A Family’s Reflections after the Institute

Five families from across California came together at the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute to share their personal journey and experiences in child welfare and probation (including Wraparound). One couple, Misty and Albert, shared their perspective about participating in the interview panel at the Institute.

“We were told there would be a lot of people in the room, but when we got there, it seemed larger than life,” said Misty. “I was nervous and excited at the same time.”

“It was intimidating being in front of all those people,” Albert said. “I didn’t know how they would react, but we wanted everyone to know how much Wraparound meant to us.” He added, “We wanted to leave social workers, probation officers and Wraparound with hope, that their time with families makes a difference.”

Albert gave an example. When they first met their CPS workers, “the walls were up,” he said, “No way, we didn’t trust anyone, and we fought the help CPS and Wraparound offered.” To their surprise, their Wraparound team and their social workers never gave up. They kept moving forward. “We had a lot of shame and guilt, and it was hard to manage day to day, but slowly we came to realize they [the Wraparound team] were not going away or giving up.”

Misty added, “They believed in us before we did. Workers need to know they make a difference, even when it doesn’t seem like it.”

Albert and Misty also wanted the Institute audience to get the message about what a difference hope can make. “We hoped sharing our story could make a difference in the group’s lives, too,” Misty added.

“I felt free,” Albert said. “It felt good to say it out loud,” although he admitted he wasn’t prepared for how emotional it would be. “I was sharing touchy, personal things, and [in the moment] you can’t help but think, will people listen, would they get up and leave?” Albert admitted.

As they shared their story, Albert and Misty said they noticed the expressions on participants’ faces. “They were nodding and smiling,” Albert said. “I felt listened to, and I was being heard in a good way.” So he felt encouraged to share more. Albert said he was particularly touched when a police officer at the Institute came up afterward to thank him for sharing. Both Misty and Albert talked about giving back as a personal mission and that this experience validated their thinking. “I wanted the opportunity to shake each of their hands, give them hugs and to thank each one personally for their help.”

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The couple was overwhelmed by the number of people who came up afterward to thank them and asked additional questions. Both said they wanted to stay longer to talk to everyone, that they wished they had more time.

“We wanted to leave social workers, probation officers and Wraparound with hope, that their time with families makes a difference.”

When asked if they had any suggestions for the “system” or other families, Albert and Misty shared these thoughts:

Wraparound should start earlier in families’ lives, and all families should be told Wraparound exists and be given the option to use it.

Knowing all the resources makes a big difference, so remember to share even the ones you might not think will help.

It’s important to have felt that EVERYONE wanted them to be successful, even when they, the family, didn’t believe it.

Families should be encouraged to ask questions throughout; it can help determine how things are going.

Attitude is everything. Misty shared that turning points in their lives came from workers’ words: “We can do this together” and “We won’t work at your life any harder than you do.” These are powerful messages.

“This experience [sharing their story at the Institute] continues to validate the changes in our lives and our family,” Misty said. “This was one of many ways we can give back to all those working with families and who everyday give so much of themselves. Again, we want to say thank you!”

We need you!

*California Wraparound Connections* helps to spread the innovations occurring in Wraparound throughout the state. No matter what your role in Wraparound is, you have a story worth sharing.

If you are a Wraparound family member, we’d like to hear about what worked for you and your family. If you work in Wraparound, then perhaps you have an idea, an approach or a lesson learned to share.

Ways to contribute

- Nominate a family to be profiled as a cover story. (We come to you! Please share past cover stories, so families understand that we are strength-based!)
- Write a parent partner column (about 500 words). Or, alternatively, volunteer to be interviewed about your selected topic, and we will write the article.
- Write a feature article or short article (1,000 words or 500 words) about a success, lesson learned or innovative practice.
- Submit poetry or other creative endeavors by children, youth and family that reflect Wraparound.

If you are interested, please contact Monica Caprio at macaprio@ucdavis.edu to obtain information on how you can contribute. We look forward to hearing from you!
Thank You for Being Part of the Experience!

Whether you were a first-time attendee or a seasoned veteran, the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute was a rewarding experience. The event, themed, “Nurturing Connections, Sustaining Change,” marked a continuation of an event designed to blend the core competency of Wraparound with California’s core practice model for child welfare and beyond.

The Institute was designed to bring all partners in practice together as well as to discover new tools and techniques. It was successful! Inspiration and knowledge were found through an unprecedented number of workshops and speakers, covering topics on direct practice, understanding disciplines, new innovations and practice, family services and working across systems, and more. For the first time, we had to turn down exceptional workshop topics due to lack of space—but we are thrilled to now have a bank of great ideas for future training offerings from the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice.

