

# Individualized & Tailored Care/Wraparound Parent Partner Training Manual

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Written by:  
Patricia Miles

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## Foreword

was hired to be a Parent Involvement Coordinator with a large-scale urban Wraparound project

I three years ago. As a Parent of a child who had been through the system, my job was to assure parent involvement with this effort as well as assuring that this model of implementation included Parent Partners working alongside Wraparound Facilitators. When first hired, I was also expected to provide peer parent-to-parent support for the initial families referred to the project. After a few short weeks of providing Parent Partner services I discovered that there was an assumption that Parent Partners know how to do their work instinctively. To a certain extent, that was true. I had traveled the road of the parent and sometimes was very adept at listening and supporting the parents referred to the project. What was also clear to me was that I was learning on the job with those initial families referred. Because I would soon be hiring more Parent Partners quickly in this project, I was concerned about the on-the-job learning that the role required.

Fortunately, I discovered that what was becoming clear to me was also clear to some other Parent Partners in other locations. That was that there are certain skills that can enhance the interaction between Parent Partner, parent, and professional. A few years ago, a group of Parent Partners from Sonoma County gathered together with Pat Miles and shared their thoughts on “If only I knew then what I know now.” This Wraparound Parent Partner training manual is a result of that meeting. Those of us who are implementing this application of Wraparound are fortunate to be able to benefit from their experience.

Since my initial experience three years ago, I came upon this manual and have used it to train and orient over fifty Parent Partners. I have found it to be helpful in preparing folks so that not all learning has to occur on the job.

The Irish have a saying, “If you don’t know the way, go slow.” A few guiding principles are important to mention for those contemplating using Pat Miles’ manual to train Wraparound Parent Partners.

- The assumption is that basic Wraparound training has been completed prior to attending this training.
- A Parent Partner is the parent of a child with special needs and has experienced first hand the hopelessness and isolation this brings.
- As a Parent Partner, we choose to go public with our private story. There is a skill in deciding what parts of our story to share and how best to do this.
- The training should be taught by a Parent Partner.
- The most effective way to build a skills base for Parent Partners is to limit the training to Parent Partners only. The curriculum can be used in a mixed group but it seems to change the experience of parent-to-parent understanding that is so crucial to the role.

- All of the exercises in the manual should be completed. This is often a challenge in a two day period but is truly where the learning and skills building takes place.
- Wraparound Parent Partners are champions for the parents, but also champions for the Wraparound process. This is a complex skill and requires much practice. This is also one of the ways that Wraparound Parent Partners differ from other Parent Partners and should be noted.

This manual may seem a straight-forward, how-to manual with eight core competency skills for Parent Partners working in Wraparound projects. Do not let the simplicity fool you. Pat Miles has thoughtfully and skillfully designed a manual that can be used by both novice and experienced Parent Partners alike. New Parent Partners will benefit by a set of practice skills, a place to start, so to speak. After incorporating these skills into daily practice, most Parent Partners will gain a new awareness of the deeper concepts. There will be many “aha” moments. Pat Miles’ Wraparound Parent Partner training manual will equip Parent Partners with the valuable skills base necessary to effectively define their role.

Joe Anne Hust  
Pasadena, California  
June 2003

## Introduction

This workbook was developed through conversations with Parent Partners who are or have been working in wraparound projects. Since the early 1990s a number of Wraparound Projects have included Parent Partners in the staff configuration. This has been due to a growing realization that integrating a parent perspective can be helpful on the practice, program and system levels. On the practice level, the role of the paid parent can assist the family's helpers in understanding the parent's perspective. On the program level, a key role for Parent Partners is to help supervisors stay on top of hospitality and welcoming issues with parents organizationally as well as in the area of direct help. On the system level, the role of the Parent Partner is usually to influence the larger environment in order to set the stage for effective Parent Partner capacity to occur at the other two levels. The focus of this workbook is for Parent Partners who operate at the practice or direct help level.

Often, Parent Partners who are hired and assigned to work directly in Wraparound Projects are given the same training as staff hired to function as Resource Coordinators or Team Facilitators. This is helpful in assuring that both parties are on the same page about the Wraparound Process. What many staff find difficult, however, is that the role of the Parent Partner and the skills attached to that role are often not clarified. It is almost as if the program is saying to the Parent Partner, "well, just be a parent" while a great deal of time is spent in developing skills for the team Facilitator. This manual is designed to add more substance to the role of Parent Partner as well as creating a training context so that the Parent Partner can get a chance to try out the skills required to be effective.

