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Study Guide: How Youth Partners Can Collaborate with Family Partners in Wraparound

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Study Guide: *How Youth Partners Can Collaborate with Family Partners in Wraparound*

WHAT'S THE POINT?

As the two peer providers on the Wraparound team, youth partners and family partners have a good deal of crossover between their role descriptions, as each uses their individual lived experience to support their respective youth and family clients. Yet in order to be certified in their peer roles, the youth and family partner may have received training that was distinct and specific to the populations they serve, and when entering into a Wraparound team where there might exist strife and tension between the youth and their parent(s), the youth partner and family partner may feel that their roles have put them at odds. It does not have to be this way. While there may be challenges that arise, there are also many ways in which it is quite natural for the family partner and the youth partner to connect, collaborate, and support each other's work.

It is our hope that this study guide can be a helpful training, coaching, and conversational tool to help supervisors and staff think through the nuances of this particular working relationship. It can be used when onboarding new staff, when a family partner is working alongside a youth partner for the first time (or vice versa), when addressing challenges that come up, or simply to check in on and refresh staff skills. In addition, it can be used during one-on-one supervision as well as in a group training or coaching session. This tool also may be useful for colleagues who work alongside family partners and youth partners, such as care coordinators, clinicians, case workers, and others.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR “COMMON COLLABORATIONS” AND “COMMON CHALLENGES”

- 1. Give an example of how you would validate your youth/family client's negative feelings about their parent/youth without agreeing with them, and how you could promote effective communication without lecturing.*
- 2. How do the principles of Wraparound come into play when addressing some of the common challenges described in the peer practice brief?*
- 3. Have you ever had a positive relationship with the youth/family partner on your team? What do you think made that relationship work well?*
- 4. Have you ever had a difficult relationship with the youth/family partner? Why was it a struggle? Looking back, are there any strategies you could have used to improve things?*
- 5. Are there any challenges that you've had while working with a youth/family partner that were NOT mentioned in this guide? How did you address them?*

SCENARIOS: DISCUSSION QUESTION ANSWERS

Kerry (she/her) and Jane (she/her)

1. *What are some things that the family partner and/or the youth partner could have done before the meeting to help the process go more smoothly?*

There are a few possible strategies the youth partner and family partner could have used to prevent the standoff that occurred during the team meeting. First of all, best practices dictate that both the family member(s) and young person should be assigned a peer support partner from the beginning of the Wraparound process, so perhaps some of these tensions might have been prevented had Kerry's youth partner been a part of the team since the engagement phase.

When Kerry expressed not wanting to share her plan to move out with her mother before the meeting due to negative past experiences, the youth partner could have helped Kerry anticipate the situation at the team meeting by asking open-ended questions, such as, "How do you think your mother will respond?" or "How can we best communicate your plan to your mom?" The youth partner also could strategically share some of their own lived experience, if appropriate. It may have been that through conversation Kerry would have decided that her mother would react more favorably to hearing of her plan in advance, rather than having it sprung on her in the team meeting. If she did decide to communicate with her mother before the meeting, the youth partner could have worked with Kerry to decide how she would like to do so, and what kind of support she might need. These strategies are good examples of how a youth partner might work with a young person to **promote positive/proactive communication** between the young person and their parent or caregiver.

Another option may have been for the youth partner to ask Kerry for permission to share her agenda item with her mother's family partner in advance of the meeting. This should be done in a way that honors the principle of **keeping it confidential**. It also would be important for the youth parent to be transparent about why they would like to speak with the family partner about Kerry's thoughts — in general, if all parties are coming into a Wraparound meeting with the same knowledge of what will be discussed, and there are no surprises in store, things are much more likely to go smoothly. Were the youth partner to give the family partner a heads-up about what Kerry was planning to add to the

agenda, the family partner in turn would have been able to let Jane know what to expect, allowing Jane to feel more prepared to address the topic. Jane then also would have had time to plan with her family partner about how she might like to communicate her thoughts to Kerry, and the rest of the team, during the meeting, as well as to anticipate any issues that might arise or support she might need from her family partner.

Finally, it may have been helpful for the youth partner to check in with the care coordinator in advance of the meeting so that the care coordinator could have better prepared to manage any tension or conflict that might emerge during the team meeting. Again, generally, the more prepared all team members are, the better the team meeting will go.

2. *What are some things the family partner or youth partner could have done in the meeting?*

Depending on how the meeting was going, the youth and family partner may have needed to reorient Kerry, Jane, and the other team members to the ground rules about respectful communication and the principle of collaboration. Ideally, the youth partner and family partner will be able to support each other in doing this. Sometimes it also can help for youth and family partners to work with their clients ahead of time on strategies to use if they are feeling overwhelmed — for instance, taking a break or going for a walk. These are good times for the youth partner and family partner to check in with their client about how things are going, any additional support they may need from their peers, etc.

