Introduction

Wraparound is a defined, team-based process for developing and implementing individualized care plans for youth with serious and complex needs and their families. Since the first publication on wraparound in 1988, the research base has grown; however, a comprehensive review has not yet been conducted.

The purpose of this study was to systematically review and describe the published literature on Wraparound between 1988 and 2012. The goals of the review were:

To thematically categorize Wraparound research by the purpose, design, rigor, measures, and main foci;

To synthesize and describe any patterns or trends in research studies and findings over time; and

To derive implications from the existing research and identify areas for further study.

Methods

“Literature” was defined broadly to include research such as experimental, quasi-experimental, and descriptive studies; Thought pieces; commentaries; and literature reviews. Search engines used included PsycInfo, Web of Science, Medline, Social Work Abstracts, and ERIC.

A keyword search was performed with terms such as (“Wraparound”) AND (“Wrap-Around” OR “Wrap Around”) AND (“Wraparound Services”) AND (“Wraparound Process”) AND (“Intensive Community-based Services”) AND (“Targeted Care Management”). Journal articles, books/book chapters, and dissertations were included, while book reviews, monographs, and conference presentations were excluded. Only English-language publications were included.

After removing duplicates and non-relevant publications, N=198 publications were found. Of the 198 publications, 75% were journal articles, 14% were books/book chapters, and 11% were dissertations.

The publications were reviewed and coded by two coders based on their purpose, design, rigor, measures, and main foci. A Kappa coefficient of 0.80 was found, indicating excellent Inter-rater reliability.

Results

From 1996-2010, a mean of 10 Wraparound-related studies were published every year. From 2010-2012, the number has increased to between 15-24 publications (see Figure 1).

Fifty percent (n=99) of the publications found were empirical studies; the other 50 percent were non-empirical. Among the empirical publications, experimental studies were rare:

—Methods used for empirical publications:
  • Non-experimental (38%)
  • Descriptive (23%)
  • Quasi-experimental (16%)
  • Case study (14%)
  • Experimental (8%)

The purpose of most (56%) of empirical publications was to examine the impact of
Figure 1. Annual/cumulative number of empirical and non-empirical publications by year

Table 1. Percentage of articles by non-exclusive categories (all publications)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Focus of Publication</th>
<th>% of All Publications*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wraparound or System of Care principles</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth functioning</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living situation or restrictiveness</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation or research strategies</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team functioning</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBPs</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of various systems in the system of care</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n=198
Wraparound on the population served, while 21% of the publications aimed to describe the Wraparound program.

Of the non-empirical publications, 76% were a thought piece, 14% were commentary on a previously published article, and 9% were literature reviews. Figure 2 shows additional details of this breakdown.

Table 1 breaks down the main foci of all the publications. These categories are non-exclusive.
Table 2 provides information about the design and most common measures used in the 99 empirical studies.

Discussion

The literature on the wraparound process has grown linearly over the past 25 years, with a recent (2010-2012) acceleration in rate of publications. Special journal sections focusing on Wraparound (e.g., Journal of Child and Family Studies special sections in 1996, 2006 and 2011) have punctuated the growth.

The literature is evenly split between empirical and non-empirical publications (e.g., commentaries and reviews).

Until recently, very few studies measured fidelity. Even fewer used an experimental design, such as randomized assignment to groups. In the past 10 years, however, there has been an increase in empirical studies, with more quasi-experimental studies, studies of the association between fidelity and outcomes, and of the role of implementation supports. Nonetheless, the research base would benefit greatly from more rigorous studies.

Under the aegis of the NWI, the current project will expand to include evaluations in the “gray literature,” produce an annually updated, searchable database for use by the field, and inform benchmarking of process and outcomes.

Table 2. Percentage of articles in non-exclusive categories (empirical studies only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design and Measures Used</th>
<th>% of Empirical Publications*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standardized measures</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-standardized measures</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity measures</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison individuals</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison site</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed a scale</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used random assignment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n=99
Bibliography of Wraparound Literature


This work was supported by the Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch of SAMHSA, through Task Orders with the American Institutes of Research and University of Maryland School of Social Work.

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Suggested Citation:


Peer reviewed through the NWI.