

# Wraparound

## *As a Tertiary Level Intervention for Students With Emotional/Behavioral Needs*

*Robert, a fifth-grader with a history of behavior problems, has become more belligerent to his teacher in the past few weeks, refusing to complete tasks, disrupting instruction, and now threatening other students—who have become less tolerant of his outbursts. The social worker feels suspending him will “make things worse”; she knows his mother is struggling with him at home as well. Robert reports his father is getting out of prison next week, is anxious to have his dad back in his life, and wishes his dad and mom would reunite after being divorced for many years. The principal, also reluctant to keep suspending Robert, feels Robert “needs much more” than a functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan and has asked for a special education referral. She feels a placement in a setting where “he will get more attention from staff” is in everybody’s best interest. The teacher agrees that a special education referral is needed because behavior plans developed by the school’s positive behavior support team “have not worked.”*

Sound familiar? If a student has multiple behavior problems that escalate over time and across different settings, school-based problem-solving teams can become quickly overwhelmed, especially when educators identify “setting events” for problem behaviors that have occurred outside of school and are beyond the control of school personnel. Instead of resorting to exclusion or restrictive placements, schools need to be able to implement proactive interventions that match the

when it is necessary to move to the highest level of intervention planning for such students and (b) have the skills to quickly provide a level of support commensurate with the demonstrated needs of such students.

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**Instead of resorting to exclusion or restrictive placements, schools need to be able to implement proactive interventions that match the complexity and intensity of the student’s needs.**

complexity and intensity of the student’s needs. A function-based individualized behavior intervention plan (BIP) has been described as an important foundation for tertiary tier support (Crone & Horner, 2003); however, identifying the function and designing a specific behavior support plan around problem behavior may be insufficient to prevent more failure—and may be potentially more restrictive or punitive for students such as Robert. Schools need to (a) know

when it is necessary to move to the highest level of intervention planning for such students and (b) have the skills to quickly provide a level of support commensurate with the demonstrated needs of such students. The wraparound process is a comprehensive intervention for the 1% to 2% of students with the highest level of emotional/behavioral need. As the most complex intervention in the schoolwide positive behavior support (SWPBS) response-to-intervention con-

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the student at school, at home, and in the community.

### **Wraparound: A History**

A value-based approach for supporting students with complex mental health needs, wraparound originated as a grass-roots practice, as mental health and other practitioners struggled to provide realistic options for youth with serious emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD) who had traditionally been placed in highly restrictive settings with limited success (Eber & Keenan, 2004); whose families had typically been excluded from intervention planning; and who generally experienced poor outcomes (Burchard, Bruns, & Burchard, 2002). Wraparound (see box, “Additional Resources”) is grounded in the System of Care movement, which began in the 1980s as mental health and related youth-serving agencies attempted to more effectively work in concert with families to identify the supports most likely to help youth attain positive outcomes, both socially and academically. The core System of Care principles espoused through wraparound include: (a) families and children are full-participants in planning and selecting interventions, (b) services involve multiple providers across all of the domains relevant to



the child’s needs, and (c) the process is culturally relevant (Stroul, 2002; Stroul & Friedman, 1986, 1996).

Concurrent with the emergence of wraparound in the System of Care field in the 1980s, an individualized application of positive behavior supports (PBS) known as person-centered planning (PCP) surfaced as part of the advocacy movement for persons with developmental delays (Risley, 1996; Wehmeyer, Baker, Blumberg, & Harrison, 2004). Focused on reducing problem behaviors in persons with developmental disabilities without resorting to aversive techniques (Horner et al., 1990), the goals and approach of PCP parallel the value base, process, and desired outcomes for wraparound: (a) full participation in the community, (b) participation in healthy interpersonal relationships, (c) right to self-determination, (d) access to meaningful education, (e) opportunity for gainful employment, and (f)

ongoing opportunities for growth (Risley).