This workbook is not meant to be a "carved in stone" set of requirements for people in these positions. The best Parent Partners represent a perfect blend of who they are with what they can do, a mix between skill and personality. This workbook will hopefully add more opportunities for Parent Partners to practice skills and approaches prior to doing the work and so, allow individuals in those positions to decide the right blend of personality and skill for themselves. The sections for this workbook are organized around an effort that occurred several years ago in one California County. In that county, numerous parents had been hired in Parent Partner positions. After a couple of years, these people began to discuss what they didn't know when they started. They brainstormed the list below as a code of ethics for Parents hired in these positions:

- **We Tell Our Own Story when it Can Help Other Families**
- **We support other families as peers with a common background and history rather than as experts who have all the answers**
- **We acknowledge that each family's answers may be different than our own**
- **We take responsibility for clarifying our role as Family Partners and as a parent of a child with special needs**

- **We build partnerships with others including professionals who are involved in the care of our children**
- **We commit to honesty with each other and all involved with the care of a child & expect the same from others**
- **We are committed to a non-judgmental and respectful attitude in our dealings with & discussions regarding families**
- **We are committed to nonadversarial advocacy in our roles within the system**

This workbook is designed to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on what it means personally and publicly to follow the areas listed above. It is also designed to be guided by parents to parents and to be rewritten by each generation of parents who participate in this training. The original is only a starting point.

Patricia Miles  
July, 2001

## **Telling Your Own Story when it can Help Other Families**

The first skill set for most people employed as Parent Partners involves telling one's own story. Those individuals who have elected to work as Parent Partners make the choice to be public with their personal story and that of their loved one. This is the big difference between Parent Partners and those in other professions who may happen to have a son or daughter with a diagnosis. Because the Parent Partner makes the decision to blend their private story with a public role, they may be called on to tell their story in a variety of settings. This may not be as easy as it sounds. The Parent Partner has to apply their story to fit the context of the family they are meeting through the Wraparound Process and as a result they have to consider the following areas:

- **Identifying *what* aspects of your own story and experience would be most helpful to families you are connected with:** Each family is different. A key role for Parent Partners is to create conditions, which break isolation in families, and provide parents with the knowledge that they are not alone. This is particularly true for parents of children with mental illness who may be facing a culture in which they are blamed for their children's behavior. Parent Partners and their stories can serve as inspiration to a parent who is entering a Wraparound project. What is important is that Parent Partners who are hired to serve this role, can analyze their own story against the experience of the parent they are meeting and identify aspects of their own story which would be most helpful to the parent they are meeting. In some cases, the story of the Parent Partner may serve as a sad reminder of what you don't have rather than serving as inspiration of what you could have. Parent Partners have to identify what it is about themselves that can be most helpful to the person they are paid to help.
- **Identifying *when* your story would be most helpful to tell:** It's been said that timing is everything. When a parent is first entering a Wraparound Project, there may be a number of crisis episodes occurring. This could include a son or daughter about to get ejected from a residential program, school or daycare, a hefty bill has been received from the child's last hospitalization or simply a feeling of being at wit's end. The effective Parent Partner has to identify when self-disclosure will be helpful. As a result, the Parent Partner has to have skills in being able to assess the environment and the individual situation that the family is experiencing.
- **Identifying *how* to tell your story in a way that will help families:** Each family met by the Parent Partner is unique. A key skill for Parent Partners will be to assess the culture of the individual family to determine the best ways to communicate. A common trap for Parent Partners is to misread the family they are meeting and tell their story in a way that is not helpful for the parent doing the listening. This is especially true when issues such as race, class, age and gender are considered in terms of how the story should be shared.

A final skill for Parent Partners is to determine when to tell their stories to others involved in the support of the family engaged in the Wraparound Process. The presence of a Parent Partner can be a learning experience for professionals in terms of practicing partnership. Parent Partners must be able to tell their story in way which professionals can not only learn from the story but also apply the learning in a positive way to benefit this family.

Practicing Your Story  
An Exercise

Pair up with someone from the group who you don't know or at least don't know well. You will be given thirty minutes to share your stories with each other. When you have shared your stories take a few minutes to fill out the table below.

Sum up the story. What did you hear?	List three lessons you've learned from this person's story?	List three conclusions you drew about the person from their story?

Practicing Your Story  
Step Two

When you have completed the table above share your results with your partner. When that is done complete the following table.

What did you have confirmed from this feedback?	What did you learn new about yourself from this activity?	What would you do differently as a Parent Partner based on this feedback?

