



A Family Guide to Wraparound

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What is Wraparound?

Wraparound works with existing supports and services to help families, children and youth with complex needs find solutions and build a better life. Teams are built of family members, friends and professionals who come together to “wrap” individual families in community supports. The Wraparound process recognizes the importance of long-term connections between people, particularly the bonds among family members. It is a family-driven, strength-based, solution-focused planning and problem-solving process.

Wraparound is **family driven** in that it creates an individualized plan that is unique to each family, adapted to that family’s culture, and driven by their choices. It is **strength based** because it helps families build on what is working in their lives instead of focusing exclusively on what isn’t. It is **solutions focused** as it offers real hope to families who are struggling with complex problems. And it centres on **planning and problem solving** by bringing appropriate people together to create a sensible plan to help families improve their lives on a daily basis.

The main purpose of Wraparound is to help children, youth and the adults around them have the kinds of lives they want to have—or at least get closer to them. For example, when there is failure in school, the Wraparound goal is success in school; when there is dangerous behaviour, the Wraparound goal is to replace it with safe behaviour; when there are no opportunities, the Wraparound goal is to create them; and so on. In short, it offers practical compassion to people who need and want to improve their lives.

Why Wraparound?

Rather than forcing people to fit into existing program structures, Wraparound is based on the belief that services and supports should be flexibly arranged to meet the unique needs of children, youth and their families.

The appeal of the Wraparound approach is that it focuses on the personal values, preferences and culture of individual families and is based on the belief that you know best what’s right for you. So your voice is heard—you choose the team, you identify your goals, you decide what is working. At the same time, Wraparound teams are encouraged to make helpful, caring connections not only within the family, but also between the family and the community.

There is no one path to Wraparound. The families who choose this approach do so for reasons that are unique to their own lives, their own particular circumstances. Still, there are some common experiences and feelings among those who seek the help of a Wraparound team.

Parents

Parents turn to Wraparound for help dealing with a wide range of issues. Some are concerned that their children are struggling in school. Others see behaviour that worries or bothers them—there may be incidents of stealing, assault, alcohol and drug abuse, or unsafe sex. Children may be spending time with the wrong kinds of friends or even becoming part of gang-related or criminal activity.

Some parents feel their children are out of control, that their behaviour is potentially dangerous and destructive. And there are those who are panicked because their children are already putting themselves in unsafe situations or harming themselves.

In all cases, parents come to Wraparound because their children are presenting challenges they weren't expecting and that they need help addressing. They want to improve their family lives and keep their children safe and happy.

Youth

Youth also come to Wraparound for many different reasons. Some feel like everybody in their lives is pressuring them or criticizing their actions all of the time. They want to be left alone and allowed to make their own decisions, whatever they are. Some youth are angry at nearly everyone they know.

Other young people are scared and lonely—they feel like they don't have a chance to be happy. Some are bullied ...others are bullies. Some are sad and socially isolated, feeling like they don't fit in anywhere. They often blame themselves for everything bad that happens to them.

Many of these youth want to have better days, better relationships, and better ways to express themselves. They want to be optimistic and hope for a great future, but they sometimes think that those things are, for them, forever out of reach.

Important note

For parents and youth alike, Wraparound is a flexible process used in lots of different ways. This includes being able to access the services as an individual, not just as a member of a family. It is important to note that throughout this document and the YSB website, all references to services provided to “families and youth” can also be accessed on an individual basis.

If you think you might want to try Wraparound, keep reading—and make a note of any questions you have so we can be sure you get all the information you need.

Referral Process

If you feel, that Wraparound is for you, please contact us by phone or fill out the *Mental Health Application Form*. The link to the form is included in the Wraparound section of the YSB website, under **Referral Process**.

