crisis support and intervention as needed, and translating wraparound plans into reimbursable Medicaid plans.*

### **Resource Developers/Resource Brokers/ Community Development Specialists:**

*Some projects have found that their ability to practice quality wraparound is enhanced by developing capacity to systematically connect with community resources. Those in this role do more than manage community resource manuals. Instead they are responsible for developing connections among community options and the wraparound project, communicating about options for wraparound staff, negotiating for access for wraparound families within the identified resource, and assisting community resources to maintain a welcoming stance for families involved in wraparound.*

tent and direct feedback about not only what has happened but why it's a problem for the project and what needs to happen instead. The effective wraparound supervisor takes responsibility for fostering an environment in which staff seek to continuously improve their skills while assuring pride in their development as wraparound practitioners.

### *Developing Staff*

As staff become proficient in demonstrating the wraparound process steps, they will undoubtedly want new challenges. This may mean that they are interested in advancing within the wraparound project or may want to move into other departments that have a philosophy that is compatible with the wraparound philosophy. Effective supervisors are able to champion the growth of their workforce by sponsoring and supporting employee talent and continued growth, through formal education/training, lateral transfers, promotions and/or restructuring jobs to enhance growth. Wraparound supervisors walk a fine line when making these adjustments and need to be sure that they are making accommodations that really enhance the employee's strengths, thus improving the overall program performance. Accommodations must be balanced with accountability to ensure that individuals are still producing good outcomes while consistently following practice pathways. (See Sidebar on page 6 for methods of developing staff).

## 3. Working with Systems & Organizations

Quality wraparound implementation takes the combined efforts of practitioners, managers, and partners on the inside who can tame

the bureaucracy and organization, as well as family and community members. Many wraparound projects are initiated as an alternative to other services specifically targeted for those situations that can't be resolved effectively with what's already available. This alternative approach often



makes wraparound programs very political within the host environments in which they are housed. Those involved in trying to serve the family prior to the referral to the wraparound project may feel defensive that the wraparound project will be able to achieve what they couldn't accomplish. This can set up an "us-them" mentality within the organization whether it is housed in a non-profit, public sector or other type of service agency. Some wraparound projects fail because of the inability of the host environment to change. Effective wraparound supervisors must demonstrate the following capacities in working with systems and organizations:

#### *Lateral Alliance Building*

Effective supervisors have the ability to work across departments with peers and others to assure that all employees within an organization or service system feel a sense of ownership and participation in the wraparound project. This means the effective supervisor has to stay away from taking on the role of "hero" within the organization and ultimately realize that a right-size host environment is fully participatory.

#### *Manage Up*

Effective supervisors are those who are able to

produce the right type of practice model within the organization. This requires creating capacity within the organization to tolerate responsible risk taking, realigning rules and policies for individual situations, and working cooperatively with administrative leadership to assure that wraparound is well-placed within the organization. Smart organizational thinkers avoid the trap of developing their wraparound project as a subculture within the larger organization. Instead, they work cooperatively within the organization to increase compatibility between the operations within the wraparound project and those within the larger organization.

#### *Build Out*

Wraparound is a process that we use when we don't know what to do. It's also a process that you can't do alone. Wraparound supervisors find they spend a great deal of their time building connections in addition to those they need to build within their organizational environment. Many wraparound supervisors find they need to develop effective alliances with public systems such as child welfare, juvenile justice or mental health, so that they continue to make referrals to the project. Once the referral is made, wraparound supervisors must manage to assure continued participation by individuals in those systems. This can be a challenge for the individual who is used to referring "to" a service rather than joining with that project. Wraparound supervisors spend a great deal of their time assuring that their staff and project don't end up "going it alone" but instead, bring on everyone together.

#### *Make Over*

Wraparound supervisors should be prepared to partner with others in creating new opportunities within their primary host environment and the within larger service system. The wraparound project is often seen as a laboratory for innovative ideas or strategies and effective wraparound supervisors find ways to work with the organization to apply those strategies across more widely. One example is an organization that has hired parent partners within their wraparound project, and after experimenting in that setting, discovers that the rest of their programs could be enhanced by

## Tips for Developing the Wraparound Workforce

Developing the right workforce can be a challenge for wraparound supervisors, especially if the project is new and designed to be richly staffed with a diversity of roles. These tips can be helpful for individuals who are developing new projects or realigning their staff patterns.

