

**PROJECT BLOOM WRAPAROUND
COMPARISON STUDY:
INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICES PLAN (IFSP)**

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INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICES PLAN

A. Introduction

The State of Colorado, under the auspices of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, received a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) in October 2002 to build and sustain a system of care to address the needs of young children ages 0-5 with severe emotional disturbance (SED) and their families in four Colorado communities - the City of Aurora and the counties of Fremont, El Paso, and Mesa. This grant initiative is known as Project BLOOM (Building Leveraged Opportunities and Ongoing Mechanisms).

In 2006, Project BLOOM commissioned a study to compare the wraparound planning process, the service delivery approach chosen by BLOOM to implement the early childhood systems of care at the individual child and family level, with other individualized planning processes mandated by different service systems. These other planning processes were the: Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP); Individualized Educational Plan (IEP); Family Support Plan; Head Start/Early Head Start; Team Decision Making (TDM); and Family Group Conferencing (FGC). This study is known as the 'Wraparound Comparison Study'.

The subject of this Executive Summary is on the implementation of the IFSP as compared to the wraparound process in the four BLOOM communities. The following sections described the IFSP and wraparound planning processes; the study's purpose and methodology; the study's findings; and conclusion and recommendations.

Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds programs for children with special educational and developmental needs. The purpose of the IFSP under Part C of IDEA is to provide early intervention services to eligible infants and toddlers from birth to age three and their families. Eligible infants and toddlers are those who have a significant developmental delay or have a diagnosed physical or mental condition known to have a high probability of resulting in a significant developmental delay.

Early intervention services and supports include education, training, and assistance in child development, parent education, therapies, and other activities designed to meet the developmental needs of these children including cognition, speech, communication, physical, motor, vision, hearing, social-emotional, and self-help skills. Up until July 1, 2006, Early Childhood Connections offices in local communities received grants through the Colorado Department of Education and the Community Centered Boards (CCB) received funding through contracts with the Colorado Department of Human Services to provide these Part C services. Beginning July 1, 2006, the CCBs under contract with the Division of Developmental Disabilities administer this program in communities across Colorado.

Wraparound Process

Wraparound is a comprehensive child-centered/family-focused way of assessing and planning services. It involves a shift away from the traditional service delivery model where service providers are considered to be the experts, to seeing families and service providers as partners (Malysiak, 1997). In wraparound, children and families are viewed as the key to solving problems, rather than being viewed as the problem itself (VanDenBerg & Grealish, 1996). The term “wraparound” came from the idea that youth could be best served by “wrapping” individualized services and supports around them in their homes and communities.

In wraparound, families identify the areas of their life that they would like to address, such as school, recreation, home, health, employment or other life domains. They then go on to select the goals that they would like for their child and family to achieve within those life domains.

Families also choose the members of their wraparound team. These teams generally consist of the four to 8 people who know that child and family best. They include both informal supports, such as neighbors, friends or relatives, and professionals from agencies involved with the family, such as schools, mental health or child welfare. Ideally, wraparound teams have less than fifty percent professionals on them. The reason for this is that professionals will come and go in a family’s life whereas informal supports will generally remain with the family.

Families develop their wraparound plans together with their team. These plans set forth a unique set of community services and natural supports that are individualized for each child and family based on their culture, strengths and needs (Burns & Goldman, 1999). Wraparound teams meet periodically to develop, review and adjust plans as needed.

B. Study Purpose and Methodology

Study Purpose and Methodology

The wraparound process is structured to operationalize the core values and guiding standards of a system of care at the individual child and family level. The purpose of this study was to determine how closely other mandated planning processes also operationalize system of care values and principles in the four Project BLOOM communities given their interest in reducing the number of planning processes in which children and families are involved and including these children and families involved in other mandated planning processes in the national outcome evaluation, a required component of all federally funded system of care grants. The findings from this study will inform Project BLOOM’s planning efforts in these areas.

In order to compare the IFSP and the other planning processes to wraparound, eleven different elements were analyzed. These elements were based on wraparound’s core values and principles:

- Element 1: Family Voice and Choice
- Element 2: Child and Family Team
- Element 3: Community-Based Services and Supports
- Element 4: Cultural Competency
- Element 5: Individualized Services and Supports
- Element 6: Strengths-Based Services and Supports
- Element 7: Natural Supports

- Element 8: Continuation of Services and Supports
- Element 9: Collaboration
- Element 10: Flexible Resources and Funding
- Element 11: Outcome-Based Services and Supports

Within each element, several questions were asked and scored based on the interviewee’s response. Following these scored questions, the interviewer asked several open ended questions to learn more about the IFSP and the other planning processes. The scored questions were adapted from the interview guides used by the Wraparound Fidelity Index, commonly known as the WFI. Project BLOOM uses the WFI to assess its fidelity to the wraparound model.

