

# Preface

Dear Reader,

Since first convening in 2003, the basic mission of the National Wraparound Initiative has been to promote understanding about the wraparound model and its benefits, and to provide the field with guidance that facilitates high quality and consistent wraparound implementation. In its early stages, the NWI served as the convening point for wraparound experts nationally to develop consistent definitions of wraparound, including descriptions of the principles of wraparound, basic activities of the process, and characteristics of supportive communities and systems. More recently, we have committed to more actively support high-quality wraparound implementation by developing and disseminating accountability and quality assurance tools, providing hands-on technical assistance, and developing a membership-based national community of practice.

A few years ago, a workgroup within the NWI began to explore the idea of developing standards for wraparound implementation. However, after initial discussions, the group reached a consensus that it was not advisable to establish hard and fast “rules.” Instead, the group decided that the NWI should develop resources that would provide guidance about wraparound implementation while also recognizing that implementation must be undertaken in a way that fits with the local strengths, needs and resources of individual communities. The workgroup members felt it

was of particular importance to develop practical information that was specifically tailored for managers and administrators who are involved in developing, implementing, managing, funding, or improving community or state wraparound projects. This information would provide guidance not only about what sort of implementation support was needed for wraparound, but also how managers and administrators could go about building the needed support. Thus the idea for a “how-to” manual was born.

As in the past, the NWI relied on the individual and collective expertise of its members to provide content for this new publication. Members of the NWI’s Standards Workgroup took the lead in generating material for inclusion in the proposed manual. Workgroup members were asked to contribute material related to each



of the six “themes” or areas of wraparound implementation: *community partnership; collaborative action; fiscal policies and sustainability; access to needed supports and services; human resource development and support; and accountability*. For each theme, workgroup members provided information regarding key considerations to keep in mind, the most critical things to accomplish, and the biggest dangers or pitfalls to avoid. Once the workgroup members’ contributions had been gathered, we approached two individuals who have extensive experience in supporting wraparound implementation across North America and asked them to synthesize the raw material into a practical guide for supervisors, managers, and administrators.

The result is the current document, the *Wraparound Implementation Guide: A How-To Guide for Administrators and Managers*. The *Implementation Guide* is designed to provide a “road map” for those in program and system oversight roles for wraparound, to help keep them focused on the range of important issues in overseeing effective wraparound practice.

It is important to recognize, however, that supporting wraparound is not a step-by-step process. As described in the introductory chapter, wraparound implementation is complex, and work related to one particular theme is not independent of work related to other themes. Progress in one area can reinforce, allow, or accelerate progress in other areas; and each community will likely have different priority areas to work on at different junctures. Thus, the *Guide* is not designed to be read from cover to cover, but should instead be seen as a working document that one can go back to over time. Toward this end, we have built troubleshooting sections and self-assessments into the *Guide*, so that an administrator or community team can use these tools periodically to check how well they are doing.

One more point is worth making. As Co-Coordinator, we are often asked whether (“when”) the NWI will in fact establish and disseminate hard and fast expectations or “standards” for wraparound implementation, such as caseload sizes, mandated training and coaching activities, necessary staffing patterns, required evaluation measures, and so forth. Indeed, establishing expectations in these areas is important because we firmly believe that the success of every wraparound initiative will be based largely on the nature and quality of the system and program support that is involved. We also have research that backs up this belief. Thus, the NWI wants to be able to actively shape the development of communities, systems, and programs so that wraparound initiatives will succeed and children and families will thrive.

At the same time, we also believe that one of the unique strengths of wraparound is its conceptual adaptability to local needs and its ability to benefit from local innovations. We recognize that every community implements wraparound differently based on unique conditions. This means that, while we need to promote systems and organizations that support wraparound across a defined set of domains, application of overly rigid standards runs the risk of constraining local individualization, adaptation, and innovation. What’s more, with too many rigid standards in place, many communities might decide that adopting the wraparound principles in practice is too costly or not worth the effort, de-railing the movement toward more collaborative, individualized, family- and youth-driven service systems.

To reflect this creative tension, we have taken guidance from NWI advisors and developed the *Implementation Guide to Wraparound* in a way that is intended to provide direction on how to achieve accommodating conditions in the six areas of community support without demanding that there is only one way to get there. In

fact, the initial draft was constructed like a traveler’s guidebook – presenting useful maps, tips, and facts without suggesting there was only one route the traveler had to take in order to have a successful voyage. Even though we eventually decided to make the *Guide* more straightforward we think this initial inspiration remains.

We hope the flexible guidance provided here can help you and your community, jurisdiction, or state stay focused on high-quality wraparound implementation across this range of specific, research-informed areas, while still allowing you to take a route that works best for you, your stakeholders, and, most importantly, your young people and families.

Sincerely,

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