

Does Wraparound Need Enhancement?

Wraparound has resulted in life changing improvement and outcomes for thousands of youth and families. Some carefully controlled evaluations have shown significant improvements in outcomes. Unfortunately, efficacy research has had mixed outcomes and inconsistent results in moving the process to overall community implementation. Experiences in communities and reports from staff and supervisors suggest that wraparound is very effective for youth and families who are ready for change and in the action stage of behavioral change. The process of bringing together a team of people to support and integrate their services and support can be very effective. On the other hand, many of the youth and families referred to wraparound have significant needs, are less ready and committed to change. Wraparound has proven to be much less effective in engaging and motivating these youth and families to successful outcomes.

Our commitment to high fidelity wraparound has been strong and constant for more than 30 years. For over 20 years, VVDB has worked to consistently to evolve and improve wraparound. Over the last ten years, we've seen wraparound become more mechanical in its application and less flexible to help families. In some areas of practice, it had become cumbersome and challenging to implement. We are seeing too many youth and families who do not fully engage in the process or are not sufficiently motivated to complete the process and achieve their visions. The purposes of this first study was to quantify some of the concerns from staff and supervisors, begin the process of assessing some of aspects of engagement and motivation within the high-fidelity wraparound process, and provide some insight to support wraparound process enhancement.

This study is an exploratory analysis of two of the outcome measures related to engagement and motivation for youth and families receiving high fidelity wraparound. Many of the youth and families who are referred to wraparound are ambivalent about making changes in their lives and participating in a process to support that change. To be an effective service for those youth with the most severe needs it is important that the process be effective in supporting the engagement and motivation to give the process and staff a chance. The first measure was the proportion of youth referred and oriented to wraparound who decide to participate in the process.

Once youth/families have begun the process successful wraparound should support levels of engagement and motivation sufficient to complete the process. Data from multiple state programs shows that youth who remain with wraparound for at least four months are much more likely to have positive outcomes. The second outcome measure related to engagement and motivation is the proportion of youth who complete the process. Using data collected for state monitoring of wraparound we examine the proportion of youth referred and orientated to wraparound who begin services and the proportion who complete the process. To minimize confounding variables the programs selected for comparison were scoring at or above national means for wraparound fidelity on the WFI 4.0 or WFI EZ.

Method

Participants

The total pool of referred participants was 10,287 youth. 1,034 of these youth did not follow through on the referral and 1,472 were found to either not meet eligibility criteria or not eligible for the funding source. (This second group of youth were referred to other services). The resulting participants were 7,781 youth with severe emotional disorders who were referred and determined eligible for wraparound and state funding for the program. These youth were served by 62 agencies in five states.

The participants in the second analysis were the 6,240 youth who completed the first three sessions

Outcome Measures and Coding Procedures

To be eligible the youth (and their families) completed an initial intake and orientation session to wraparound. Youth who completed three sessions were considered enrolled in the process. Youth who completed the orientation and then refused services or dropped out before completing the third session were considered not engaged.

For the second measure there were three general categories of discharge from services. Goals were met and/or staff and youth and family agreed the process was complete and a success, youth dropped out of service prior to completing services, and youth became ineligible for services by either moving out of the catchment area or being disenrolled from the funding program.

In addition, each program was evaluated by outside evaluators on the fidelity of the wraparound provided by the program using the WFI 4.0 or the WFI EZ. The scores from these evaluations were reported to the state office and the local program.

Data Collection

Data was collected by the local agency on a monthly report of the status of every youth and family served by the program. Data was sent to the state central evaluation unit. State evaluation staff did quarterly site reviews to check the accuracy of the data. The data was used to assess program outcomes and effectiveness of the local agency. The data was collected from July 2015 through June 2016 and data collection continued until March 2017 to include the final discharge outcomes for all included youth.

Outcome Measures

Engagement

Begins Services - Youth/family provided written consent to participate in wraparound and has completed three sessions including the initial orientation/intake.