As with function-based behavior supports identified through PCP, wraparound recognizes the influence of environment (e.g., settings and persons) on behavior. Successful implementation of both PCP and wraparound relies upon team collaboration, considers the youth’s wants and needs, and recognizes the importance of family voice and choice when planning interventions. The concept of contextual fit, central to functional behavior assessment (FBA), BIP, PCP, and wraparound, examines the degree of compatibility or “goodness of fit” between multiple elements of an intervention plan (Albin, Lucyshyn, Horner & Flannery, 1996, p. 82). In particular, the match between the proposed intervention and the values, skills, and knowledge of implementers, family members, and the child is crucial. The FBA process must be streamlined for educators by balancing the need for

accurate behavioral data and the constraints of the practitioner’s environment (Scott, Nelson, & Zabala, 2003). Families and educators can reach consensus on the priorities for intervention, and the strategies planning is engaging, collaborative, and considerate of “real-life” conditions.

### **The Wraparound Process**

As a philosophy and a process, wrap-around supports the student, family, and teacher by proactively organizing and blending natural supports, interagency services, PBS, and academic interventions. As previously mentioned, a critical feature of the wrap-around process is a specific focus on engaging the student, family, and teacher equally in a proactive team process. The student, family, teacher(s), and others who may have ongoing contact and interaction with the student are key members of the strength-based team that determines and prioritizes needs and designs and implements strategies likely to improve quality of life for all involved.

A team facilitator (typically a school social worker [SSW], psychologist, counselor, or other clinical staff), who is trained in this family-centered, strength-based philosophy and approach, leads the wraparound process. The facilitator needs to be

able to (a) engage students, families, and teachers who have experienced failed interventions and therefore may feel frustrated, disillusioned, or angry; (b) translate student, family, and teacher “stories” into need statements and strength inventories that guide the design of interventions; (c) bring together student, family, teacher, and natural supports to form a team; (d) ensure voice and ownership of interventions by those who are involved in implementation; and (e) organize and use multiple levels of data to guide the development and monitoring of interventions by the team on a regular basis.

As the most complex intervention within the tertiary tier of SWPBS, wraparound requires forming a unique team that reflects the strengths and needs of the individual student. Natural support persons are included as key team members who can ensure contextual fit, increasing the likelihood that the supports and interventions will have positive effects. An uncle or older sibling, a teacher from a previous school year who had a positive relationship with the student, and a music teacher who appreciates a student’s talent are all examples of critical natural supports. Wraparound teams develop unique supports and interventions that increase the student’s opportunity to

experience success at home, at school, and in the community.

Other key features of the wrap-around process include a focus on (a) improvements in quality of life instead of only a reduction in problem behaviors; (b) regular progress monitoring using school data and the perspectives of teacher(s), student, and family; and (c) frequent meetings to carefully design unique strategies that reflect the strengths and voice/choice of the student, family, and teacher.

### **Wraparound: A Case Study**

Staff members at “Sunshine Elementary School” have begun the process of creating and implementing a full continuum of positive behavior supports (i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary tiers). The Universal PBIS Team addresses primary tier supports, including overall school climate and the supports needed by all students. The Secondary Tier Team monitors the implementation of three types of support: (a) generically delivered check-in, check-out (CICO) intervention for students whose behaviors are not sufficiently responsive to primary tier interventions; (b) an individualized version of CICO, known as check-and-connect, for students whose behaviors need more than the generic version of CICO; and (c) small group social skills instruction for students with significant social skills deficits. The Tertiary Planning Team adopts a system focus to ensure that students who require highly individualized function-based interventions to succeed actually receive these interventions and progress satisfactorily. This team continuously monitors the progress of individualized interventions and does not design or implement the actual individualized interventions. The Tertiary Planning Team enforces the requirement that each student at the Tertiary level has his or her own uniquely designed team who creates and implements interventions, monitors increments of change, and revises the plan as needed based on data (Eber et al., in press).