## Applying Your Story to the Parent Partner Role

Consider the following three situations with your listening partner. Pretend that each of these families has just been referred to your Wraparound Project and that you will be meeting them within the next 48 hours. Identify how you would modify your story to be most effective in this situation. This might include how you would share it, when you would share it as well as what aspects might be most helpful.

Situation	When would you share your story?	How would you share your story?	What parts of your story would be most helpful?
<p>Myrtle is a 32 year old single mother of 8 year old Josh and a lifelong resident of your county. Her son was diagnosed with ADHD at an early age but most recently there have been problems with the school that has resulted in more &amp; more referrals. Josh's Grandparents, Myrtle's folks feel like she doesn't discipline Josh enough. They are quite well off and Myrtle has relied on them in the past for financial support. She's worried that her ex-husband who lives across the state will make her life miserable in terms of custody if something doesn't happen with Josh.</p>			
<p>James &amp; Lucille are parents of 16 year old Gloria. They both work as night janitors at a local factory and are trying to make ends meet for their entire family. They relocated here from another country four years ago and have a strong work ethic. Their oldest daughter, Glenda, stays with the kids while they are working &amp; lives at home rent-free while she's attending community college. Gloria was diagnosed with Bipolar and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder six months ago and has been receiving services since then. She is about to be released from the psychiatric hospital &amp; wraparound is scheduled to commence.</p>			
<p>Jonathon is the adoptive father of Kelly, a 14-year-old referred to the Wraparound Project. Jonathon's wife, Dolores, died last year. Kelly was adopted at birth but in the past year he has been running away &amp; ending up in hospitals or the detention center. He has been arrested for solicitation three times in the past year &amp; appears to be experiencing gender identity issues. Jonathon is self-employed, computer troubleshooter with most of his extended family residing in Nebraska.</p>			

## **Supporting other families as peers with a common background and history rather than as experts who have all the answers**

Parent Partners add a unique value to Wraparound Projects precisely because they are peers with a family rather than experts who have all of the answers. Skills required in this area involve the ability to transfer knowledge from oneself to a parent as a peer rather than as a coach. In order to do that well, effective Parent Partners find they must do the following activities:

- *Listen to the family's story and Identify Shared Values Common Ground:* Effective Parent Partners help parents recognize themselves in others thereby breaking the loneliness. This is done by identifying shared experiences and values that tie one parent of a child with special needs to another parent. This best happens through a give and take of conversation and shared experience. Parent Partners have to first, hear the family's story from their perspective, and next identify shared values and common experiences.
- *Providing Candid Feedback in a Supportive Manner:* Reports from family members suggest that effective Parent Partners are able to say things to parents that others can't. Parent Partners are nonjudgmental but this doesn't mean they often don't have opinions about what's best. Effective Parent Partners are able to share those opinions in a friendly manner, which allows the family receiving the information to consider other options and perspectives. Highlighting the shared experiences and values between the family in Wraparound and the Parent Partner often does this.
- *Communicating Common Experiences to Other Partners:* As mentioned earlier, Parent Partners elect to become public with their private family story when they agree to be hired in these roles. As a result, Parent Partners and their own stories are always providing a learning experience to others involved in the care and support of a child and family. This requires the Parent Partner to analyze similarities and differences in their own story and that of the family involved in Wraparound as well as analyzing when others are likely to learn from the experience of the Parent Partner. Finally, effective Parent Partners are able to communicate big ideas through personal stories in an effective manner.

## Identifying Similarities & Differences

Return to your partner from the first exercise. Together identify what your two stories had in common and what was different. Use the table below to identify those similarities & differences.