Contact the **Ottawa Children’s Coordinated Access and Referral to Services**
2675 Queensview Drive
Ottawa ON K2B 8K2
Tel: 613-729-1000
Fax: 613-288-0426

Preparing for Wraparound

The first thing that will happen when you begin the Wraparound process is that you will be assigned a trained facilitator—this is the team member who will serve as the “glue” to help bind together your family, friends, community and professional supports. The facilitator will also keep meetings on track, draft and update your plan as needed, and coordinate your family’s support team. At the outset, he or she will work with you to prepare for the Wraparound process. The following five preparation steps are essentially the same for everybody who participates in Wraparound.

1. Linking up with Wraparound people

First, your facilitator will make arrangements to meet with you and as many others as you wish to include. The facilitator will explain Wraparound in more detail and answer any questions you may have.

2. Life domain area selection

Wraparound plans are comprehensive and address multiple areas of the family’s life. Your facilitator will ask which areas of your life you want (or are required) to work on while in Wraparound. Often, families choose among the following areas, called *life domains*.

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural | <input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place to Live | <input type="checkbox"/> Social | <input type="checkbox"/> Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional/ Psychological |

You can include additional life domains as you see fit—this is your Wraparound plan.

3. Strengths assessment

You will participate in a strengths assessment with the facilitator to identify the strengths of each family member, including the identified child or youth, in multiple settings (home, school, work) and across several life domains. Everyone has strengths and competencies, and focusing on them is a critical first step in the Wraparound process. In fact, strengths identification has the power to change the family's perception of itself and the self-perceptions of each individual family member.

The assessment works best when the people close to you also participate, but that's entirely your choice.

4. Wraparound team building

You will be asked who you want to include in your Wraparound team. This group of people will assist you in developing and implementing your Wraparound plan over the coming weeks and months. Together, they ensure that the help you and your family need is well coordinated and more easily accessible. The team approach is also a useful way to bring required resource people together, and it allows the participants to readily share the work that is part of your plan.

Again, the team composition is your choice, unless the courts say that you must include certain people, such as a probation officer or protection services worker. Creating a team is an important part of the Wraparound process: you should suggest anybody you think could be helpful.

5. Permissions

You will be asked to sign permission forms that let us know who we can talk to (doctor, teachers, school counsellors, etc.) and what records we can read (medical files, school records, assessments, evaluations, court reports, etc.). This information may be very useful to your facilitator and your team, but granting permission for others to access it is your decision.

The Wraparound Meeting

Wraparound meetings are scheduled at times that work for you, your family and as many of the team members as possible. Everyone you've identified (or who was added to the team because of external requirements) is invited to the meeting.

The meeting can be held in any place you find reasonably comfortable. In most cases, you can have the meeting at your home, if you choose. You may also opt to meet at a counsellor's office at your child's school, at your local church, in another family member's home, and so on.

The topics discussed and the plans made in Wraparound meetings are as varied as the people in them. However, in most cases, the facilitator will ensure that the following meeting elements are included in your initial Wraparound meeting.

- Introductions
- Ground rules
- Strengths presentation
- Needs and strategies
- Crisis, transition, and safety planning
- Evaluation
- Next meetings

Introductions

The meeting typically begins with introductions, including names and titles (when relevant) as well as a brief explanation of why each person has joined your Wraparound team. While the facilitator will have described Wraparound to each team member when he or she was invited to the meeting, the process may be quickly reviewed again.

Ground rules

Some facilitators propose ground rules—what people are and are not allowed to do at the meeting (for instance, it may be a rule to speaking constructively rather than critically, or to be discreet with private matters). Sometimes team members will suggest ground rules when another member's behaviour bothers them (no swearing or yelling, for instance). And some teams do both: set rules upfront and then add new ones as required.

Strengths presentation

The team is presented with your and your family's strengths and other useful information learned during the strength assessment. This generally takes 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the size of your family. The strengths presentation is an important step because it's the only way that all the people on your team will know you and your family for your full selves, not just your difficulties.