“Henry,” a student at Sunnyside Elementary School, had extremely poor

### **Additional Resources**

1. Kansas Institute for Positive Behavior Support:  
<http://www.kipbsmodules.org>
2. Illinois PBIS Network:  
<http://www.pbisillinois.org/>
3. National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:  
<http://www.pbis.org/main.htm>
4. National Wraparound Initiative:  
<http://www.rtc.pdx.edu/nwi/>
5. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) Systems of Care:  
<http://www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov/>
6. University of Kansas, Center on Developmental Disabilities—Positive Behavior Support:  
<http://uappbs.apbs.org/>
7. Eber, L. (2005). Wraparound: Description and case example. In G. Sugai & R. Horner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of behavior modification and cognitive behavior therapy: Educational applications* (pp. 1601–1605). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



attendance, failing grades, and poor homework completion. He had experienced trouble with the law in the community, which resulted in a court-assigned probation officer and a mandated Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) counselor. Based on this information, the Tertiary Planning Team identified Henry as having complex needs and requiring a comprehensive wraparound plan. The SSW, who had been trained as a wrap-around facilitator, approached Henry's mother to see if she would be interested in an individualized, strength-based wraparound team to support his transition back to school.

During the first phase of wrap-around, **engagement and team preparation** (see Table 1), the student's family is introduced to the wraparound program. When Henry's mother shared a pamphlet she had been given for a short-term residential treatment center, the SSW started the conversation by offering Henry's mother the opportunity to develop a comprehensive support plan so Henry could experience success in his natural home, school, and community settings. In addition, the SSW explained that the process included developing a uniquely designed wraparound team to meet Henry's needs and take advantage of his strengths and the most natural supports possible. She asked his mother for suggestions of positive, supportive, and helpful team members to design this strength-based plan.

Initial team members included Henry, his mother, the SSW, his primary classroom teacher, the school principal, the bilingual liaison, and the district SWPBS tertiary-tier coach. Each person was chosen for a specific role on the team. Henry had a strong connection with his primary teacher, who also would implement certain interventions. The principal genuinely liked Henry, was invested in his success, and could assist with modifying system variables to ensure Henry's progress. The mother had a good relationship with the bilingual liaison and also needed her support as a translator. The tertiary coach was on the team to guide and support the SSW as she

**Table 1. The Wraparound Process**

**Phase I: Engagement and Team Preparation**

Facilitator . . .

- meets with family and key team members to gather their perspectives.
- guides family to generate a strengths list (multiple settings and perspectives) and a list of needs.
- generates a team member list, which includes natural supports, with the family.
- documents and shares baseline data about student's strengths/needs.

**Phase II: Initial Plan Development**

Team . . .

- begins regular meeting schedule.
- documents and reviews strengths and needs data (home/school/community).
- chooses a few needs for team to focus action planning, with special priority assigned to family concerns.
- develops an intervention plan (including function-based behavior supports as needed) to respond to home, school, and community strengths/needs.
- assesses community supports/resources available to meet needs identified by family.

**Phase III: Plan Implementation and Refinement**

Team . . .

- documents accomplishments of student and team at each meeting.
- meets frequently, checking follow-through and assessing progress of different interventions.
- receives regular documentation including data and plan updates.
- facilitates ongoing communication among those providing interventions in home, school, and community.

**Phase IV: Transition**

Team . . .

- discusses transitioning out of wraparound.
- considers the concerns of all team members in transition planning.
- communicates methods for future access to services to all team members.
- negotiates methods of introducing student and family to future teachers or providers.

learned to lead the wraparound process.

The team evolved as additional team members were identified to ensure a consistent and seamless support plan for Henry and his mother. Specifically, his mother felt that "these people should probably be part of a team that's doing so much to help Henry": She identified a DCFS counselor who had been assigned to pro-

vide in-home support as someone to invite to team meetings. She also suggested that Henry's probation officer should be involved; although she thought that the probation officer should be provided with updates from the team, she did not feel it would be helpful to Henry to have him present at team meetings.