Declines Service - Youth/family are determined eligible for services and meet medical necessity and refuse services after the orientation and intake.

Not Eligible for Services - Does not meet funding or medical necessity for wraparound.

Does Not respond to Referral - Referred for services but does not follow-up on calls and letters to set the initial orientation/intake to the service

Motivation

Goals Met - Youth /family and wraparound staff agree enough progress made youth no longer needs wraparound support.

Withdrawn from Services - Youth/family withdraws consent without meeting goals.

Moved - Youth/family moves out of catchment area and is no longer eligible.

Not Eligible - Youth no longer eligible for Wraparound due to loss of eligibility for funding or medical necessity

Results

The first part of the study looked at the proportion of youth/families who were referred for services who choose to participate and begin the process. 10,287 youth were referred for wraparound in the 62 programs. Of these 1,034 did not follow-up on the referral or declined to consider the service when contacted by the program and 1,472 were determined to not be eligible either for the finding source or did not meet medical necessity. These 2,506 youth were excluded from the sample because they did not receive the initial contact and orientation for wraparound and thus their non-participation was not a reflection of staff interactions. This resulted in 7,781 youth who were eligible and who attended the orientation and intake sessions.

	Eligible	No Follow through	Not Eligible	Total Referred
Number of Referred Youth	7781	1034	1472	10287
Percentage	75.6%	10.1%	14.3%	
	Started Services	Refused Services	Total Eligible	
Number of Eligible Youth	6240	1541	7781	
Percentage	80.2%	19.8%		

Of the 7,781 youth 6,240 choose to participate in the wraparound process. Thus, after the initial orientation and intake session 19.8% of the youth/families choose not to participate.

The second part of the study looked at the proportion of youth/families who completed the process. This meant that either their goals were met, or the staff and youth/family agreed that they were ready to continue in their change process without the support of wraparound staff. During the wraparound process 645 youth become ineligible for services (lost their funding source or failed to meet medical necessity) and 257 moved out of the catchment area. These 902 youth were excluded from the sample because their withdrawal from the program did not reflect on staff interactions or motivation. This

left 6,240 youth eligible to determine the proportion who met their goals or completed the process. 3,714 of the youth (69.7%) met their goals or completed the process and 1,624 (34.4%) withdrew from services without completing it.

	Goals Met	Withdrawn from Services	Not Eligible	Moved	Total Eligible
Number of Eligible Youth	3714	1624	645	257	6240
Percentage	59.6%	26.1%	10.3%	4.1%	
	Goals Met	Withdrawn from Services	Remained Eligible		
Number who Youth	3714	1624	5388		
Percentage	69.7%	30.4%			

Discussion

The questions of the exploratory study are to determine the need for enhancement of the wraparound process and to suggest possible directions for that enhancement if needed. The review of outcomes for engagement and process completion for 62 programs in five states finds that more than 10% of the youth/families do not follow-up on referrals for wraparound and of those that do 19.8% choose not to participate and of those who do 30.4% do not complete the process or meet their goals. This 44.2% of youth/families either choose to not participate or stopped participating before meeting their goals. This large proportion of youth/families who do not have success with the process is likely a primary reason for the mixed results in the efficacy research. In addition, the failure to engage and build motivation is a likely factor in the large number of youth/families who do not have success with wraparound. The many reports of youth/families who are referred but don't appear to be committed to behavior change suggests a need to enhance the process to be successful with youth/families in earlier stages of change.

Of course, this is exploratory data and only indirectly reflects on engagement and motivation. It supports the notion that a large proportion of youth/families who are referred for wraparound are not ready and committed to make behavior change and the wraparound process does not stimulate sufficient engagement and motivation for these youth/families to be successful. The data is an indirect measure of engagement and motivation and more research on the actual reasons for failure to benefit from the wraparound process is needed. That wraparound is not successful for over 44% of the eligible and oriented youth/families should be of great concern and finding ways to enhance wraparound to improve these outcomes is important.

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