Similarities	Differences

## Communicating Your Story to Other Professionals as a Learning Experience

Review the situation in the first column that briefly tells a situation in which a professional partner is struggling with a perspective on a family. In the next column identify something in your personal story which could relate to helping that professional change their perspective in order to fit more closely with the parent’s perspective. When you have identified something in common, practice ways you would use your own experiences to assist the professional in adapting their perspective.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Common Personal Experience</b>	<b>Ways to communicate</b>
<p>Jim, a Child Protective Worker, is very concerned about Michelle and her son, Bob. Michelle has a history of drug abuse &amp; has been participating in recovery for the past 90 days. This morning, Jim stopped by the house &amp; found it to be very messy and chaotic. He is concerned that he should place Bob outside of the home until he is more sure of Michelle’s ability to stay sober. As a Parent Partner, you are aware that Michelle has been doing the best she can with Bob who has ADHD &amp; is at best considered a handful. You also know that Michelle &amp; Bob are very attached to each other &amp; since Michelle has gotten sober she has elected to be spending time with Bob at school rather than housekeeping &amp; basic home tasks. Think about personal experiences you have had which might help reassure the CPS worker.</p>		
<p>Terry, a Therapist, is very concerned about Jake’s mother and father. Jake, a fourth grader, is in classes for students with Serious Emotional Disturbance, which include Terry on-site. Jake’s parents are extremely concerned that the school is “dummying down” the curriculum so they have been buying computer programs &amp; structuring his homework time up to two hours per night. Jake’s older brother &amp; sister are both honor students and the Therapist is just concerned that Jake’s parents have expectations which are unreasonable. As a result, the Therapist is advocating for out of home placement so that Jake can get out from under the pressure he seems to be living under. Your perspective after spending time with the parents, is that both of these parents want the best for their son and just aren’t ready to settle. They are advocating the best way they know how which often involves Jake’s dad pounding the table at school &amp; structuring his homework time.</p>		

## **Acknowledging that each family's answers may be different than our own**

Effective Parent Partners who demonstrate this skill are able to do the following things:

- *Listen, hear and acknowledge what parents are saying & what they aren't saying:* In the heat of a Wraparound Planning process, teams and team members get excited about creative ideas. Sometimes the momentum of the creative planning process carries us away and it falls on the shoulders of the Parent Partner who hold the team up to consider what is most likely to be effective from the parent and family's point of view.
- *Identify a List of Options and a Way to Decide Which One is Best:* When Wraparound Planning is occurring, more options can be generated than any one person could have imagined. These can come in the form of a list but often are more apt to come in the form of helpful suggestions from various team members. The Parent Partner often may need to assist the parent in sorting through those helpful suggestions and creating a way to decide which one is really the most helpful.
- *Clarifying & Communicating the Parent's Decision to Others:* In the course of brainstorming and all of these good ideas, the parent and family will make a decision. Unfortunately, that decision isn't always clearly communicated or heard by the team members. Consider one mother who often received a suggestion to implement a point system with her son. She really didn't have the energy or interest to implement such an approach but felt badly about shooting down a team member's idea. As a result, she would nod, go home and never follow up on the suggestion. That situation didn't have a Parent Partner involved. If she did, the Parent Partner would have been instrumental in communicating to the rest of the team that this suggestion was not going to be implemented, why it wasn't going to happen and soliciting other ideas which were more likely to be helpful.
- *Recognizing "difference" in terms of the family identity and our own as well as when this family's solution might differ from your own solution:* A key ingredient of an effective Parent Partner is the ability to recognize cultural differences between this family and your personal experience. Often Parent Partners are given the message that their job is to assist the family in accessing community resources. This framework often fits for families who have a more is better framework but may not fit at all for families who are weary of services and resources. One example might be working with a family around a child's school environment. It may have helped in the Parent Partner's past experience to pursue an Individual Education Plan and a Special Service label for their own son or daughter. As a result, the Parent Partner might encourage the family they are supporting to pursue that route for their son or daughter. But, as it turns out, the family is very tolerant of alternative educational strategies and would do very well with a home schooling option. While the Parent Partner cannot imagine this as a solution it's what

works best for this family.

- *Positively regard the family's chosen solution & inspire the same regard in others:* Parent Partners often are the first source of acknowledgment for family choices. Part of that skill is to communicate to the family respect for the decision they have made. Another skill is to inspire that same regard from others involved in the care and support of the child and family.
- *Planning for unanticipated results of choices:* Wraparound is not a process in which all control is given to the family to make the hard choices no one else can make. It is a process in which the family's voice is heard and recognized and the team is involved in making tough decisions together. As a result, Parent Partners are often called on to assist parents in making informed choices. This requires that Parent Partners can plan out the future benefits and costs of decisions made today.

## Recognizing Differences: Choosing the Best Solution

Take a few minutes and consider the following list. When you have completed the list, pair up with a partner and compare your lists. Identify what differences you have on the list. Discuss why you differ regarding this opinion. When you have had that discussion work with your partner to come up with two statements detailing the difference in the culture of your families.

Possible Solution	Not for Me	You Bet I'd Try that
An Individual Education Plan		
An in-home therapist		
A parent support group		
A gym membership for the whole family		
A therapeutic foster home in the community		
A residential treatment center on the other side of the state		
Some Social Security or other disability payments for my child		
Day treatment for my child		
Respite at a county shelter facility one weekend per month		
A few night's stay at a detention center to get my son/daughter's attention		
A referral to the local Child Welfare office because I can access services through them		
Other?		