In the second phase of wraparound, **initial plan development**, the team

identified and documented Henry's strengths and needs. Henry's strengths included a good relationship with his teacher, responsiveness to positive attention from adults he liked, leadership among his peers, and effective self-advocacy. The SSW helped the team identify two big needs for Henry: (a) "Henry needs to feel as if he fits in with the other kids at school" and (b) "Henry needs to feel successful at school." Henry's mother and school

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staff also wanted Henry to be "invested in his education," so that he would want to be at school and attend school willingly. By focusing on *needs* rather than *problems*, Henry's team changed the tone of both meetings and interventions from reactive to proactive. Rather than using preexisting interventions or services that are more deficit-oriented, the team designed interventions to respond to Henry's unique strengths and needs.

Because Henry had a positive relationship with his teacher, he was included in the check-and-connect intervention being delivered to other students in the school, some of whom were not on wraparound plans (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004; Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004). Henry's teacher would greet him each morning by saying, "Thank you for coming; I am so glad you are here today." Henry and his teacher would talk about the individual behavior goals listed on his daily point card. This intervention was selected because Henry's expected behavior could be "corrected" in advance and positive behavior encouraged in other settings, with extra support or reminders as needed.

Henry's plan included strategies that he selected along with his family and teachers and that were based on his expressed strengths and needs. For

example, he joined the school safety patrol, with the goal of acting as a positive role model; this helped him monitor and improve his own behavior in the hallways.

In the third phase of wraparound, **plan implementation and refinement**, the team focused on (a) regularly using data for decision making; (b) checking with the family, student, and teacher(s) to ensure that the plan was working; (c) adjusting the wraparound plan

based on feedback from team members; and (d) addressing additional needs that may have been identified but were not priorities at the onset of the wraparound process. During this phase, Henry's principal was able to facilitate completion of benchmark testing (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) even though Henry was not at school when others were tested. To address the truancy problem, the principal also arranged for the school bus to pick up Henry in front of his home rather than on the corner (where he was frequently distracted by people he knew and then did not get on the bus). Classroom interventions included homework adjustments, fewer spelling words, checking that Henry understood directions, and extra reading support in class from the Title I teacher. In addition, the team designed unique progress criteria for Henry so he could be eligible for the schoolwide Student of the Month recognition. His classroom duties included putting stickers on the homework chart for everyone in the class. The school also referred Henry and his family to a local interagency network so they could receive financial support to participate in community recreation activities.

The wraparound team monitored Henry's progress through a variety of data sources, including office discipline

reports, attendance/tardy record, grades, DIBELS scores, and CICO behavior card points. Team member perspectives about Henry's strengths, needs, and progress were collected using the Illinois Systematic Information Management for Educational Outcomes (SIMEO; see Illinois State Board of Education, 2005) data system. For example, SIMEO's Educational Information Tool collected teacher ratings of classroom academic and behavioral performance; the Home, School, Community Tool helped in assessing Henry's strengths and needs across multiple settings and life domains (e.g., safety/basic emotional, behavioral, and social needs/strengths).

Small increments of improvement were recognized, celebrated, and built upon. For example, from second quarter to third quarter, with wraparound in progress, Henry's grades began to improve (spelling: 15%–40%, math: 15%–48.5%, and reading: 20%–63%). During the previous school year, Henry's attendance was 22%. As wraparound was introduced, his attendance increased from 15% for the first quarter of the school year (attending 6 out of 41 days—he did not register until there were 10 days left in this quarter) to 60% in the second quarter (25 out of 42 days), and 75% (12 out of 16 days) at the beginning of the third quarter. His DIBELS score increased from 55 words per min in the fall to 67 words per min in the winter.

Figure 1 illustrates SIMEO data shared at team meetings to document improvements in the team's perception of Henry's placement risk, which went from minimal to no risk at home, high to minimal risk at school, and high to moderate risk in the community.