A total of nine people were interviewed by telephone with regard to the IFSP. These interviews ranged from one hour to one hour and half. Two service coordinators were interviewed from each of the BLOOM communities with one exception. In Aurora, two supervisors were interviewed instead because of the transition that was taking place shifting responsibility for the IFSP from Early Childhood Connections to the CCB. Given the transition, the supervisors felt that it would be an inappropriate time to interview front line staff. Additionally, a state representative from the Division of Developmental Disabilities was interviewed to determine state and federal requirements governing the implementation of the IFSP at the community level.

In each BLOOM community, the scored questions were averaged and then combined to arrive at an overall score for each planning process including the IFSP. The higher the score a planning process received the more similar that process was found to be to the wraparound planning process. Of all the planning processes studied, the IFSP received the highest score in all four BLOOM communities.

Finally, there are some restrictions about the wraparound comparison study that should be noted. First, not all WFI questions under each element were asked in this comparison study. Instead, a sampling of questions under each element was asked to give an overall understanding of the similarities and differences between the specific planning process and wraparound. Second, the WFI is used to assess the fidelity of the wraparound process to the model in individual cases by interviewing both staff and families. Unlike the WFI, this study asked agency staff to generalize what typically happens across all cases. Youth and families did not take part in the study.

C. Study Findings

Overall, the IFSP received the highest score of all of the planning processes studied. Therefore, it was found to be most comparable to wraparound across all four BLOOM communities. The range in scores was from 117.5 to 104 points. The total number of points that could have been awarded was 129. Fremont County received 117.5 points, which was the highest score of all the counties. Mesa County received 106 points. El Paso County received 105.5 points and Aurora received 104 points. Unlike the other communities, in El Paso County the Head Start/Early Head Start planning process received the same score as the IFSP. Therefore, the IFSP and the Head Start/Early Head Start planning process in El Paso were both found to be the most comparable to wraparound among the different planning processes. Additionally, the communities’ responses were compared to federal and state requirements provided by the

representative from the Division of Developmental Disabilities. The chart below summarizes the scores that each community received with regard to the IFSP.

Wraparound Element	Aurora IFSP	El Paso IFSP	Fremont IFSP	Mesa IFSP
Family Voice & Choice	14 points (out of 15)	13.5 points (out of 15)	15 points (out of 15)	15 points (out of 15)
Child & Family Team	24 points (out of 27)	20 points (out of 27)	24 points (out of 27)	21.5 points (out of 27)
Community-Based Services & Supports	8 points (out of 9)	9 points (out of 9)	9 points (out of 9)	9 points (out of 9)
Cultural Competency	4 points (out of 6)	5 points (out of 6)	6 points (out of 6)	5.5 points (out of 6)
Individualized Services & Supports	10 points (out of 12)	10.5 points (out of 12)	10.5 points (out of 12)	10 points (out of 12)
Strengths-Based Services & Supports	9 points (out of 9)	7 points (out of 9)	9 points (out of 9)	6.5 points (out of 9)
Natural Supports	7 points (out of 9)	6.5 points (out of 9)	7.5 points (out of 9)	7 points (out of 9)
Continuation of Services & Supports	11 points (out of 12)	10.5 points (out of 12)	10 points (out of 12)	11 points (out of 12)
Collaboration	8 points (out of 12)	6.5 points (out of 12)	8.5 points (out of 12)	4 points (out of 12)
Flexible Resources & Funding	7 points (out of 9)	8.5 points (out of 9)	9 points (out of 9)	8.5 points (out of 9)
Outcome Based Services & Supports	9 points (out of 9)	8.5 points (out of 9)	9 points (out of 9)	8 points (out of 9)
Total	104 points (out of 129)	105.5 points (out of 129)	117.5 points (out of 129)	106 points (out of 129)

The sections that follow summarize the study’s findings as to the IFSP’s implementation in each community as compared to the wraparound process and federal and state requirements.