The kick-off keynote, John VanDenBerg, challenged and reinforced California’s movement toward integration—real integration. Not just sitting down together to discuss each other’s system philosophy or practice and procedure, but creating a vision together. Simply put, it’s about bringing the Wraparound concept to the powers that be and adopting a shared mindset to serve parents, children and youth. Our Day 2 plenary speaker, Patrick Friman, used a humorous approach to highlight the importance of understanding a young person’s behavior in context of their unique challenges and behavior, which too frequently can be misunderstood by parents and professionals alike. And lastly, our closing presentation by Eddie Peterson reminded all of us that adversity can be overcome and lessons can be learned to have a fulfilling life.

I remain in awe of the participants who attend this event and their dedication to the families they serve. Seeing the family panel, always a highlight, is inspiring and brings me joy (and goosebumps) in hearing how individuals and families have addressed challenges successfully with the support of services. It brings into perspective the reason for the work being done and admiration for the strength that resides in our families.

A special thanks to everyone who made this event a success. I want to especially thank the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Health Care Services for their attendance and support, Cheryl Treadwell for her awesome dance moves and the participants who make the world a better place.

Sincerely,

Jane Tabor-Bane, Interim Director
Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice
We were pleased to see 725 participants at the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute in Garden Grove, June 15-17, and to share such an enriching educational experience! The theme of the Institute, “Nurturing Connections, Sustaining Change,” underscored the importance of cross-system partnerships to achieve positive outcomes. During the inspiring two-and-a-half-day event, 100 workshops examined the good work occurring with children and families across California. Participants deepened their knowledge about specific practices that support service models such as Wraparound, Intensive Care Coordination, Functional Family Therapy, Safety Organized Practice and others. Workshops also focused on cross-system collaboration and effective teaming practices. New initiatives such as Therapeutic Foster Care and the Continuum of Care Reform were also included in the program.

Our keynote speaker, John VanDenBerg, is a pioneer of Wraparound Services in the United States. His remarks reflected his perspective on the importance of collaborative partnerships between formal systems that support children and families as well as communities. And everyone stood a little taller as he spoke of California’s success in reducing the number of children and families involved with child welfare, while numbers have remained flat in many other parts of the country. Patrick Friman presented a compelling and sometimes humorous case for viewing adolescence as a “temporary mental disorder,” and offered several tips for families and practitioners to consider using when dealing with “adolescent lunatics.” And the family and youth panel, as has been true in the past, provided an eager and appreciative audience with extraordinary insights into the impacts this work has on individual children and families.

Many who attended this year’s Institute were attending for the first time, and the energy they brought was infectious. Across California, the growing number of collaborative projects and programs involving child welfare, mental health, probation, education and community services agencies illustrates our efforts to transform the way children and families interact with our systems. Today, California stands at the threshold of challenging (and somewhat unknown) times for the children and families we serve. But looking ahead, as implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform and Therapeutic Foster Care gain momentum, we can be reassured by the knowledge that our energy and recent successes are a strong and reliable foundation on which to build.

Partnerships—both old and new—are vital to our continued success and essential to achieving the important, positive changes now underway. The dedication and commitment of everyone who supports California’s vulnerable children and families is sincerely appreciated and genuinely needed more than ever. As California transforms the very structure of its child welfare system, we anticipate the collaborative spirit and positive energy demonstrated at the Institute will emerge as a heroic force in improving the lives of children and families across the state.
At this year’s Partnerships for Well-Being Institute, we showcased the good work parent/family partners do with the families they serve. We also took the opportunity to ask parent partners who attended the Institute about their experience and what they will take back to work with families. Some of the parent partners we interviewed were attending the Institute for the first time, while others had attended several times over the years. As a result, we were able to gather a variety of different perspectives.

Q. What motivated you to come to the Institute?

Andrea Bourbon Sebreros, parent partner from Aspiranet, said: “It’s always refreshing, encouraging and uplifting to go to the Institute. It validates what we do in our job. It encourages me to be empathetic, learn new tools and learn new ways of doing things. There was a lot of creativity. It gives me new ideas to put in place at my job.”

Laarni Sandle, family support partner for the Mental Health Systems, Inc., Families Forward, said: “I was excited to present [at a workshop]. In my agency, the kids love the Dungeons and Dragons program, and it works well. The social skills group uses problem solving as a team and teaches kids to get along and, at the same time, be open to feedback. This activity works, and we were eager to share this with others.”

Q. Is there anything you would like to share that other parent/family partners might need to know or that could support them in trying something new?

Valai Brown, mental health peer specialist/parent partner from Riverside University Health System Behavioral Health, said: “I will use storytelling tips to be creative and have families share their story—which can be difficult to do. I will bring back the idea of ‘naming the characters in your life’—who is the hero and other roles. This is easy to implement. I am piloting this with a family I think would really benefit from it and would be willing to do it. We have a new family and are going to try this at the child family team meeting.”