SIMEO data in Figure 2 were used by the team to identify increments of increased strengths across home/school/community, and improved behavior at school.

During the fourth phase, **transition**, Henry's accomplishments will continue to be reviewed and celebrated. The team will develop a transition plan to ensure success as it adjusts to less frequent team meetings and/or moves to natural supports without the ongoing

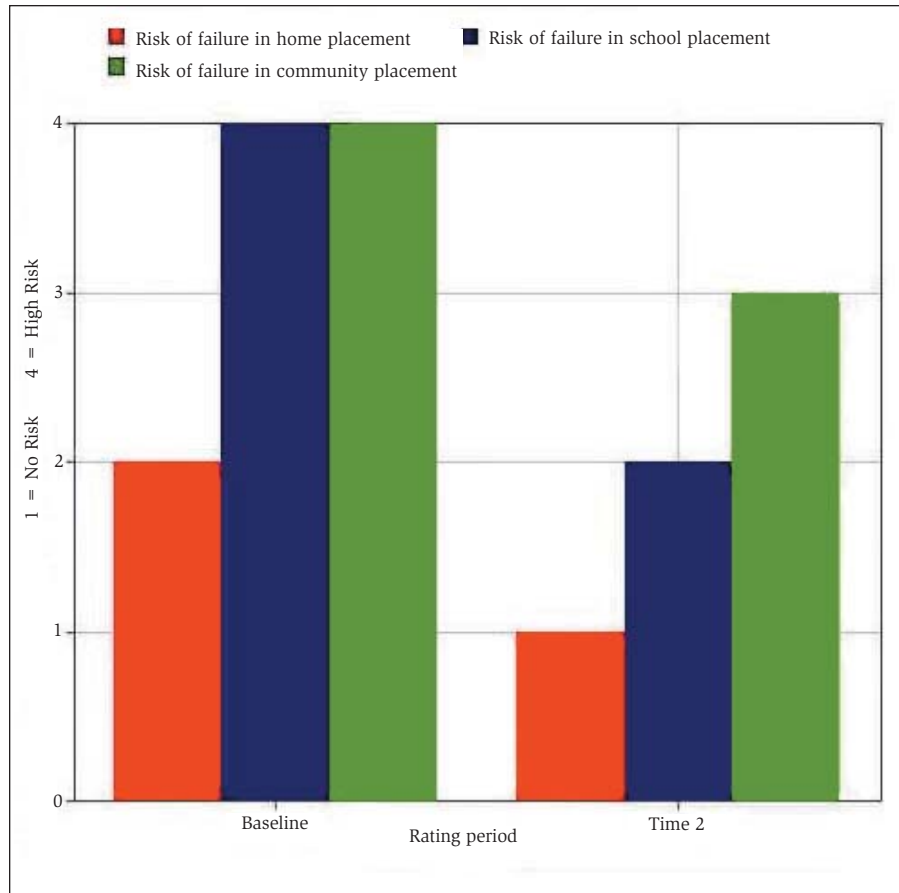
wraparound team. As Henry's school performance improved, the team had to plan for increasing the use of natural supports and for ensuring successes during and after summer break.

### Supporting Wraparound Implementation

To ensure Henry's success, his team dedicated planning time for the wraparound facilitator (the SSW) to meet with Henry, his family, and his teachers to hear their stories and perspectives, gather and review data about strengths and needs, and facilitate regular team meetings. The principal allowed time for school team members to participate in team meetings. In addition, the SSW checked in with the teacher at least twice a week to monitor progress, assess implementation fidelity, answer questions, celebrate successes, and make intervention adjustments. This flexibility and the allocation of the SSW's time were supported by the school and district.

