



Family Partners Task Force: Request for Information

We have been asked to find out what some of the standards are (if there are any) outside of Maryland for the number of families a Family Support Peer Partner should carry specifically in wraparound. Have any standards been set for good practice models such as the 1:10 ratio for care coordinators? If so, what are they? If they haven't been set, have they been discussed? What are you finding to be the norm? Do you have an opinion on what the ideal should be?

*Thanks for your help!
Marlene*

Here in Colorado Springs we have adopted the ratio of 1:10 cases for both Wrap facilitators and FSP. We chose 10 arbitrarily (National ave 8-12). Now, it is also based on the type of population we are serving. Our population are multi-system involved child welfare and at-risk youth/families. Given the needs and the demand of that population group I think this is a reasonable number. Most other agencies in Colorado do not go over 15.

*Art Navalta, Wrap Coach
El Paso County, Colorado*

I believe that we wrote 10 but no more than 14 in the Austin Children's Partnership SOC grant

*Patti Derr
Texas Federation of Families*

In Los Angeles County the number is 1:10

*Jack Spies, Assistant Program Director
Parent Partners*

I am not sure if a standard has been set; however I can say I think that eleven to one is too much.

*Vicki Creel, Family Partner
Wraparound Oregon: Early Childhood Project*

We do not have a ratio because it depends on the needs of individual teams. I would say that a ballpark would be about 12.

Nancy Borreani

In Oklahoma the ratio is 15 families per team of an FSP and a Wrap Facilitator.

Susan Boehrer

I would warn people that when you starting setting standards then you automatically set the stage for looking for ways to streamline or "automate" the service. This goes against the principle that Wraparound Services should be individualized based on family strengths and needs. Also, it may be possible for say a more experienced family support/care coordinator to carry a case load of 12 given that maybe most of the families are higher functioning and maybe further along in the service, but it would also seem that a caseload of 6 to 8 "new" families would also challenge a care coordinator that is less experienced. Besides care coordinator experience other factors such as functioning level (strengths and needs) of the families served, length in service, types and policies of the systems involved with the family, culture, etc. should all be considered when trying to determine appropriate caseloads or standards.

Alan Rabideau, Family Consultant/Advocate

I thoroughly agree with Alan. Our ratio varies from 5 to 10 depending on all of the factors Allan has described. They are not set but are discussed at every staff meeting. When a new family came into services we had a discussion who is the best fit, how many families are they already serving, what is the new family's level of need. We have several times when the need is very great had two family team workers (out term) assigned to one family during the stabilization period.

Sue Smith

Georgia Parent Support Network

I'm having a hard time wondering why we want to set a caseload standard for the peer support partners. It all depends on how involved the partner needs to be. Each family is different and each community is different so the positions can be used very differently. We have parent wraparound facilitators who are working with as many as 10 or 12 families and some who are only involved with 5 or 6 because of the intensity of needs and where they are in the process. Also, a more experienced facilitator would be able to handle more than a new facilitator.

As far as peer partners go, it all depends on what they are doing. Some of our partners are attending meetings with parents and helping them navigate the special education maze as well as attending their wraparound meetings. Some are helping families with basic needs - including job hunting. One of my partners is brand new to the work so she is translating for families while she learns everything else, so she has a larger caseload while she is training but for those families that is all she is doing - translating at school meetings for the experienced partners who know special education but cannot speak Spanish, with the idea that she will then have her own smaller caseload later.

Beth Berndt

McHenry County Family CARE

Our Family Support Specialists (our name for family partners) don't have a set caseload. However, our program also works with families at all levels of need and may not necessarily be part of our county or state wrap project. We don't refuse support to any family enrolled in our services, so we do have a triage system in place. We also

work very closely with our system partners and our local family organizations to ensure families get connected with a family partner even though it may not be within our program. My Family Support Specialists carry caseloads anywhere from 7 to 17, keeping in mind that we work with families at all levels of need. We try to balance caseloads so everyone has a few families that are higher need and may have several meetings a month (CFT's, IEP's, Family Decision meetings, court hearings, etc.) and also have families that only ask for phone consultation on certain issues or may only need us to attend a couple IEP meetings and the issue is resolved. It is a balancing act and we try very hard to maintain that balance. All of our Support Specialists have children within systems themselves so we also take time out to support each other and make sure we are communicating our own personal needs with one another. We make sure that the families with more intense needs know their Support Specialist and are also familiar with another Support Specialist in our program so we are able to "cover" for one another if necessary.