Darron Jones, Sr., senior parent partner from San Diego Center for Children, said: “In the PCIT training, they mentioned a free webinar module where you can get certified PCIT training through UC Davis [Extension] at no cost. I can use this in the field to lead parents to this model. Also, getting information on the Parent Partner Advisory Committee—it was good to hear different strategies and tools and to learn about efforts going on in California.”

Q. What did you learn from the families who shared their stories in the family panel that might impact how you work with families?

Valai Brown said: “I am always touched by the family panel. I appreciate their honesty and openness. They give me inspiration that there is success in a tough field that sometimes feels like there is no success. Families still have difficulties and struggles, but it’s great when your words stay with them, like when they say, ‘my parent partner says this,’ it’s like, wow!”

Stan Hervivaux, parent partner from San Diego Center for Children, said: “Families can have resistance and not want you ‘getting too close.’ But families can’t get better if there are secrets. I don’t need to know everything, but there has to be a level of transparency and trust. The beauty of Wraparound is we have people who can connect and develop a relationship. It is natural for families to be cautious.”

Andrea Bourbon Sebreros said: “Sometimes, we get caught up with the parents’ needs, and we lose focus on what their goal is. Something we do in our agency that has been successful is to hold a Family Retreat. It’s a good support group, and it refreshes the families. Parents have resources and links that parent partners might not know, and they share these with other families. Then families create a natural support for each other. This is something others might try.”

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protocols. Successful implementation of TFC will have a direct impact on the CCR which eliminates the group-home rate structure and establishes a new rate structure. County agencies should be looking at their current foster care population and their placements. The ACIN is due to be released in the next few weeks. The CWAC group will meet again in October. The Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice focused on information and questions about the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute in June. Most participants indicated they were registered and looking forward to attending.

The afternoon discussion focused on the role of prosocial activities, including evaluating when and how to engage the youth, involve the family, as well as the role of the community. Cultural aspects are also a consideration.

The next Northern Hub meeting was Thursday, August 4, 2016, in Davis.

California Wraparound Hub Reports

Northern California Hub Meeting Notes

The Northern Hub met in Davis on May 5, 2016, and was facilitated by Nicole Nelson.

A presentation on “Integration of Wraparound and Safety Organized Practice—Expanding our Frontiers” was given by Sharron Morrison to a packed room of Hub participants. The audience included folks from probation, social services and mental health departments as well as many contract providers and county representatives. The presentation was interactive and filled with ideas on possible integration strategies, understanding of DSS concerns and priorities, as well as Wraparound principles and applications. All-day trainings on these topics will be provided regionally through UC Davis Extension’s Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice starting in late May.

Updates from CDSS and UC Davis followed. CDSS’ Lupe Grimaldi announced Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) information and changes in staffing. Janine LeSieur was introduced as a new consultant. The Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) implementation committee is close to finalizing the model, including foster parent and RFA qualifications. Counties struggling to implement are looking forward to receiving

Q. Was there anything missing from the Institute that you’d like to see in the future?

Laarni Sandle said: “I would love to see more on how parent partners are beneficial to parents and on having concrete expectations around these roles. Sometimes our role and what is expected of us can be confusing.”

Darron Jones, Sr. said: “I would like to see more parent partner-based breakout sessions around how to navigate the different systems. The role of the parent partner is to help families navigate child welfare, probation, special education, etc. Before I attended my first Institute, I never knew consumers of Wraparound became parent partners!”

Stan Hervivaux said: “Nope—but we want more families to put on workshops or be in workshops. It is more hopeful to have someone come in to say how the program reached them.”

We want to thank our valued parent partners for their feedback about this year’s Institute. This feedback, along with the evaluations we receive from all participants, helps us in the planning of the next Partnerships for Well-Being Institute. See you in 2018!

Central California Hub Meeting Notes

The Central Hub met in Bakersfield on April 15, 2016, and was hosted by Aspiranet. Hub co-chair Tabitha Baldwin opened with the agenda review and announcements.

The morning training was a presentation on “Tools for Monumental Story Telling by the Platform Project” by Jessica Burlaff and Bethany LaHammer. Their mission is to assist youth with tools to create an emotional vocabulary to assist them in relating their story. The youth use their experiences and translate them into performance on stage. The Platform Project is run by youth. Many youth who participate find it emotionally healing. Hub members were able to participate in activities that mirror some of the youth’s actual experiences. This was both fun and educational. For more information on the Platform Project visit www.platformtheatrecompany.org.
Regular agenda items followed, including updates from the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice and CDSS. The Resource Center answered questions about the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute regarding registration and workshops. Regional trainings will resume after the Institute and announcements will go out to Hubs. Announcements from CDSS included information on Continuum of Care Reform and a new consultant list. The next CWAC meeting is on October 25.