### 1. Recruiting

- a. Use the values base to publicize the staff needs in wraparound to attract individuals who are compatible with the philosophy.
- b. Family/Parent/Support Partners can be recruited from client lists. Cast a wide net by sending out job announcements to all people who have received services in the past year.
- c. Post job announcements in waiting rooms and encourage front desk personnel to distribute.
- d. Direct contact counts. Go to practitioners to get names of potential applicants.
- e. Define your expectations specifically. If you're recruiting for family members who are parents, say so. If you are expecting lots of on-call hours, state that the schedule will be irregular.

### 2. Hiring

- a. Involve parents and young people in interviews from the first contact. This allows the workforce to know you are serious about working with families.
- b. There are two HR Department responses when asked whether you can ask potential family partners about whether they have first-person experience of the system. One answer is "No, that information is privileged." The other answer is "Yes, first-person experience is a fundamental job requirement." Work cooperatively with your HR department to find ways to work through the first stance. One example to work around this includes conduct-

ing group interviews in which material is shared with a group of potential applicants and then they are required to respond to each other while the employer observes. In that circumstance, those with first-person experience will often self-disclose while those who haven't had that experience will become very obvious.

- c. Use situations to get at the values. Most applicants will indicate they are "strength based, culturally competent, needs driven, community based, committed..." during an interview. Use behavioral examples to get at the values rather than simply asking if they believe.

### 3. Training

- a. Use the values to build a foundation but don't stay there too long. If your training doesn't capture how to do something in addition to why to do it, your staff will not be able to demonstrate the skills you need.
- b. Recognize the limits of training. Training will help you define terms but won't necessarily translate to action or good practice.
- c. Involve families receiving services in all aspects of your training. The more your customers know about what's supposed to happen the more they will be able to help you produce it.
- d. Avoid a before and after, us and them paradigm in training. When wraparound began it was clearly an alternative to other frameworks. As services within the larger system have continued to evolve to use more family-centered, strength-based models there is more in common between wraparound and basic practices than before. Materials that speak about moving from one assumption to another (for example a deficit model to a strengths model) may create a context for competition rather than cooperation.

- e. Define what wraparound is in training rather than focusing on what it's not. Use positive, proactive examples that paint a picture of wraparound practice rather than defining wraparound in contrast to more traditional models.

### 4. Supervising

- a. Describe wraparound practices behaviorally and specifically.
- b. Define how you want the values to be delivered in specific, behavioral terms. For example, don't say to staff "be strength based," but instead describe for staff what you want them to do and use the values terminology to tie behaviors to the overall concept.
- c. Actively supervise to the practices you have described and defined.
- d. Recognize that as the supervisor you are responsible for assuring consistency across the breadth of the project.
- e. Share your defined practice model with families
- f. Solicit family feedback about whether you are following your own guidelines.
- g. Seek feedback from a variety of sources and in a variety of settings including attending team meetings and accompanying staff.

### 5. Transitioning

- a. Build vertical and lateral career ladders for the wraparound workforce to advance.
- b. Working within a wraparound environment is not for everyone. Help those that are poorly matched move on quickly.
- c. Establish your limits and communicate those to staff.
- d. Reward demonstrated competence through promotions and opportunities either inside or outside of the wraparound environment.



hiring those with “first person experience of the system.” In this case, the organization has parent partners hired within their foster care, residential, day treatment and outpatient programs. Another example is the wraparound project that involved family members in hiring new staff. Over time, the organization has institutionalized that process in its human resource department by assuring that all new staff, including administrative staff, are screened by family members who are currently receiving services.

### Summary

Wraparound supervision requires a multi-dimensional approach to practice, people, programs and policies. Effective supervisors are often faced with the need to define the practice model, build support for the practice model, and tame policies that may be in conflict with the practice model, while also creating procedures that are compatible with the spirit and intent of wraparound. Very few wraparound supervisors find themselves in situations that don’t require some retrofitting of the host environment. The effective supervisor strikes a balance between the need to work on the larger environmental issues, the need to nurture the work force and the need to continually improve and adapt the process for the benefit of families.

When communities start new wraparound projects, supervisors may find themselves managing a project they have never done before. Staff or others may sometimes raise this as an issue in questioning the capacity of the supervisor to supervise. Some supervisors have elected to take on

the role of facilitator for at least one family to assure they have a good understanding of the process. Others have elected to educate themselves by working closely with staff and being available within a variety of meetings and settings so they can gather information in that manner. Others find themselves networking with peers from other wraparound settings in order to get feedback and information. Some will also use consultants and trainers as a way to build their own confidence and knowledge base. It is important to remember that the skill set for supervising wraparound is different than the skill set for implementing wraparound. Those projects that are maturing and can create promotional opportunities for wraparound staff will do well to remember this. Effective projects invest in building supervisory skills at the same time they are developing strong wraparound capacities.

### Author

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