Ally Linfoot, Family Involvement/Family Support Services
Albertina Kerr/Morrison Child & Family Services

After talking with folks in our state (Washington) who are utilizing Family/Youth Partners I discovered as a general rule they have found that a ratio of 1:15 is the norm for a fulltime Family/Youth Partner. I also learned these can fluctuate depending on the intensity of & challenges faced by the team.

Jeanette Barnes, Family Liaison

Maybe it isn't as easy as looking at ratios. I think we may have too considered job descriptions also.

Sue Smith
Georgia Parent Support Network

What we have on this project is a facilitation/family partner team approach to wrap. We model a collaborative working relationship between professional and family members so that the wrap team sees the respect and collaboration we expect within our teams.

Either one of us but usually both may be taking calls from wrap team members, handling flex fund requests, attending court hearing, etc. Usually we present in the community as a team and so attend those things together. Also, correspondence and other communication from wrap team members is processed between facilitator and family partner. We, as family partners have a very empowered position, which has been very effective, however, it does add duties and responsibilities. So the work load might be different than another model.

Vicki Creel, Family Partner
Wraparound Oregon: Early Childhood Project

Dear Family Taskforce Members,

What an extraordinary coalition this is. The communication system set up through the NWI allows for exploration of pertinent topics or for support and information

needed by any one of us to find the tools we need to do our work. We put out a question at about 3pm on a Friday and you are all so passionate about family support that you responded right through the weekend.

Clearly the questions regarding numbers of families a family partner should be serving brings up many complex issues. While we try to serve families based on their needs, we often find that funding, organizational structure and a variety of workforce issues get thrown into the mix.

Many years ago (almost 10!) we set up the first family support organizations in NJ with the help of a SAMHSA grant. Very quickly, our state rolled with it and fifteen family organizations were funded to, among other things, deliver peer support to families on wraparound teams. Each organization was representative of a county or jurisdiction. Very locally based. There were only 3 family partners to 18 care managers at each local site. As families were referred in, there would, over time, be 180 families per site. The family organizations and all of the players (state, our technical assistance partners, families, providers etc.) sat down together through many tough sessions and determined that there were a few ways to handle this but we agreed on the following:

- Every family would have an opportunity to work with the family partner
- Family partners would work very closely with care managers (strategic partnership as part of contract)
- Roles and responsibilities had to be clearly established
- Family partners would work with families very early on and support their understanding of wrap, help the building of the team and kind of get them through the early implementation phase. Families would understand early on that they and the family partners would be planning when family partners would be transitioning off of the team. Is the family calling care manager or other provider on their own as needed? Are the family needs driving this plan? Does the family speak up during meetings? Has a supportive team been built? These are some of the questions that would help determine when it was time to transition off of the team. There were no hard rules about when they had to transition off. Much as Sue Smith described, the family partners would discuss monthly which families were receiving “intensive support, moderate support or just supportive contact”

One very positive note here is that there is total flexibility. It is understood that a family’s needs can change, so even if a family partner has been off of the team they can rejoin if the family wishes them to. Also, if a family has very complex needs, the family partner can stay with that family longer. The other thing that probably makes it work is that each organization is funded to run support groups and host events. So families are encouraged from day one to become part of the local family movement, thereby creating some informal supports. Clearly this kind of a ratio is not what many would find ideal... but it was what we had. All of the family organizations continue to provide family support.

If anyone wants to see any of the documents that we drew up to support this statewide effort let me know and I will send it to you.

Best,

Marlene Penn, Family Technical Assistance Consultant

Hi all this is Carolyn at 3 Rivers Wraparound in Kennewick WA. Because of the high intensity that some of our families come with and depending on full/part time we really have to individualize it to the position and the job description and who strengths may be a good fit for the family and youth.

Carolyn Cox, Family Support Coordinator

3 Rivers Wraparound Program