What are your disagreements?

What are your two statements detailing the differences between your two families?

- 1.
  
- 2.

## Communicating the Parent's Solution to Others

This activity is designed to assist Parent Partners in communicating the Parent's solutions to others. You will be broken into groups of three to four. One of you will take on the role of Parent Partner, while the other two or three will take on the role of a professional involved in the support of the child and family. Choose one solution from the list that you would find difficult to represent based on your personal beliefs and experiences. Pretend that this solution is one chosen by the parent for their family and spend a few minutes convincing the others in your group that this is the best solution.

Send my child to day treatment

Keep my child in a contained classroom off-campus

Move my family into a bigger home

Pursue a "tough love" program at home & remove all of my child's furniture from his bedroom. He has to earn it back.

Give the family the flexible funds you get to do wraparound

Refer my child to a residential treatment program

Send my child to a confrontational, boot camp program

Get more psych. testing done on my child

Keep my family & child involved with the therapist we've been seeing for the past five years.

### Presentation Feedback

(To be answered by the people who are not playing the role of Parent Partner)

1. Think about yourself and the argument you are hearing in the role you are in. Are you convinced?
2. What does convince you?
3. What keeps you skeptical about the family's chosen solution?
4. What would you do differently?

## Clarifying our role as Family Partners and as a parent of a child with special needs

Although many Wraparound efforts around the country include Parent Partners there is no doubt that this is still a dramatic difference for many involved in implementing Wraparound. One manager of a mature Wraparound Agency recently commented that the hardest part of the last fifteen years of implementation was integrating Parent Partners in a meaningful way. This is partially due to the fact that the very nature of having Parent Partners involved within the organization represents a major cultural shift for most organizations. The presence of Parent Partners within an organization represent a major shift in an often unintentional but significant bias against parents in many organizations. Many child-serving agencies got their start rescuing children from bad situations. That history of child rescuing has historically included rescuing children from their families, and in particular their parents. To move away from that image to an image of partnership represents a major cultural shift in many organizations.

Because it is such a major cultural shift for many organizations, the Parent Partner is often called on to do a lot of the work in assisting the organization in moving from a parent hostile environment to a parent tolerant environment to a parent friendly environment. This is not easy to do on a daily, personal level, as many Parent Partners will encounter institutional bias and blaming about parents on a daily level. A common challenge for many Parent Partners is often the tendency to over-identify with the larger organizational context as a coping mechanism. As a result, in some projects, you might see parents who sound a lot more like the professional staff than the staff themselves. In order to be effective in this area and avoid the pitfalls, Parent Partners should be able to:

- *Make introductions of self in ways that allow parents & others to understand your role:* Parents involved in Wraparound Projects might be somewhat suspicious of a Parent Partner. It's an understandable suspicion. The family referred to the Wraparound process may have been looking for answers and experts. To find themselves face to face with another family who's been on that journey may not be totally comforting when you are searching for an answer, solution or certain expert to provide help. Parent Partners have to be adept at making introductions of themselves and their roles, which inspire confidence while avoiding setting up themselves as an expert.
- *Interrupting Bias as it Occurs:* Parent Partners attached to Wraparound Projects have a front seat to what happens within agencies. As a result, they may come face to face with institutional prejudice about families and, in particular, parents. This is often unintentional but learned behavior. Many professionals will identify their parent bias as a need to vent or as a way to shake off frustration. Unfortunately, those venting and judgmental moments do result in perpetuating the bias that many organizations have towards parents. Parent Partners represent a walking and real contradiction to that bias however, many staff will often represent their bias as excluding the Parent Partner. Many Parent Partners have heard the following statement, "I know you're not like the parents on my caseload. I would be so lucky if my parents were more like you." This is a

dangerous statement because it reinforces stereotyping. Parent Partners have to be skilled at redirecting biased comments and conversations.

- *Inspiring a Nonjudgmental Attitude Towards Parents in Others:* A third skill for Parent Partners involves inspiring a nonjudgmental attitude in others. It's not enough for Parents Partners to hold strength –based perspective on the family but it is a requirement that the Parent Partner can inspire this approach among their co-workers and other team members. This is done partially through example, partially through story telling and partially through working on concrete tasks with system partners thus building a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

## Introducing Yourself as a Parent Partner

**Phase I:** Break into groups of three. One of you will first take on the role of Parent Partner. Have another person take on the role of a new Parent you are just meeting for the first time. The third person will be the observer. Introduce yourself to the Parent. Have the observer keep notes for feedback.

