

National Wraparound Initiative

As this issue of *Focal Point* clearly illustrates, Wraparound is as much a philosophy and a grassroots movement as it is an intervention. This unique nature of Wraparound has proven to be a source of both strength and difficulty. Normally, an intervention is designed and tested by a single person or group. In contrast, Wraparound practice and supporting policies have evolved through a process of ongoing innovation on the part of families, trainers, and providers around the nation. This process has stimulated a kind of creativity that would never have occurred within a less flexible model. On the other hand, the lack of shared standards or guidelines for Wraparound practice has created problems around issues of quality assurance and fidelity.

In true Wraparound fashion, a team approach is being used to address these difficulties. In Portland, Oregon, on June 25, 2003, the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health hosted a national group of over 30 parents, parent advocates, Wraparound trainers, practitioners, program administrators, researchers, and systems of care technical assistance providers. This was the first meeting of the Advisory Group of a new *National Wraparound Initiative*. At this initial meeting, the group reaffirmed the need for clearer definition of the Wraparound model, discussed potential methods for conducting such work, and described specific products that should result. By the end of the meeting, the group reached a consensus about what is most needed to promote high quality in Wraparound:

- Clear definitions of the terms used to describe the Wraparound philosophy and practice;
- Specific strategies on how to achieve high quality Wraparound at the family, team, provider, and system levels;
- Minimum standards for Wraparound practice and for supporting families, teams, and practitioners;
- Implementation and fidelity tools—aligned with the strategies and standards for Wraparound—that can inform quality improvement and be used for more rigorous evaluation; and
- Handbooks for youth, caregivers, practitioners, and team members that explain Wraparound and what should be expected during implementation.

The coordinators of the Initiative have proposed using a web-enabled group process in an effort to achieve consensus in the first three areas listed above. Later stages of the effort would focus on producing implementation guides, handbooks, and fidelity tools. The overall goal of the Initiative is to preserve the creative essence and innovative spirit of Wraparound while also providing specific guidelines and resources to support high quality implementation.

— Eric Bruns & Janet S. Walker