New NIMH grant application to support the NWI’s fidelity measure development

Discussions at the National Wraparound Initiative advisors meeting in June generated a wealth of information about the field’s needs for wraparound fidelity and quality measurement. Based on these discussions, on August 1, 2005, Eric Bruns and Jim Rast submitted a “Small Business Technology Transfer Research” (STTR) grant proposal to the National Institutes for Mental Health. STTR grants are awarded to partnerships between research institutions and small businesses who propose to work together to develop technologies that will improve health and well-being outcomes for vulnerable populations. This grant mechanism seemed well-suited to the needs of the National Wraparound Initiative to develop core implementation supports for wraparound.

Work on a new, more comprehensive set of fidelity and quality measures for wraparound will begin this Fall as part of our subcontract with SAMHSA. If we receive the STTR grant, it will provide an initial “Phase I” award of $100,000 to the research team (including Janet Walker, Trina Osher, and Gary Bond, fidelity expert at the University of Indiana-Purdue University) to more systematically validate and field test these measures. During Phase I, we would also develop and field test basic computer- and web-based applications to support a fidelity measurement system. During “Phase II” of the STTR project, which provides up to $750,000 over 2 years, we would then develop and mobilize additional supports for using the fidelity tools, such as computer-based trainings, web portals for dissemination, and systems for linking fidelity scores to needed training and technical assistance for a program or site.

In the basic “commercialization plan” of the application, we propose that the NWI will benefit from any revenues generated from fidelity measurement products. These resources would then be used to support continued research and development efforts by the Initiative. At the same time, small businesses that support wraparound implementation (like Vroon VanDenBerg) will be able to market training and technical assistance to communities that includes reliable and valid staff and program evaluation technologies, benefitting both the small business as well as the communities it serves.

The project abstract included in the grant application is provided below. The advisors of the National Wraparound Initiative will play a key role in this project, including helping field test both the measures and the supportive technologies, so stay tuned!

Development of Wraparound Fidelity Assessment System
Proposal abstract
The purpose of this Phase I Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) proposal is to develop and evaluate the Wraparound Fidelity Assessment System (WFAS), a multi-method approach to assessing the quality of individualized care planning and management for children and youth with serious emotional and behavioral
problems and their families. WFAS will consist of modules for use by both (1) researchers, evaluators, and agency certification entities to determine degree of conformance to the wraparound service model (WSM), as well as (2) trainers, supervisors, and program personnel involved in implementing WSM. The current research project will evaluate psychometrics, reliability, and validity of a prototype of the WFAS, which will consist of interviews with caregivers, youths, providers, and members of the child and family team; a practice observation measure to be employed by external evaluators to assess conformance to standards of high-quality wraparound during team meeting sessions; a record review instrument for assessing the written record of the wraparound process and indicators of fidelity to the prescribed model; and program administrator and community stakeholder interviews. During the course of Phase I of this STTR project, we will also develop and evaluate the feasibility of prototypes for two web-based supports for using the WFAS: (1) a web portal for WFAS information and dissemination, and (2) a computer-based training program for implementing one of the WFAS measures. Successful development of a reliable, valid, and user-friendly fidelity assessment system for this service model will inform decision-making by providers, supervisors, program administrators, and key stakeholders in the broader service system. The WFAS will also provide a model to the field for deploying fidelity measurement, recognized as a core implementation support to evidence-based practices. Given the lack of such measures in the field currently, the fidelity assessment system and the proposed supportive technologies for implementation will have significant commercial application for public agencies, behavioral health programs, and research and evaluation entities, and will support improved health and functioning outcomes for an underserved population of children and families.