**Phase II:** Change roles and assign someone else to be the Parent Partner and observer. In this situation pretend the third person is a professional involved on the Wraparound Team. This person has no idea what a Parent Partner is so your job is to explain it to them. Have the observer keep notes of this interaction.

**Phase III:** Discuss among the three of you what were the similarities and differences among these two conversations. What was most effective? What was least effective? Be prepared to report out to the larger group.

## Identifying Your Own Encounters with Bias

Many parents encounter bias in their movement through the service system. It is important to remember that most bias is learned and unintentional. This is good news as it means that new patterns can be learned. When people encounter unspoken bias they may be confused by it as well as start to internalize those preconceptions. In order to be an effective “bias buster” it is important to consider how you have experienced these values and attitudes. Use the table below to consider your own experience. One situation is filled as an example to get you started. Think about why professionals would have drawn those conclusions about you.

Describe a situation where people drew a conclusion about you.	What conclusions did you draw about yourself or other families?	What conclusions did you draw about professionals?
<i>Example for a Parent with an adopted daughter who is seeking help: “During a meeting with professionals the comment was made that it looked like this was going to be another failed adoption. That was the furthest thing from my mind &amp; I had never heard the term before.”</i>	<i>Other parents who have adopted kids must be just dropping them off.</i>	<i>They are not going to help me because they’re afraid I’m going to abandon my child. I better look somewhere else.</i>

## **Building partnerships with others including professionals who are involved in the care of our children**

In a Wraparound environment, the Parent Partner is part of team which is responsible for building partners with everyone involved in supporting the family. Although the Parent Partner role is different than the facilitator, effective Wraparound Parent Partners are also pursuing effective partnerships. As a result, Parent Partners need some key abilities to be effective including:

- *Introducing Self and Role:* Effective Parent Partners are able to introduce themselves to all players in a manner that creates credibility, understanding and confidence.
- *Identifying Skills, Assets & Abilities of Professionals:* Effective Parent Partners recognize and use strength based approaches with not only the family but also the professionals involved in supporting the family.
- *Identifying the Position, Opinion & Agenda of Professionals without Judgement:* Effective Parent Partners are able to identify the interests of the professionals and while not necessarily agreeing with those interests they can understand them. Additionally, effective Parent Partners are able to separate those opinions from personality.
- *Identifying Strategies to Help Professionals Meet Their Interests While Still Assisting Families:* Effective Parent Partners often apply the Wraparound framework to everyone involved in the support of the child and family. What this means is that Parent Partners often identify strengths of the professionals, unmet needs of the professionals and strategies for meeting their interests.

### Skills, Abilities & Assets of Professionals

Identify three professionals who you found particularly helpful in your own journey. List those professionals by position in the first column. In the next column identify the professional strengths of those people. In the last column identify the personal attributes, skills, interests or abilities of those individuals.

Person/Position	Professional Strengths	Personal Strengths

Describe a time when this professional was helpful to you.

Identify what strengths they used in providing this help. Circle the ones that were personal.

## **Practicing honesty with each other and all involved with the care of a child & expect the same from others**

Another skill for Parent Partners involves the capacity to honestly, openly and candidly hold conversations with the family about what is going on. A common mistake found in Wraparound Projects is to engage only in strength based conversations and not deal with what's directly happening in the family's life. This is disrespectful to families as well as professionals and is not apt to create a good outcome for the child or family. Parent Partners model open conversation from a position of problem solving rather than judgement. Parent Partners are also called upon to inspire that same honest, problem solving conversation between all members of the team including parents, other family members and professionals. Skills necessary to be effective in this area include:

- *Differentiate between confronting & addressing a situation:* When bad things happen many folks have been trained to “get the family in here and confront them.” Sometimes this approach works. Often it results in those being confronted pulling away or shutting down. The difference between confronting and addressing an issue often is in the outcome you are looking for. When confronting an issue, the goal of the person doing the confronting is often for the other person to identify what they have done wrong. When addressing a concern the person speaking is looking for a way to come up with a solution so it's no longer an issue. In wraparound, the responsibility for solutions rest with the whole team so you are not looking for problem ownership by a single person. As a result, the Parent Partner often must model the ability to raise an issue while not assigning blame or responsibility.
- *Assessing own communication style:* Effective Parent Partners recognize their own challenges and are ready to “own them” openly as a modeling tool for others. This includes assessing one's own judgement and attitudes as well as skills and patterns in certain situations. Parent Partners must be aware of when they are challenged by certain situations within a family and communicate what they are doing about those situations with all team members.
- *Creating conditions for honest and open conversation in and out of Wraparound Team Meetings:* Parent Partners reflect candid conversation at every step of the Wraparound Process. In addition to modeling for professionals how to bring up hard issues with families they also model for families how to disagree respectfully and openly with professionals. The Wraparound Process can be very helpful in this area in terms of creating needs statements which are “owned” by the individual with the needs rather than problem statements which assign blame.