There are several ways to present strengths: the facilitator may lead the presentation on his or her own; other participants may add their own ideas about your strengths as the presentation progresses; or you can present your strengths to the team yourself. Make sure that what is presented is not only accurate but is also relevant to the process. You may be said to have an engaging smile, but you'll need to focus on the qualities that are most important to this process.

Whatever the style of delivery, the presentation can make you feel self-conscious—that's perfectly normal! Just remember, Wraparound is a strength-based program: the team needs to hear what's working in your family in order to build on it.

Needs and strategies

The team discusses what you and your family require to achieve your goals and what strategies are best suited to meeting your needs. It is important to treat those two topics separately. That is, it is not helpful to say that someone *needs* a *strategy*, as in “he needs peer to peer support,” or “she needs parenting classes.”

The initial focus must be on the targeted outcomes and the family’s vision of success. So one might say “he needs safe friends,” “she needs to make better decisions,” or “they need a way to air their disagreements without yelling or hitting.” The best way to ensure that the plan will be individualized is to state the family’s specific needs first.

Then the team moves to strategies. Strategies are the plans you will put together to meet the needs that you’ve defined. They are mostly action oriented, listing exactly what each team member will do before the next meeting. Some members will collect information, for instance, while others will contact resource people. Each team member should volunteer to do what they feel able to do and ask others for help when they need it.

Crisis and safety planning

You and your team will also talk about any crises, safety risks, and changes you and your family face, so you can benefit from the assistance of the team in managing them. This planning step won’t happen at every subsequent meeting, but it will continue until you feel prepared to handle any circumstance you think might arise.

It’s common for crisis and safety plans to be changed after people try them out. Teams will review a plan once it’s been used, discussing what worked and what didn’t. Together, the team will try to fix what isn’t working. It may take several attempts before you hit on the best possible crisis or transition plan for you and your family.

Safety plans must be very carefully and conservatively designed. They are used most often when children and youth are exhibiting or are expected to exhibit dangerous behaviours—such as assault, fire setting, or suicide attempts.

Evaluation

Wraparound is often evaluated at the end of the first meeting and sometimes at later meetings as well. You may be asked for your opinion on what happened at the meeting or on how you and your family were treated. At intervals throughout your Wraparound plan, you may be asked to complete a questionnaire or to participate in interviews, which we try hard to make as quick and enjoyable as possible. These feedback mechanisms allow us to learn if Wraparound is working or not.

Through the evaluation process, families and youth can have a positive influence on the way the program is managed—and that means you'll be helping others who will turn to Wraparound in the future. However, you do not have to participate in the evaluation process. Feel free to refuse for any reason.

Next meetings

You've reached the end of your first Wraparound meeting! It will be apparent by now that much of the real work of Wraparound goes on between the meetings. If all has gone according to plan, every team member now knows what he or she is supposed to do before the team meets next.

Facilitators generally schedule the next meeting—or series of meetings—at this point. Wraparound teams meet as often as they decide they need to meet, so every team's schedule is different.

Many teams create contact lists and telephone “trees” so that meetings can be scheduled quickly to deal with emerging problems. When crises or other difficult events occur, Wraparound teams meet on an emergency basis and they may also meet when the crisis has passed to review the plan and make necessary adjustments. This continues until crisis events become less frequent, less intense, or stop altogether.

The planning and meeting process continues until you and your family achieve the changes you defined at the outset.

Outcomes Achieved and Graduation

As things improve and you and your family achieve the changes you set out to achieve, you will begin talking with your team about how and when you'll “graduate.” Like everything else in Wraparound, graduation works best when it is well planned and the resources you need to maintain the achievements are in place.

If you want to do extra crisis or safety planning, let your team know. Graduation is a positive change, but it's still a change, so feel free to ask for what you and your family need—including information about how to reconnect with Wraparound if you think you might need it in the future.

Closing

Please give Wraparound a chance to help you and your family. It has worked well for many young people and those who love them. It can work for you.