

Foster Parents and Wraparound

The role of the foster parent is critical when the wraparound process is being used to help children and families. Foster parents are able to engage the parents of the foster children placed in their home in ways that no one else involved can.

The role of the foster parent involves:

- Participating as a team member on the Child and Family Team.
- Participating in the ice breaker when children are initially placed in the foster home.
- Encouraging and supporting the visitation process.
- Working directly with the parents and family of the child placed in their home as prescribed by the wraparound plan.
- Working closely with the Team Coordinator and Caseworker to ensure that all services and supports are carried out in a quality manner.

The wraparound process is also intended to be helpful and supportive to the foster parents, as well. Part of the process involves focusing on the needs of the children. Foster parents, as members of the Team, have an important say in how the plan for the child is developed and implemented.

Kids Crossing will also utilize the wraparound process to reduce placement moves—especially those relating to the behavior of a foster child.

Essential Elements of Wraparound

- Wraparound must be based in the community.
- Services and supports must be individualized, built on strengths, and meet the needs of children and families.
- The process must be culturally competent, building on unique values, preferences, and strengths of children and families, and their communities.
- Families must be full and active partners in every level of the wraparound process.
- The wraparound approach must be a team-driven process involving the family, child, natural supports, agencies, and community services working together to develop, implement, and evaluate the individualized service plan.
- Wraparound child and family teams must have adequate, flexible approaches, and flexible funding.
- Wraparound plans must have a balance of formal services and informal community and family resources.
- An unconditional commitment to serve children and families is essential.
- The plan should be developed and implemented based on an interagency, community-based collaborative process.
- Outcomes must be determined and measured for the system, for the program, and for the individual child and family.

Kids Crossing's Wraparound Process



Working with
Children & Families
with Complex Needs

Why Wraparound?

The El Paso County Reunification Task Force was created in early 2004 to assess the state of our foster care system, especially the number of children who were being reunified with their parents versus finding permanency through adoption by kin or foster parents. The Task Force issued its Final Report June 7, 2005. The first three "Recommendations for Future Efforts" were:

1. Self-Sufficiency Needs of Child Welfare Families

"Assessment and response to the self-sufficiency needs of families should be an ongoing process that occurs throughout our involvement with child welfare families."

2. Use of Visitation

"Appropriate visitation is a proven intervention for increasing the likelihood of reunifying families."

3. Engagement with Families

"Strong engagement with parents and families based on a strengths based approach is one of the most significant factors in increasing reunification."

In early 2004, Kids Crossing began exploring different approaches for working with children and families. Kids Crossing reached the conclusion that there was no better approach than the wraparound process.

In October of 2004, Kids Crossing began an 18-month consultation with Vroon VanDenBerg to make Kids Crossing a "wraparound agency". Effective September 1, 2005, the wraparound process is being utilized for all new placements.

The Wraparound Process

The wraparound process is a way to improve the lives of children and families with complex needs. It is not a program or a service. The key components are the child and family team and the wraparound plan.

The Child and Family Team is:

- Selected by the family and typically has no more than half professionals. Team members will include extended family, friends, advocates, teachers, pastors or ministers, etc.
- Committed to persistence in delivery of services and supports. When things do not go well, the child and family are not "kicked out", but rather, the individualized services and supports are changed.
- Responsible for answering the question: "What will it take to return the child back to his/her parents and make their lives better?"
- Responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating the wraparound plan for the child and family.

The Wraparound Plan is:

- Individualized and based on the unique strengths, values, norms, preferences, and culture of the child, family, foster family, and community.
- Needs driven rather than services driven.
- Developed, implemented, and evaluated by the child and family team.
- Completely consistent with the Family Services Plan now utilized by caseworkers and which are submitted to the Court.

Family Engagement

Engaging the family begins with the first contact and continues throughout our involvement with the child and their family. Family engagement is a philosophy and an approach.

Initial Engagement Process:

- Staff go to the foster home within the first 24 hours of the initial placement. This staff member contacts the parents of the child to let them know their child is safe.
- Staff attend the initial court hearing in order to meet the parents.
- Staff facilitate the ice breaker meeting between the parents of the children and the foster parents.
- Foster parents bring the children to Kids Crossing so children can visit with their parents.

First Meeting with Family:

- Staff meets with the parents in the family home within the first week after placement.
- Identify and address basic needs (food, shelter, medicine, etc.) not being met.
- Explain wraparound and team process.
- Have family identify team members they would like to have participate.
- Set time and place for first team meeting.

Visitation and Engagement:

Parents visiting their children is an opportunity for the foster parents engage families:

- Communicate directly with children's parents.
- Encourage and support the visitation process.
- Children benefit tremendously when they see their parents and foster parents together and getting along.