### Describe a Family

Take a few minutes and identify your comfort level with each of the situations described below. When you have completed this meet with someone else to compare your answers & identify which families you would be most comfortable with and where you may have difficulties.

Description of the Family	Very Comfortable	Somewhat Comfortable	Not at All comfortable
Two parents living together			
Single mother raising children			
Single father raising children			
Daughters are expected to help with household chores, sons aren't			
Kids are expected to get a job early, finishing school is not that important			
Kids are expected to perform in school & try out for everything			
Discipline is the father's responsibility			
Mother is expected to get dinner on the table			
Parent doesn't work and household income consists of the kid's SSI payments			
Mom is an exotic dancer for a living			
Dad raises exotic dogs who take a lot of his attention			
Parents think the Wraparound Project should pay for everything			
The older sons are all in prison.			

## Practicing the Hard Stuff Addressing Situations in a Wraparound Manner

Listed below are several situations that are likely to come up in a Wraparound setting. Your job is to break into a small group and practice addressing those concerns in a Wraparound Team setting. When addressing those concerns you have to assure that the person who you are concerned about doesn't feel judged and others involved in the situation walk away invested in creating a solution.

**Situation 1:** This mother, who came home from prison shortly after you began wraparound, has a no contact order with her ex-husband. The kids have started referring to him in school and the teacher called the facilitator to let them know they are having contact. The facilitator feels this has to be brought up in the Wraparound Meeting. Practice addressing this concern in a way that will keep the mother involved in the process.

**Situation 2:** These parents are extremely concerned about their son and his school program. The teacher, Caroline, has been running the Serious Emotionally Disturbed classroom at her high school for over ten years. They recently discovered some snapshots of their son posing in a provocative manner on a desk with a girl in that classroom. They like the teacher as a person and think she is very warm but they have concerns about her ability to teach and structure the classroom. Practice addressing this concern without causing the teacher to feel judged.

**Situation 3:** You have been attending Wraparound Meetings for the past sixty days with the Jones family. The team is trying to work on things. The problem is that, from your perspective, in all team meetings the Clinician seems to be undermining or competing with the Wraparound Facilitator. The Clinician has expressed concerns outside of team meetings that the Wraparound process will undermine the clinical agenda. The Facilitator seems paralyzed by this dynamic. Address this concern between the two of them while maintaining a Wraparound perspective.

## **Committing to a non-judgmental and respectful attitude in our dealings with & discussions regarding families**

Parent Partners hired by and assigned to Wraparound Projects are not saints. The truth is most Parent Partners encounter situations with families that challenge them and force them to explore their own bias. Effective Parent Partners are continually evaluating their own perspective and opinions in order to become effective at encouraging others to explore their own agendas. Some simple rules which can be helpful for Parent Partners to maintain and inspire a nonjudgmental approach with families:

- Meet each family as a brand new situation.
- Avoid drawing conclusions based on past experiences.
- Reflect on your own trouble spots.
- Make a list of what is familiar and what is different about this family.
- Avoid offering solutions.
- Find at least ten strengths of the family through conversations with them.
- Practice introducing the family using their strengths.
- Avoid passing judgement through considering why people are doing what they are doing.
- Tell co-workers and partners that you have a zero tolerance rule for judgement prior to interrupting biased statements.
- Stop judgmental statements sooner rather than later in the conversation.
- Avoid choosing sides in a situation.

## Interrupting Bias

In small groups consider the following three situations. Come up with at least three concrete approaches you would use in interrupting the prejudice that is being communicated.

