these years in part because of my love of academe, and in part due to the flexibility of the schedule.

Another challenge is that not everyone understands the values and theory of Wraparound. At the individual level as well as the organizational level, many of the agencies that we are involved with (including the schools) are unfamiliar with Wraparound. Individuals within agencies who are unfamiliar with how Wraparound works seem reluctant to have a parent and a family directing their own treatment. If these professionals are familiar with Wraparound, they do not appear to “buy into” the belief that families are an integral and necessary component of the team. At the organizational level, agencies have forms, protocol, procedures, and power structures that work to discourage creative problem solving to address unique family challenges. The daycare dilemma is a good example. The need clearly exists, not just for my family, but for many families like mine. How can these agencies, in partnership with families, go to work on solving this challenge? From my perspective, it requires stepping outside of policies, procedures, protocols, and turf protection. It requires creative thinking, believing in the power of families and community, and believing in the strengths of children and families like mine. When this happens, many families and their children with emotional and behavioral challenges can be provided with the necessary supports to keep their children at home, in school, and out of the juvenile justice system. Moreover, these families and children can flourish, given the opportunity.

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CODY’S EXPERIENCE OF WRAPAROUND

Wraparound teams may find it challenging to involve youth in meetings. Youth may find the meetings boring, they may be easily distracted, or they may get upset about what team members are saying about them. However, when youth are engaged in their own team meetings, they can take part in the development of their plan.

Cody, who is 11, has had a Wraparound team since 2000. He is an example of a youth who finds Wraparound meetings boring. In the beginning, Cody said he acted out during the meetings because he was bored. As Cody puts it, “It’s not exactly the funnest thing to do!”

Despite being bored, Cody participates as a member of his team and admits his team has helped him and his family. “It [attending the meetings] is usually kind of boring for me, but now I kind of realize that it’s to help me.” Since realizing this, Cody listens to what his team is talking about and realizes they are looking after his best interests. “Some of the adults see things that I don’t even know I do!” He finds it helpful when the team talks about these things and discusses ways to work on them.

Cody is appreciative of the team for listening to his needs. When he describes things that he would like to do, like attending summer camp, the team makes it happen. They also hired a mentor for him, which he says helped him make friends. “Now I’m making friends really good. I used to be shy and I didn’t want to go up and say, ‘Hi!’ to somebody. And now I just go up and say ‘Hi, what’s your name?’” The team even helped Cody and his brother get along better, despite their “over-the-top sibling rivalry.” For Cody, the boredom of the meetings is worth it because in the end, good things have come from these meetings.

What does Cody like best about the team meetings? He likes it when the team talks about the good things. “I like it when I get to name my strengths because that’s a really easy thing to do!” He says the team does a good job at recognizing his strengths and helping him to use his strengths. At the same time, it is helpful for him to hear what he needs to change and get the help from the team to work on these changes.

Cody’s suggestion for making the team meetings better is to have lots of free food at the meeting and discuss the bad things about his brother. It seems as if sibling rivalry is still around!

— Kathryn Schutte