Element 1: Family Voice and Choice

Wraparound Practice Standards: In wraparound, families must be full and active partners at every level. If the wraparound team cannot reach consensus, the family makes the final decision. Families also choose the members of their wraparound teams.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: The spirit and intent of the IFSP is that families are equal partners with the other members of the IFSP team. Federal regulations, however, mandate

those who need to be present on the IFSP team. They are: the service coordinator, the professionals who evaluated the child, the family, and anyone else that the family invites to be a team member. State regulations also reiterate that the family can invite anyone that they would like to participate on the team.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: In all four communities the IFSP strived to be a family-driven process. Aurora and El Paso County deviated slightly from wraparound practice standards regarding the selection of wraparound team members. They were, however, in compliance with federal regulations. In both communities, the professionals who evaluated the child must be on the initial IFSP team whether or not the family wanted them to participate. However, families do have more of say as to the selection of members on the ongoing team. Families were also encouraged in all four communities to invite natural supports, such as family members, friends and neighbors to participate on the team.

Both Fremont and Mesa Counties received a perfect score as to this element. In these two counties, the IFSP planning process appeared to be one where consensus building among team members was an important part of the process with families being the ultimate decision-maker. If the family did not want a particular professional to participate on their wraparound team, the service coordinator worked on getting another professional representing that field to participate.

Element 2: Child and Family Team

Wraparound Practice Standards: Wraparound is a team-driven process that involves the family, their informal supports, and community services. Wraparound teams ideally have four to 8 people on them who know the child and family best. These teams meet weekly in the beginning and eventually transition to less frequent meetings.

The wraparound team works together to develop, implement, and evaluate the child and family's individualized wraparound plan. Families choose the areas of life the plan addresses and the goals that they would like their child and family to achieve.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: The IFSP is developed by a team of three or more people. Federal regulations dictate who needs to be present on the team and the family can invite others to participate. A team meeting is held after the evaluation has been completed to develop the initial IFSP plan. The plan is then reviewed every six months. Annually, the plan is re-evaluated and a new one developed.

Federal regulations require that certain life areas be addressed. The team discusses those areas and then the family decides their priorities within those areas to be addressed by the plan. Families also choose their child's goals. Together the team decides what services and supports will be put in place through the plan. The family, however, can accept or decline these services.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: All four communities generally met wraparound practice standards in this area with one exception, the frequency of IFSP team meetings. Wraparound requires weekly meetings in the beginning that gradually transition to monthly meetings. IFSP team meetings, however, met less frequently in these communities.

Additionally, in Mesa County the IFSP team did not consistently have the four to 8 people on the team as required by wraparound practice standards. At times, the IFSP team in Mesa County consisted of just the service coordinator and the parent(s). However, all four communities met Federal/State requirements in this area in terms of frequency of team meetings and number of people on the IFSP team.

Element 3: Community Based Services and Supports

Wraparound Practice Standards: One of wraparound's values is that services and supports be community-based and address the needs of the entire family, not just those of the eligible child. Wraparound teams also encourage families to participate in activities found in their community.

Federal/State Plan Requirements: Federal regulations require that services and supports be provided in a natural environment, such as home, school, childcare, or in the community. The team also helps the child and family to become involved in community activities.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: Three of the communities received a perfect score with regard to community-based services and supports. The one exception was Aurora where a slight difference was noted. In Aurora, the needs of the entire family were not always addressed. At times, only the child's needs were considered as part of the IFSP planning process.

Element 4: Cultural Competence

Wraparound Practice Standards: In wraparound, teams are respectful and actively seek to understand the family's unique beliefs and traditions. These are documented in the wraparound plan, which is responsive to the family's culture and values.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: There is no specific regulation that the IFSP be responsive to a family's culture or that it be documented in the plan. Instead, the ISFP must be responsive to the family's needs, which Colorado has taken a step further to include a family's cultural needs as well.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: In all four communities, the IFSP was found to be responsive to family culture and values. However, only Fremont County stated that the family's culture and values were always documented in the IFSP.

Element 5: Individualized Services and Supports

Wraparound Practice Standards: Wraparound requires that children and families receive services and supports that are tailored to their unique strengths, culture, and needs. These services and supports meet their needs at home, school/childcare, and in the community. They may include both traditional services and informal supports. At times, these services and supports may need to be modified or new ones created in order to meet the family's needs and goals.