3. *What can the family partner or youth partner do to help resolve this conflict?*

The youth and family partners should work with their clients to reflect on what happened and to plan for the next team meeting and possibly any communication they want to have between meetings. The youth partner can help Kerry plan next steps as to how she wants to tackle her housing situation, and, by reflecting on how the meeting went and using open-ended questions, possibly help Kerry come up with a plan to discuss her plan with Jane in advance of the next team meeting. This is another example of **promoting positive/proactive communication**. The youth partner might ask Kerry questions like, "How

did that meeting go?" "What do you think made it go poorly?" "When you have had good meetings, what do you think made them go well?" or "What do you think we can do to help your next meeting go better?" If Kerry decides that she wants to communicate with Jane before the next meeting, the youth partner can support Kerry in identifying what she would like to say, how she would like to communicate, and what kind of support she might need. The family partner also can work with Jane to come up with a plan for how she might like to communicate with her daughter. If Kerry does not want to communicate with her mother in advance of the next meeting, it's possible that the youth partner might have some relevant lived experience she could share with the family partner that

the family partner could use to **provide perspective** to Jane on Kerry's goal of moving out, which might help her see things in a different light. In addition, the youth and family partners should work with their clients to plan for the next meeting, touching on what agenda items they might like to include, how they might like to share these with the rest of the team in advance of the meeting, what communication strategies they might like to use, and what supports they might need during the meeting. It also may be helpful for the youth and/or family partner to meet with the care coordinator ahead of time so that they are all on the same page and everyone is prepared to have a more productive conversation about Kerry's living situation.

Lola (they/them) and Michael (he/him)

1. *What were some successful strategies used by the youth and family partner?*

The youth partner and family partner used several successful strategies to support Lola and Michael in having a positive experience in Wraparound. First, both listened to their clients and validated their concerns, sharing these with the rest of the team with the permission of Lola and Michael (**keep it confidential**). Second, the family partner and youth partner met before the meeting and talked about how they could address their clients' concerns. Next, they each supported their clients in arriving at a unique solution (the separate meetings) and worked to advocate for Lola and Michael's ideas by appealing to the principles of Wraparound, despite some pushback from the rest of the team.

2. *What could they have done better and/or differently?*

Since Wraparound seemed to end with a positive solution for Lola and Michael, it does not seem like the youth and/or family partner necessarily

needed to do anything differently. Perhaps they might have reintroduced the idea of having a single team meeting after a period of successfully holding separate meetings to help Lola and Michael begin to communicate and collaborate with each other with the support of their Wraparound team.

3. *What challenges did they face?*

The youth and family partner faced a pretty significant challenge at the very beginning of the Wraparound process, with Lola refusing to be in the same room as their father and Michael sharing some history that could make for a difficult and combustible team meeting. Through collaboration, creativity, and honoring their clients' voice and choice, the youth and family partner did a great job of addressing what may have felt like an insurmountable difficulty. They also faced the challenge of persuading the Wraparound team to support their unconventional idea of holding two separate meetings for the youth and family, which they addressed well by appealing to the principle of youth and family voice.

Jordan (he/him) and Sandra (she/her)

1. *What were some successful strategies used by the youth and family partner?*

The youth and family partner used several excellent strategies to support Jordan and his mom. When the youth partner first joined the team, the family partner met with them to brief them on the history between Jordan and Sandra, so the youth partner would be better prepared to support Jordan, and the youth partner also was able to share some of Jordan's perspectives that the family partner and Sandra may not have been aware of. During this conversation, the youth and family partners kept it confidential and maintained trust with their clients. Using the information they learned from the family partner, the youth partner did a great job of helping Jordan come up with a plan on how to share his goals with his mother, using open-ended questions to help him anticipate the situation. The family partner also was able to share the information she had learned from the youth partner with Sandra, which gave her a fuller picture of Jordan's perspective, and helped Sandra and her family partner work on a plan that might be more agreeable to Jordan than residential treatment. In addition, the youth partner, family partner, Jordan, and Sandra met before the meeting to discuss what Jordan and Sandra planned to share with the team, which was a great strategy to promote positive/proactive communication, help everyone feel better prepared, and minimize conflict.

2. *What could they have done better and/or differently?*

Instead of sharing Jordan's feelings about his mother and worries about ending up in the hospital with the family partner initially, perhaps the youth partner could have supported Jordan to share these thoughts directly with Sandra. One other thing the family partner might have done differently would have been helping Sandra identify natural and community supports at an earlier time.

3. *What challenges did they face?*

The youth and family partner were primarily dealing with the challenge of their clients being on two different pages. However, fundamentally, Jordan and Sandra agreed on what Jordan's needs were — safety and education — they just had different strategies to meet those needs. By meeting separately, sharing their clients' perspectives, and collaborating outside the meeting, the youth and family partner helped Sandra and Jordan come to an understanding of each other's positions and reach a solution that both were comfortable with.

Emily (she/her) and Sarah (she/her)

1. *What were some successful strategies used by the youth and family partner?*

The youth partner did a great job of keeping it confidential and promoting positive/proactive conversation, when they agreed to keep Emily's medical information private but also supported her in thinking through how her mother might react upon finding out that she was on birth control. The youth partner also did a good job of clarifying their role when challenges arose at the team meeting, and the family partner supported them. The family partner also was instrumental in providing perspective to the whole team as to how Sarah was feeling. Since Sarah was speaking out of anger and may not have been expressing herself very clearly, hearing things from the family partner's calm, professional perspective probably helped everyone, including Emily, better understand Sarah's point of view.

2. *What could they have done better and/or differently?*

When exploring consequences with Emily, perhaps the youth partner could have asked questions like, "If your mom does find your birth control, what kind of support do you think you'll need?" or "What do you want to do if the team finds out?" to help her anticipate the situation that arose at the meeting, but in general they did a great job of honoring Emily's wishes and staying within their role.

3. *What challenges did they face?*

Since Sarah decided to raise her concerns at the team meeting, the youth partner was faced with the situation of the team meeting devolving into an argument and potentially an "us vs. them" situation. The youth partner responded well to this by remaining calm, referring back to their job description, and advocating for the young person's rights. The family partner kept things from becoming contentious by validating Sarah's feelings without undermining the youth partner.

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