Wraparound Process

Background of this term

A strategy in children's mental health is the "wraparound process" or "wraparound services." Recently adapted by American Indian/Alaska Native child welfare programs, this intervention features aspects that seem to be a good fit for Native communities.

The term "wraparound" was first used in the early 1980s by Dr. Lenore Behar from North Carolina to describe a process where a variety of community-based services are applied to the needs of an individual family. That is according to the National Wraparound Institute, headquartered in Portland, Oregon.

In 1998, Duke University held an organizing meeting of child advocates, researchers, wraparound trainers, and facilitators in response to the growing use of wraparound interventions, in order to clarify the specifics of what wraparound is.

From that meeting came 10 founding principals of the wraparound approach (see other page), and other clarifying details have emerged since.

Wraparound in Indian Country

In a tribal casino's meeting space in Washington state, a recent wraparound training happened for the child mental health system of care staff at the Lummi Indian Nation's behavioral health agency.

Conducted by the Native American Training Institute (NATI), the training culminated in a simulated wraparound planning meeting for a Native teenage boy who was facing possible incarceration at a delinquency center far from his reservation and family.

NATI Director Deborah Painte said, "The wraparound plan itself is used to identify the needs of the youth and the goals that the youth and his or her family will work towards with the assistance of the team and community."

She added that a wraparound plan will list short-term goals that can be accomplished in 30 days or less, so that as they are completed, it will eventually lead to accomplishment of the long-terms goals (six months or more) in specified life domain areas chosen by the youth, family, and team.

A wraparound planning role-play exercise was to convene a circle of contacts from a youth's school, family, neighborhood, community, spiritual connection, and institutions connected to the youth such as the child's case manager or local law enforcement officer. The meeting was moderated by an organizer.

One of the most important aspects that was highlighted at this Lummi staff training was that wraparound means you speak about the child using strength-based language. Each participant speaks about the strengths of that youth to build upon, rather than identifying negative aspects to highlight and address.

Deborah commented that "culture-based wraparound" in tribal communities means the culture is the

Commentary and Professional Perspectives

"Jan Birkland, a wraparound coordinator from the Turtle Mountain Sacred Child Program in North Dakota, told me about the time she was explaining what wraparound was to a parent. Another parent chimed in and said, 'it's like when I bring the Kool-aid, you bring the sugar.' In that simple statement, the parent conveys the concept that we all bring our resources and strengths together with what we have in the community, i.e., the water, we can make something good."

Deborah Painte, MPA
Native American Training Institute Director

"So the ideal wraparound process emphasizes the family and youth's choice of support in the wraparound team; i.e., grandparents, aunties, spiritual leaders. Most importantly, the process ideally focuses on child and family strengths and allows for time to build trust."

Jill Shepard Erickson, M.S.W.,
First Nations Behavioral Health
Association Executive Director

Additional Resources

National Wraparound Initiative of Portland State University
www.nwi.pdx.edu
This website has a downloadable publication, "Resource Guide to Wraparound," which contains descriptions, practice models, comments from youth and family members, articles, tools, and resources.

Native American Training Institute
www.nativeinstitute.org/training.htm
This website includes the training module "Wraparound in Indian Country: The Ways of the People are Who We Are," described as an adaptation of national training incorporating Native American perspectives and best practices learned by tribes.

foundation on which the wraparound process is based so that the cultural protocols, practices, and values are embedded throughout the process.

It seems that this aspect, along with the concept of an entire community being convened, via representatives, to address the needs of a child and/or family, is what makes wraparound services such an attractive option in Indian Country.

The fictional role-play of the teen male and his safety plan included getting services by clinics and therapists, and also more participation in sports, going hunting, and assistance with transportation and supervision after school while his mother worked. These tasks were shared among the people in the circle, illustrating that the interventions are not merely clinical, but cultural and social, shared among neighbors, trusted friends, and family.

This may be the more critical aspect of wraparound usage in Indian Country—the organized outreach among caring individuals around a child to see what is needed and to make the effort to fill the gap.

The Ten Principles of Wraparound[*]

1. Family voice and choice
Family and youth/child perspectives are intentionally elicited and prioritized during all phases of the wraparound process. Planning is grounded in family members' perspectives, and the team strives to provide options and choices such that the plan reflects family values and preferences.

2. Team-based
The wraparound team consists of individuals agreed upon by the family and committed to the family through informal, formal, and community support and service relationships.

3. Natural supports
The team actively seeks out and encourages the full participation of team members drawn from family members' networks of interpersonal and community relationships. The wraparound plan reflects activities and interventions that draw on sources of natural support.

4. Collaboration
Team members work cooperatively and share responsibility for developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating a single wraparound plan. The plan reflects a blending of team members' perspectives, mandates, and resources. The plan guides and coordinates each team member's work towards meeting the team's goals.

5. Community-based
The wraparound team implements service and support strategies that take place in the most inclusive, most responsive, most accessible, and least restrictive settings possible; and that safely promote child and family integration into home and community life.

6. Culturally competent
The wraparound process demonstrates respect for and builds on the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the child/youth and family, and their community.

7. Individualized
To achieve the goals laid out in the wraparound plan, the team develops and implements a customized set of strategies, supports, and services.

8. Strengths-based
The wraparound process and the wraparound plan identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family, the community, and other team members.

9. Unconditional
A wraparound team does not give up on, blame, or reject children, youth, and their families. When faced with challenges or setbacks, the team continues working toward meeting the needs of the youth and family and toward achieving the goals in the wraparound plan until the team reaches agreement that a formal wraparound process is no longer necessary.

10. Outcome-based
The team ties the goals and strategies of the wraparound plan to observable or measurable indicators of success, monitors progress in terms of these indicators, and revises the plan accordingly.

[*] Taken from the training module "Wraparound in Indian Country: The Ways of the People are Who We Are"