The Family Partner Task Force
A Brief Overview

July 2010

Background
In the early stages, communities practicing wraparound tried several strategies to acquire family partners who could provide a supportive role to families on wraparound teams. In spite of their good intent many of these efforts were not entirely successful. Over time, National Wraparound Initiative advisors observed that these difficulties resulted, in part, from a lack of clarity about the role and a lack of guidelines to support communities in defining the role and responsibilities of individuals hired in these positions.

Purpose
To address these concerns, the National Wraparound Initiative (NWI) established the Family Partner Task Force in June 2006. The overall goal of the Parent Partner Task Force is to create a model for how parent partners operate within the wraparound process as described by the National Wraparound Initiative.

Activities and Accomplishments
Within the first year, the 16 volunteers of the Family Partner Task Force established a work plan. The work plan is updated annually to document progress, address challenges, and identify new tasks. The Family Partner Task Force provides an easy to access and dynamic forum where members discuss and deepen their understanding of the role of family partners within the wraparound process and explore solutions to challenges encountered by family partners in the course of doing their work.

The Family Partner is a family member who is a formal member of the wraparound team. The family partner’s role is to serve the family, help them engage and actively participate on the team, and make informed decisions that drive the process.

Family Partners have a strong connection to the community and are very knowledgeable about resources, services, and supports for families. The Family Partner’s personal experience raising a child with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs is critical to earning the respect of families and establishing a trusting relationship that is valued by the family.

The Family Partner can be a mediator, facilitator, or bridge between families and agencies. Family Partners ensure each family is heard and their individual needs are being addressed and met. The Family Partner should communicate and educate agency staff on wraparound principles, the importance of family voice and choice, and other key aspects of ensuring wraparound fidelity. The family partner works in close partnership with the wraparound facilitator.
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The first accomplishment of the Family Partner Task Force was to reach consensus on the title "Family Partner" for this role and identify the key responsibilities and characteristics of the individual who is qualified to fill it. (See the sidebar below.)

Task Force members believed that firmly grounding the role of Family Partner in the wraparound principles is essential. Using a family driven, iterative, and participatory strategy the Family Partner Task Force examined how the Family Partner role was shaped by and also contributed to operationalizing each of the Ten Principles of the Wraparound Process. The resulting document, *The Application of the Ten Principles of the Wraparound Process to the Role of Family Partners on Wraparound Teams* is available on the NWI Website. It is gaining wide acceptance as a model for practice in communities around the country that can be used or adapted across a wide spectrum of system of care communities. To access the document go to [http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/NWI-book/Chapters/Penn-4b.1-(family-part-10-principles).pdf](http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/NWI-book/Chapters/Penn-4b.1-(family-part-10-principles).pdf).

The Family Partner Task Force's newest product is *How Family Partners Contribute to the Phases and Activities of the Wraparound Process*. This document explains in detail what the Family Partner does during each phase of the process to support the family’s engagement in key activities. It also describes how the Family Partner’s work complements that of the Wraparound Facilitator and how the Family Partner works in partnership with other members of the team. To access the document go to [http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/NWI-book/Chapters/Osher-4b.2-(fam-partner-phases-activities).pdf](http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/NWI-book/Chapters/Osher-4b.2-(fam-partner-phases-activities).pdf).

**Future Plans:**

The Task Force's Work Plan has a number of activities for future consideration. These include:

- The NWI website includes an assortment of tools contributed by wraparound practitioners and trainers around the country. These can be browsed by going to [http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/tools/toolsforwraparound.php](http://www.nwi.pdx.edu/tools/toolsforwraparound.php) Family Partner Task Force members consider it important to develop a tool that provides a framework, guidance, or standards that developers and adopters can use to assess how closely tools conform to NWI and Family Partner Task Force principles and practice.

- Family Partners provide a professional service to wraparound teams and the families, children and youth, they serve. Family Partner Task Force members believe it is critically important to develop valid and reliable tools to assess and support the quality with which individuals are performing this role as well as the outcomes that result from their efforts.

- Conditions of employment can influence how family partners perform their work and how effect they are as members of a wraparound team. Family Partner Task Force members see the need to develop alternative frameworks for working conditions that are consistent with the wraparound principles and can be applied by different kinds of employers (e.g. family organizations, provider groups, community agencies). Members suggest that these should at a minimum include salary schedules and key issues such as benefits, liability, flexible working hours, supervision, career ladders, growth opportunities, and different roles families can take on in wraparound.
An inquiry on the Family Partner Task Force listserv called for information about how members have experienced and dealt with background checks. Individuals with "red flagged" histories who have been able to return to their homes and communities, rebuild their lives and family, and are dedicated to helping others, can be a model and support others trying to achieve these same goals. Some of them would make excellent Family Partners. Members agreed that some kind of “white” paper to bring this issue to light and describe how “exceptions” have been or could be made as a way to offer guidance for national and state policy is needed.