

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT EVALUATION PLANS FOR HIGH FIDELITY WRAPAROUND



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Prepared by staff from the National Wraparound Initiative, Portland State University; the National Wraparound Implementation Center, University of Maryland; and Wraparound Evaluation and Research Team, University of Washington.

“Intensive Care Coordination Using a High Fidelity Wraparound Process” (i.e., *Wraparound* or *High Fidelity Wraparound*) has been added to the inventory of research supported programs by the [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#), making Wraparound eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement under the Family First Prevention Service Act (FFPSA).

As explained in [this information brief from the NWI](#), Wraparound has been given the designation of “Promising,” which means that its inclusion in a state’s FFPSA five-year plan must be accompanied by a *well-designed and rigorous evaluation strategy*, as well as a plan for *fidelity monitoring and continuous quality improvement (CQI)*.

WHAT IS A WELL-DESIGNED AND RIGOROUS EVALUATION?

FFPSA does not explicitly define a “well-designed and rigorous evaluation strategy,” but the Children’s Bureau commissioned an [Evaluation Plan Development Tip Sheet](#) (ACYF-CB-IM-19-04) to help guide evaluation design for programs included in FFPSA plans.

Although not required, states are encouraged to consider the [study quality requirements](#) established by the Prevention Clearinghouse and aim to design an evaluation that could contribute to the evidence for Wraparound. Strong additional evidence generated for Wraparound could make it eligible for a higher rating from the Clearinghouse in the future. In order for the evidence of a study to be considered, the Clearinghouse

requires specific study design criteria be met. These criteria include, but are not limited to, employing a randomized or quasi-experimental design with at least one intervention group (i.e., Wraparound) and one comparison group (i.e., no treatment or treatment as usual). Furthermore, the study should include at least one of the target outcomes defined by the Clearinghouse’s [Handbook of Standards and Procedures](#). Page 10 of the handbook defines target outcomes for FFPSA programs that include Child Safety, Child Permanency, Child Well-being, and Adult Well-being.

Based on the Clearinghouse’s review, Wraparound demonstrated evidence of favorable effects in Child Permanency and Child Well-being (i.e., behavioral and emotional functioning). However, *Wraparound would benefit from additional well-designed studies that provide data on target outcomes at a minimum of six months following discharge*, which would provide evidence for long term effects of Wraparound.

If states are interested in designing an evaluation that can contribute to the evidence considered by the Prevention Clearinghouse, the evaluation plan must

include a comparison group that is receiving little or no intervention or treatment as usual. For example, this could include a waitlist control group or a group of youth receiving standard case management services. These groups can be formed through either random assignment or they can be matched based on key characteristics (e.g., needs and strengths, demographics) to create equivalent groups. Randomization may occur at various levels, such as randomizing families to condition (i.e., Wraparound vs. treatment as usual) or randomizing jurisdictions or centers to providing Wraparound vs. treatment as usual. For example, the randomization process could be done as a staged rollout in which certain jurisdictions or centers are randomly selected and supported to begin providing Wraparound and the remaining jurisdictions or centers serve as the control group until the next round of staff training.

The level of rigor required for study inclusion by the Clearinghouse may be unworkable for many states who want to include Wraparound in their FFPSA plans. However, it is important to note that, even though the ACF seeks to find opportunities for states to “contribute to the evidence,” *this level of rigor is not required*. What is required is a thorough and thoughtful evaluation plan for Wraparound which will still provide meaningful information for the state implementing Wraparound and the field as whole.

As evaluation plans for Wraparound are developed, other key considerations that should be described in a state’s evaluation plan include:

- » **Scope and purpose of the evaluation:** What questions will be answered through this evaluation? Is the implementation of the program being evaluated?
- » **Target population:** Who is the target population to be served by Wraparound? What are the eligibility criteria to be enrolled in Wraparound? How is eligibility being assessed?
- » **Evaluation design:** How is the evaluation being designed to assess outcomes? What methodology is being used (e.g., RCT, QED, pre- and posttest)?

- » **Comparison group:** Who is in the comparison group for youth served by Wraparound? How are they being selected (i.e., randomization vs. matching)?
- » **Process outcomes:** What are the procedures or policies that ensure successful implementation and outcomes (e.g., caseload size, timely engagement, workforce training)? How are these being measured? How is fidelity to the Wraparound model being assessed?
- » **Target outcomes:** What youth-level outcomes are being evaluated? How are these outcomes being measured? What are the psychometric properties of standardized tools being used to assess outcomes? Over what period of time are outcomes being measured?
 - › Evaluation plans can also include an optional cost evaluation.

Tools and Strategies for Fidelity Monitoring and CQI

In addition to a rigorous evaluation strategy, states must provide a plan for how Wraparound implementation “will be continuously monitored to ensure fidelity to the practice model, to determine outcomes achieved and identify how information learned from the monitoring will be used to refine and improve practices.”¹ FFPSA plans will need to specify the tool(s) and procedures being used to assess fidelity as well as other data used to monitor implementation and plan for regular reporting of findings.

Several fidelity and implementation support tools have been developed that could help meet this fidelity monitoring and CQI requirement. [The Wraparound Fidelity Assessment System \(WFAS\)](#) has tools that can be used to regularly assess fidelity through multiple methods, including team observations, documentation reviews, and/or youth, family, and Wraparound team member surveys. To support the collection of WFAS tools and other data, a new [data management system, WrapStat](#), has been developed by the Wraparound Evaluation and

1. [Implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act: A Technical Guide for Agencies, Policymakers and Other Stakeholders.](#)

Research Team (WERT). In addition to automatically sending fidelity surveys and capturing fidelity data, WrapStat enables other elements of more rigorous evaluation, such as representative sampling, and collection of other key data elements, including demographics, enrollment, and outcomes such as reason for discharge and residential, school, and community outcomes. WrapStat will also be able to generate reports that can be used for regular reporting within a CQI plan.

Additionally, system- and organizational-level tools have been developed through the [National Wraparound Implementation Center](#) to monitor important factors that contribute to the successful implementation of Wraparound (e.g., Wraparound Implementation Standards for Programs). These tools align with the ACF requirements for collecting process outcomes and can enable states to assess and monitor the impact of training, workforce development, and organization and system level factors that are key to assuring successful implementation of Wraparound.

What Else Do You Need to Know?

- » In addition to the evaluation and CQI plans, states will be required to report specific child-level data for every child receiving Title IV-E services. These data include demographics, types and dates of service utilization, service costs, and foster care entry status. The Children’s Bureau provides specific guidance on these data elements and data submission processes ([Revised Technical Bulletin #1](#)).
- » Now that Wraparound is rated by the Clearinghouse, states may claim reimbursement at a 50% federal financial participation (FFP) for administrative costs for data collection and reporting expenses associated with their evaluation plans. There will not be funding available for information systems changes.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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Questions?

If you have questions about the status of the Wraparound evidence base, or seek to use validated quality and fidelity tools developed by University of Washington Wraparound Evaluation and Research Team (UW WERT), please contact them at wrapeval@uw.edu.

Information on training, coaching, and technical assistance can also be obtained via inquiries to these emails, or via the website of the National Wraparound Implementation Center (NWIC) at www.nwic.org.