Eight provider groups followed with updates. Most programs are dealing with a trend in runaway youth and an increase in a street drug called Spice. Tulare County referral numbers are increasing and Kern County just started a new program called Pre-Wrap. County social workers meet with youth and use early involvement to build rapport. Kern County has close to 100 referrals. Santa Barbara County Wraparound is currently full and is developing a new program called RISE. Fresno County, also dealing with an explosion in runaway youth, is working on new innovations to address concerns. Aspiranet in Kern County reported using the Why Try curriculum successfully. Monterey County is working with youth pre-dependency. Several programs are featuring local trainings in an effort to enhance skills and provide information relevant to the needs in their communities.

The next Hub meeting was hosted by Rebekah Children's Services in Monterey County on July 29, 2016.

Southern California Hub Meeting Notes

The Southern Hub met in Victorville on May 2, 2016, and was hosted by Victor Community Services. Co-Chair Rebekah Cox facilitated the meeting.

Updates from providers in person and via conference call included the following:
- Ventura County’s Casa Pacifica program is at capacity and has a waiting list.
- There is a large turnover in staff, but the new hires have been doing an amazing job.
- A new Family Preservation program has begun, and there is a waiting list for services.
- Hathaway-Sycamores reports a busy program, especially in Lancaster area.
- Oak Grove talked about its recent parent retreat and a successful fundraising event called “Evening under the Oaks” in which parents shared their journeys with Wraparound.
- EMQ has just gone live with electronic health records.
- Victor Community Services reported on a movie night in which 100 families attended.
- Olive Crest completed a men’s retreat and is launching a monthly men’s support group.

Other providers commented on contracts being completed and new services in development. A brief discussion was led by the San Diego Children’s Center on the use of the WiFi EZ and how this is being used by providers, who is collecting the information and how much response it is generating. In addition, there was a discussion on how to increase Probation Department referrals and what ideas have worked.

The Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at UC Davis Extension provided updates on the Partnerships for Well-Being Institute. Hub members were encouraged to bring seasoned and new staff and partners to the event. Free regional training on SOP and Wraparound is being developed by the Resource Center—more information to come.

Updates from CDSS included information on the Wraparound Advisory Committee meeting and Katie A. technical assistance information. You can sign up for updates at KatieA@dss.ca.gov. Calls are on the first Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m. Marissa and Glenda provided updates on their respective CWAC sub-committees. In addition, information on the Continuum of Care Reform and a list of state consultants/ counties was distributed.

Provided by Dawne Shaw and Skye Padilla from Oak Grove Centers, the afternoon training focused on effective teaming. Using a driving metaphor, the trainers illustrated how different styles can influence Wraparound teaming. Highlights included interactions with system partners, defining roles, collaboration and integration, paying attention to the process and avoiding “accidents” along the way.

The next Hub meeting was held August 22, 2016, hosted by Casa Pacifica in Ventura County.

“The Institute is always excellent. The environment and experience is refreshing for us who work in this profession because we work with families going through hard times. It’s like a retreat for us.”
—Andrea Bourbon Sebreros, 2016 Partnerships for Well-Being Institute participant
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Hub Meetings—Summer 2016

Northern California Hub Meeting
Thursday, August 4, 2016, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Host and location: EMQ FamiliesFirst, 2100 Fifth St., Davis
Chair: Nicole Nelson, Seneca Center
Email contact: Nicole_Nelson@senecacenter.org
Support email contact: Corrine_Anderson@senecacenter.org

Central California Hub Meeting
Friday, July 29, 2016, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Host: Rebekah Children’s Services, Monterey County
Location: Room B-208, Hartnell College, 411 Central Ave., Salinas
Co-Chairs: Tabitha Baldwin, LMFT Clinical Associate Director, EMQ FamiliesFirst Wraparound - Fresno (559) 446-3076 and Nicole Browning, Regional Director, Family Preservation Community Services - Kern County (651) 754-2277
Email contacts: tbaldwin@emqff.org and nbrowning@fpccorp.com

Southern California Hub Meeting
Monday, August 22, 2016, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Host and location: Casa Pacifica - Ventura County, 975 Flynn St., Camarillo
Co-Chairs: Rebekah Cox, Lead Wraparound Facilitator, Lutheran Social Services of Southern California, Running Springs (909) 939-0605 and Jarred Vermillion, Director and Lead Trainer, Vermillion Life Circle Consulting
Email Contact: rcox@lsscommunitycare.org or Jarredvermillion@gmail.com

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