Designated personnel must be adequately trained to facilitate comprehensive wraparound teams, and time must be allocated and protected to participate in planning team meetings. In addition, schools need to designate personnel who will facilitate wraparound team meetings, have ongoing conversations with the family and other team members, and collect and share data and monitor progress. In Henry's situation, the SSW was supported administratively to engage in ongoing communication and follow-up

**Figure 1. Data on Henry's Placement Risk Across Settings**



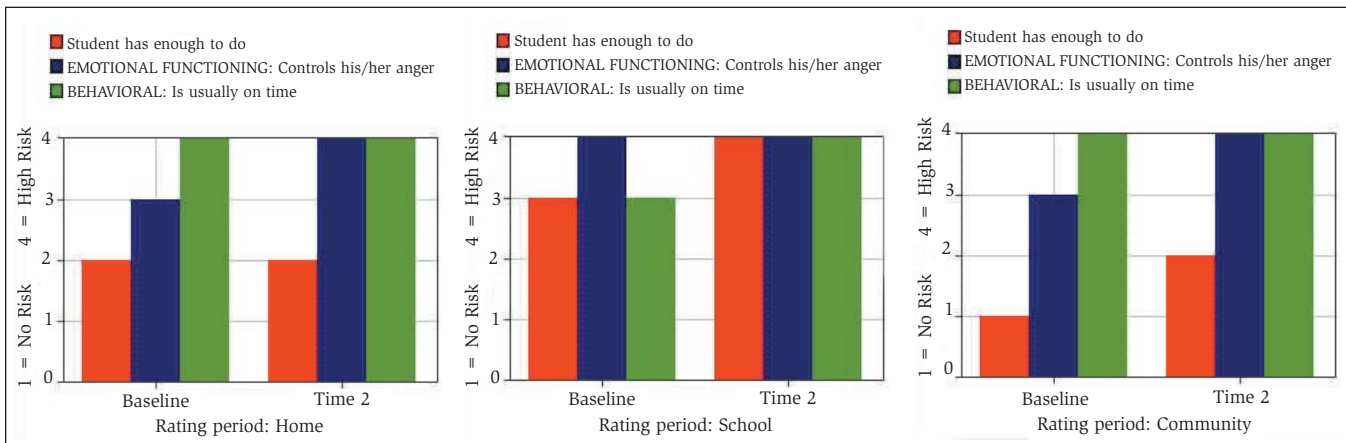
activities. Both the SSW and the bilingual liaison were available to meet with Henry's mother after work. From mid-October through early February, Henry's mother met with the facilitator three times for conversations at the public library, once at home, and twice at school with the whole team. Henry's teacher was provided with a substitute

so he could attend some meetings or was permitted to divide his classroom and send the smaller groups to other classrooms.

### Final Thoughts

Although the wraparound process may be new to schools, oftentimes the interventions that result from wrap-

**Figure 2. Data on Henry's Improvements/Strengths Across Settings**



**[W]hen the wraparound process is embedded in a coherent system of graduated support, many of the systems needed to support this level of intervention are in place and the increased personalization and intensity are natural extensions of the multi-tiered support logic.**

around are actually variations of existing primary and secondary interventions, tailored to ensure the student is successful. This strength-based and family-centered intervention process requires careful attention to developing a unique team for each student; the team focuses on the needs of all stakeholders, providing supports to the teacher as well as to the student and family. Teachers only implement strategies with which they agree and have had a voice in designing; they receive support from other team members throughout the process, and, along with the family and student, determine whether the plan is working.

A student's individualized wrap-around team can address issues that occur outside of school, which often immobilize typical intervention teams in schools. Henry's story illustrates how the wraparound team addressed triggers to behavior occurring outside of school, as well as how teams can engage and include other agencies involved with a family. Typical school intervention processes may leave these people out, leading to disconnected parallel processes that inadvertently stifle progress.

Implementing wraparound as a stand-alone intervention might seem costly and daunting to school personnel. But when the wraparound process is embedded in a coherent system of graduated support, many of the systems needed to support this level of intervention are in place and the increased personalization and intensity are natural extensions of the multi-tiered support logic.

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