

WRAPAROUND

Questions and Responses about the Child & Youth Mental Health Substance Use West Kootenay Local Action Team Wraparound Initiative

Dear Partners

Thank you for your interest in the West Kootenay Local Action Team Wraparound Initiative. During the Sept. 15, 2016 workshop on Family-Centred Practice and Wraparound, we asked you to share your excitement, questions and concerns about testing a Wraparound Model in our region. The event generated some great conversations and we learned a lot from your feedback. A common theme in the comments was how dedicated you are to supporting families in a strength-based and family-centred way. It is clear that there is a lot of care and concern for families in the West Kootenay region.

Your thoughts and perspectives are important so we wanted to respond to the most frequently asked questions and commonly shared concerns.

Q: How will I find time to be a part of a wraparound team or coordinate wraparound services for the families I'm involved with?

A. Time is a definite constraint for most service providers. And wraparound is an individualized, collaborative process that does take coordinating. The Resource Coaches will help with some of the coordinating through the testing period for both service providers and parents with the intent of building capacity for families and optimizing relationships between service providers. One area our test of change

wants to explore, is if time is invested in coordinating services early on for youth with moderate to complex issues, will it streamline services, improve crisis response, increase communication between service providers and reduce duplication of services in the long term.

Q: How will wraparound provide a different experience for children, youth and families?

A. Youth and families report that the experience of having a team of supportive service providers and family/friends meeting regularly with them to be highly effective. Families say they appreciate not having to tell their story over and over again, and that they feel relief when everyone is aware of what each wraparound team members' role and responsibilities are. This increases feelings of "being cared for" and "in connection" to the people helping them. The informal supports (family, friends, coaches, neighbours, spiritual community members) that attend wraparound team meetings provide an additional network of support so that families gain a healthy independence from the system and start to make steps towards requiring less professional services and care.

Q: Aren't I already providing care that takes the family's voice into consideration and seeks to coordinate care between services?

A. Service providers in the West Kootenay region do a very good job of engaging families, however a reality of the system is that caseloads

are often too large and providers don't get an opportunity to collaborate with each other as often as they'd like. One way to understand how wraparound can fit into your practice is to see it as an opportunity to optimize the services you are already providing families. Wraparound doesn't replace or improve what is already in place, rather it helps everyone get on the same page, coordinate their efforts, and routinely assess progress in a collaborative way.

What makes Wraparound unique is that it champions parents as experts in their children's lives and prioritizes youth and family voice, and choice. This means identifying the goals that are most important to the family, building upon the strengths of each family member and the people important in their lives, and using outcomes to guide the need for changes to the plan. Wraparound aims to build the problem-solving skills, coping skills, and self-efficacy of the youth and family members. And it seeks to ensure that families have the community supports they may need when more formal supports and services end.

Q: Wraparound sounds great but how do you coordinate services that don't exist? We are limited by living in rural communities.

A. This is a reality that all service providers contend with in our region. The wraparound process is intended to take some of the pressure off of the individual service provider to find the appropriate service for the family by sharing the responsibility of creating an action plan with the whole wraparound team. In addition, the focus of wraparound is to keep families together and children and youth in their communities as much as is possible, so the informal supports are invaluable when teams are tasked with developing creative ways to address gaps in services.

Q. What can I expect if I'm asked to be part of a Wraparound Team?

A. When you are invited to become a member of a family's wraparound team, it means they

feel supported by you and trust you. You can expect regular meetings and to be involved in a process which is designed to be strengths based and organized around family members' own perceptions of needs, goals and likelihood of success of specific strategies. The wraparound process delineates specific roles for team members, including natural support persons, and detailed conditions for interventions, including specifying roles each person will play in specific circumstances. Team members work cooperatively and share responsibility for plans.

The role of a designated resource coordinator is critical to ensure the process is adhered to and that the principles of the strength-based person-/family-centred approach are held fast. This role helps guide the team through the phases of wraparound, ensuring a commitment to "remain at the table," despite challenges and setbacks, until the needs of the youth and family are met and can be sustained without the wraparound team. The resource coordinator doesn't have to have all of the answers, but rather a commitment in getting the right people to the table.

The team reviews accomplishments and progress towards goals and makes adjustments to the plan as necessary. As the team nears its goals, preparations are made for the youth and family to transition out of formal Wraparound. The hope is that they will have the skills and plans to support them in their continued successful connections with their family and community without formal facilitation.

Q. What are local pathways?

A. When a child, youth or family, is in distress they often turn to their doctor, school counsellor or a community service. The WK LAT Wraparound Initiative seeks to develop locally agreed upon pathways for youth with moderate to severe mental health and substance use issues to clarify which professionals can connect around a family. At all steps, local agreements respect agency mandates and embody "walking along side" and not "doing to" children, youth and families.