



SKILL BRIEF  

# INTRODUCING YOUTH TO WRAPAROUND

## SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTIONS

The first few interactions a young person has with the Wraparound process and their Youth Support Specialist (YSS) have **massive** impacts on the engagement that comes afterwards. By giving special intention to how youth are “**oriented**” to Wraparound, peers can influence long-term engagement. In surveys of youth’s participation, studies consistently show that youth are **less satisfied** and **less comfortable** than family members and other team members. Careful introduction to Wraparound supports long term engagement and significantly increases **active youth participation** in team meetings (Walker et al, 2017).

There are 3 steps YSS can take to support successful introductions:

1. Supporting their **understanding** of the process
2. Generating **value** for the youth
3. Creating **comfort** in the process

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

In the first few sessions with a youth, YSS should focus part of the time to ensure that youth understand various aspects of Wraparound. This can include things like **principles, phases**, team members’ **roles**, what to **expect** in a team meeting, and more. In order to not **overwhelm** the youth, provide information while spending time on what the young person would like to focus on. Peers need to avoid jargon and use **youth-friendly language**. After initial review, consistently **check in** and see what information has stuck.

### ENSURING UNDERSTANDING

Ok, how would you describe this step of Wraparound?

What comes to mind when I say that?

What stands out to you the most about this step?

What are you looking forward to the most? The least?

### TRANSLATING JARGON

INDIVIDUALIZED



“We’ll make a plan that’s specific to you & uses language that connects best to you.”

IMPLEMENTATION



“The team will put your plan into action & start to work towards your goals.”

ADVOCACY



“I’ll help you speak up for your needs so you can get the support you deserve.”



## CREATING VALUE

A young person may objectively understand Wraparound, but not feel **connected** with it. When a youth does not find **value** in the Wraparound, engagement is likely to drop, as well as follow through with goals and action items. A young person might also feel compelled to agree to Wraparound due to perceptions of adult pressure or implications that its “required.” As a YSS, you can identify this by being **curious** and encouraging **authenticity**. The whole goal of Wraparound is to improve care outcomes by **addressing barriers** and supporting goals. Youth may not recognize a challenge they've encountered as a barrier to their care.

- Identify barriers the youth has faced in care & describe how Wraparound can address them
- Emphasize the role of youth voice in Wraparound
- Give the youth autonomy to choose by being open & honest about alternative programs and options.
- Propose a “trial.”  
Wraparound is voluntary & they can choose to stop anytime

## BARRIER BUSTING

**BARRIER:** Youth says “No one ever listens to me in meetings. They just go with what my mom says and they don’t care what I think.”

### WRAPAROUND RESOLUTION:

Wraparound follows the principle “family-driven, youth-guided,” which means youth voice is essential. System partners are also held to this principle and need to uphold group agreements.

### PEER RESPONSE:

“I’m here to support you so your voice is heard. What are some things you’ve wanted to say in those meetings?”

- Explain how the YSS will advocate for the youth
- Prepare some group agreements to hold in advance
- Review how youth voice is valued and actively sought out in team meetings



## SUPPORTING COMFORT

From the perspective of a youth, Wraparound can be **confusing, intense**, and **anxiety-inducing**. These things can make a youth **shut down** and not actively participate in meetings. This is normal and expected in the earlier stages of Wraparound, however, as time goes on, the team needs to create a setting that feels safe and comfortable for the youth. It can be difficult to open up to a room full of adults and advocate for your needs, so there are several things peers can do to support **physical** and **emotional safety**. Just like before, any **barriers** to comfort should be identified, then the YSS can move towards addressing them with the youth.

### Possible barriers:

- Feeling pressured
- Unfamiliarity with team members
- Previous conflicts with team members
- Power dynamics
- Fear of repercussion
- General anxiety and overwhelm

You mentioned feeling nervous about speaking during meetings. What do you think is causing that?

## SUPPORT STRATEGIES

### CLEAR PREPARATION

Discuss the various steps of team meetings and practice when the youth will be sharing. Plan for different goals and strategies in advance.

### TEAM UNDERSTANDING

Develop relationships with other team members and check to see how they understand Wraparound. Review the principles and model how to uphold them.

### GROUP AGREEMENTS

Create group agreements that the youth would like upheld before the first team meeting. Discuss how to call in team members who do not follow them.

### MEETING SUPPORT

Identify strategies that can be used in-the-moment during team meetings. This could be a signal for a break, a way to communicate privately, and more.





# SOURCE

Walker, Janet S., et al. "Increasing Youths' Participation in Team-Based Treatment Planning: The Achieve My Plan Enhancement for Wraparound." *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, vol. 26, no. 8, 3 May 2017, pp. 2090–2100, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0738-0>.