Proposed change to principle of “Persistence” for use by the National Wraparound Initiative

Background

In 2004, the National Wraparound Initiative (NWI) undertook a process of refining the original “10 Essential Elements”\(^1\) of the wraparound process into clearer statements. To refine the elements, the NWI convened a small group of national trainers, program administrators, and family advocates. This small group reviewed the existing “10 Elements,” and crafted 10 statements that were intended to present these values more clearly at the child and family level. These statements then underwent three rounds of review by a larger group of advisors, each followed by revision. The final version was presented on the NWI website in 2004 and has been a core component of the NWI’s description of wraparound.

The refined “Ten principles of the wraparound process” has been a helpful tool to communicate the value base for wraparound and has generally been well-received by the field. For some, however, one exception has been the “Persistence” principle. This principle represented a revision of the “Unconditional Care” element from the 1999 document. In the revision, the essence of the idea of “Unconditional Care” was retained, but the title of the principle was changed to “Persistence.” The rationale for this change was based on the core advisors’ observations that

1. Unconditional care was often very difficult for a system or community provider to commit to. Prescribing unconditional care may cause some agencies to balk at participating in a wraparound initiative.
2. It could also lead to disillusionment among families who were led to believe the system would provide care or supports under any circumstances.

Since the revision, there has been significant discussion among practitioners and champions of the wraparound process about this change. For many, the change of from “unconditional” to “persistent” represents a significant retreat from the original philosophy of wraparound. Others have found the Persistence principle confusing and hard to reconcile with the other principles, all of which present ultimate aspirations to strive for. Still others have critiqued the use of the term “persistence,” which they say has a negative connotation (e.g., “a pest, a nag, not a helper”) compared to the goal of “unconditional.”

The National Wraparound Initiative is about to publish the SAMHSA-funded Resource Guide to Wraparound, in which we will present all the basic information

about wraparound that the NWI has produced. In advance of publishing the Resource Guide, we have concluded that we should consider revising the description of the “Persistence” principle, returning to the term “Unconditional.”

In the next two pages, you will find a proposed change from “Persistence” back to “Unconditional.” You will also find the original wording of the principle of “Persistence,” for comparison purposes. The wording presented here was crafted by eight NWI advisors to whom this represented an important issue.

How to provide your feedback on this issue:

1. Review the original definition and the proposed changes as presented on the next two pages.
2. Go online using the email invitation you were sent separately. That email contains a link that will take you directly to the survey. These links are personalized, so after you respond you will not receive automated email reminders about the survey. (This also means that you should only respond using “your” link, i.e., the link sent to you.) If you have questions or did not receive an invitation for the survey, contact Vicky Mazzone: mazzonv@pdx.edu
3. If you DO NOT want to respond, email Vicky Mazzone at mazzonv@pdx.edu. If you neither respond nor decline, you will be sent periodic automated reminder emails.
4. The survey will ask you to
   - “Vote” on whether you think the proposed change is better or worse than the original (or neither better nor worse),
   - Give any feedback on the wording of the principle, and
   - Provide any other open-ended feedback.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider this issue.

Sincerely,

Eric, Janet, and the National Wraparound Initiative
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PROPOSE CHANGE TO:

Unconditional Care. A wraparound team does not give up on, blame, or reject children, youth, and their families. When faced with challenges or setbacks, the team continues working towards meeting the needs of the youth and family and towards achieving the goals in the wraparound plan until the team reaches agreement that a formal wraparound process is no longer necessary.

This principle emphasizes that the team’s commitment to achieving its goals persists regardless of the child’s behavior or placement setting, the family’s circumstances, or the availability of services in the community. This principle includes the idea that undesired behavior, events, or outcomes are not seen as evidence of child or family “failure” and are not seen as a reason to reject or eject the family from wraparound. Instead, adverse events or outcomes are interpreted as indicating a need to revise the wraparound plan so that it more successfully promotes the positive outcomes associated with the goals. This principle also includes the idea that the team is committed to providing the supports and services that are necessary for success, and will not terminate wraparound because available services are deemed insufficient. Instead, the team is committed to creating and implementing a plan that reflects the wraparound principles, even in the face of limited system capacity.

At the same time, it is worth noting that many wraparound experts, including family members and advocates, have observed that providing “unconditional” care to youth and families can be challenging for teams to achieve in the face of certain system-level constraints. One such constraint is when funding limitations or rules will not fund the type or mix of services determined most appropriate by the team. In these instances the team must develop a plan that can be implemented in the absence of such resources but in a way that does not give up on the youth or family. Providing unconditional care can be complicated in other situations as well. For example, when wraparound is being implemented in the context of child welfare, protection of children’s safety may require that care is unconditional primarily to the child or youth. Regardless, even in these circumstances, team members as well as those overseeing wraparound initiatives must strive to achieve the principle of unconditional care wherever possible for the youth and all family members if the wraparound process is to have its full impact on children, families, and communities.
Persistence. Despite challenges, the team persists in working toward the goals included in the wraparound plan until the team reaches agreement that a formal wraparound process is no longer required.

This principle emphasizes that the team’s commitment to achieving its goals persists regardless of the child’s behavior or placement setting, the family’s circumstances, or the availability of services in the community. This principle includes the idea that undesired behavior, events, or outcomes are not seen as evidence of child or family “failure” and are not seen as a reason to eject the family from wraparound. Instead, adverse events or outcomes are interpreted as indicating a need to revise the wraparound plan so that it more successfully promotes the positive outcomes associated with the goals. This principle also includes the idea that the team is committed to providing the supports and services that are necessary for success, and will not terminate wraparound because available services are deemed insufficient. Instead, the team is committed to creating and implementing a plan that reflects the wraparound principles, even in the face of limited system capacity.

It is worth noting that the principle of “persistence” is a notable revision from “unconditional” care. This revision reflects feedback from wraparound experts, including family members and advocates, that for communities using the wraparound process, describing care as “unconditional” may be unrealistic and possibly yield disappointment on the part of youth and family members when a service system or community cannot meet their own definition of unconditionality. Resolving the semantic issues around “unconditional care” has been one of the challenges of defining the philosophical base of wraparound. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the principle of “persistence” continues to emphasize the notion that teams work until a formal wraparound process is no longer needed, and that wraparound programs adopt and embrace “no eject, no reject” policies for their work with families.