Situation	Concrete Approaches
<p>You are in the lunchroom at the agency. During the conversation, one of the staff begins making a joke about a family you have been working with. In particular, the staff person is making fun of the size of the grandmother and saying that she will never be able to take care of these three active teenagers.</p>	
<p>You are attending training at the Probation Office. During the break, the Probation Officer who is one of your Wraparound Teams invites you and the facilitator to his office. You think that's just to give you some feedback about how the project is going. When you get to his office you discover that his concern is that this mother is simply not getting with the program and, in his opinion, never will.</p>	
<p>You are visiting a Therapist for initial conversations. You have met with the family once. During this initial conversation the therapist begins to roll her eyes and start talking about this "dysfunctional family" and "toxic mother."</p>	

## **Providing nonadversarial advocacy in our roles within the system**

A final skill area for Parent Partners involves moving the team to action within the system. Parent Partners are not traditional advocates but they are required to create conditions so that families can have their needs met. This is different from being a service advocate or a legal advocate. Parent Partners have some tools that traditional advocates don't have which are:

- *High access on the inside:* The Parent Partner assigned to the Wraparound Project is part of the staff assigned to meet needs. They are not on the outside trying to make someone else get something done.
- *The Wraparound Process:* The Wraparound Process is a discrete set of practice steps tied to a clearly articulated core philosophy of care designed to produce a plan which meets family needs, builds on family strengths and delivers services and supports in the community. It is not certain set of services. The Parent Partner can and should use the Wraparound Process as a way to assure that family needs get met.
- *Flexibility in Roles:* Most Parent Partners assigned to Wraparound Projects have great flexibility in roles. This workbook is one effort to bring some clarity to the role. Most Parent Partners find they can define themselves in a variety of ways because the position is so new.

Some of the challenges experienced by Wraparound Parent Partners are listed below:

- *Focusing on service access:* Parent Partners are often faced with the common belief that more is better. In Wraparound that's not true. In fact, the right amount that actually meets needs is better. Wraparound Parent Partners also have to be champions for the wraparound process as well as for the family.
- *Becoming a traditional advocate in another system:* Wraparound Parent Partners often find themselves functioning as a traditional advocate in other systems when needs are unmet in those other systems. We have often seen people in these positions end up becoming an advocate to assure that the school provides an IEP or some other service. Parent Partners in Wraparound Projects should not be put into that role, but should get families someone to assist in that role when necessary.
- *Staying on the outside:* Some Parent Partners find themselves a stranger in a strange land when a Wraparound Project hires them. They elect to keep a low profile and not become too involved in the daily mechanics of the project. This allows them to keep their perspective but does result in the families being served paying a price of not having the kind of access which would be most helpful to get their needs met.

- *Choosing up Sides:* While the role of the Parent Partner is to push the Parent's perspective when necessary, effective Parent Partners realize that there is no single right side to any situation. Some Parent Partners identify with the parent, others identify with the children and still others identify with the professionals. Wraparound Parent Partners are able to see all sides and work through to a Wraparound solution.

## Communicating Wraparound Solutions

Review the situations below. First identify whether the solution is compatible with the Wraparound Process. Next identify ways you would help communicate the solution to other team members.

**Situation 1:** This single father of Jake has just about had it. He came back into Jake's life when his mother was incarcerated two years ago. Jake is mouthy and in his face as well as smoking pot a lot. Jake's dad does drink quite heavily but he gave up the drugs about four years ago. Jake's dad wants you to help get Jake moved to a boot camp for drug users for the summer.

Is this a wraparound solution?

If no, how could you change it to make it a Wraparound solution?

What would you say to Jake's Dad in order to help him choose a Wraparound Solution?

How would you communicate Jake's dad's opinion to the rest of the team?

**Situation 2:** Eilene is the grandmother and custodial parent for three of her grandchildren. They appear to all have fetal alcohol syndrome and their behavior is challenging. Eilene, who is from another generation, doesn't put much stock in diagnosis and feels like they are just stubborn children. She wants someone to take these kids to church more often than she can because a religious message will probably help.

Is this a wraparound solution?

If no, how could you change it to make it a Wraparound solution?

What would you say to Eilene in order to help her choose a Wraparound Solution?

How would you communicate Eilene's opinion to the rest of the team?

## ~~End~~BeginningNote

This workbook is a thank-you gift to parents from a number of states who have been gracious enough to allow those people working on making things better for kids and families to “try out” wraparound and individualized and tailored care practices with real families with real children really experiencing challenges within the system. Those states include Washington, California, Illinois and Oregon. In each of those states Parent Partners were hired with little or no substance in their job description who agreed to keep on working towards partnership and a vision that systems could operate as if families mattered. I am hopeful that this manual represents a tool which can be used to make the next generation of parent partners have an easier time doing the important work they have begun. I look forward to seeing how this manual changes and adapts over the next several years.