Wraparound also requires that a crisis plan be developed for every child and family, and a safety plan for certain children and families where the child poses a risk to others. Crises are addressed prior to a wraparound plan being developed.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: The IFSP plan can identify services and supports that meet the child’s needs at home, school/childcare, or in the community depending on where the need is occurring. There is no requirement that a crisis/safety plan be developed as part of the IFSP planning process. Crises can be addressed at any time.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: All four communities appeared to meet wraparound practice standards with regard to individual services and supports with one exception. The IFSP does not include a crisis or safety plan as part of its process that is comparable to the one developed through the wraparound process.

Element 6: Strengths Based Services and Supports

Wraparound Practice Standards: The services and supports provided through the wraparound process must be based on the child and family’s strengths that are initially identified through a ‘strengths, needs, and culture discovery’. The wraparound plan capitalizes on these positive abilities and characteristics when selecting services and supports that are incorporated in it.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: The IFSP requires that the child and family’s strengths and abilities be used in choosing supports and services. These strengths and abilities are determined through a ‘routine spaced interview’. This interview takes place either prior to the evaluation or sometimes at the same time as the team meeting. If it takes place prior to the team meeting, the interview takes about an hour. If it occurs as part of the team meeting, it can take about an hour and a half. Federal regulations do not specify where the interview takes place. Often these interviews take place in family’s homes or at the evaluation site.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: In Aurora and Fremont County the IFSP appears to meet wraparound practice standards with regard to strengths-based services and supports. Both communities received a perfect score in this area.

In El Paso and Mesa Counties, the strengths and abilities of the child and family were used in selecting services and supports written in the IFSP. It is unclear, however, whether a strengths and culture discovery was conducted as part of the IFSP planning process and if one is conducted whether it is comparable to the one conducted in wraparound. Further exploration therefore, is needed to determine whether a strengths and culture discovery is conducted that is comparable to the one conducted in wraparound.

Element 7: Natural Supports

Wraparound Practice Standards: In wraparound, services and supports reflect a balance of formal and informal community and family supports rather than relying solely on formal providers and traditional services. The reason being is that service providers will come and go in a family’s life whereas their informal supports will remain with them.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: As part of the development of the plan, families are encouraged to receive support from their friends and families. Families, however, can opt out of the family assessment. The IFSP can include community supports, but it is related to the child and family’s ability to participate in service delivery through the IFSP.

Federal or state regulations or requirements do not mandate the percentage of professional to non-professional members on the team. Typically, teams have more professionals on them than non-professionals. Often the only non-professionals on the team are the parent(s).

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: All four communities appear to meet wraparound practice standards with regard to natural supports with one exception. The IFSP teams typically were comprised of more professionals than non-professionals except in Fremont County where the team sometimes consisted of an even number of professionals to non-professionals on it.

Element 8: Continuation of Services and Supports

Wraparound Practice Standards: Wraparound requires that services and supports be provided unconditionally. If a child and family's needs and goals change so do the services and supports.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: The intent of the IFSP is to help families strengthen relationships that will support them. As a result, the IFSP team often helps families understand their own resources within the community, but do not necessarily actively engage families in developing these relationships.

As the child and family's needs and goals change, the team changes the plan to address them. Services and supports can be discontinued in certain situations such as when a child ages out and is no longer eligible or when the child no longer requires resources. It can also happen when the family is not responding to efforts to contact them. If children still require services when they age out of Part C services, they are transitioned to the IEP process provided they meet the eligibility criteria and the family wants their child to have an IEP.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: In all four communities, the IFSP was found to generally meet wraparound practice standards with regard to the continuation of services and supports. Services and supports, however, can be terminated voluntarily on the part of the family, when the family moves out of the county or when the child is no longer eligible. The IFSP included a transition process for those children and families who still require services through an IEP and/or Family Support Plan.

Element 9: Collaboration

Wraparound Practice Standards: The wraparound team coordinates services and supports so that they seem seamless to the family rather than fragmented. This requires everyone, both professionals and informal supports, to work together with the family. As a part of this practice standard, wraparound facilitators carry caseloads of 15 families or less.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: There are no specific federal requirements around collaboration. Some communities are more successful than others around in securing provider participation at meetings and holding one and other accountable to specific tasks around the plan. There is also no federal or state caseload standard for IFSP service coordinators. The average caseload across Colorado is between 45 and 55 children.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: All four communities generally met wraparound practice standards in this area with one exception. Caseloads for IFSP service coordinators

significantly exceeded wraparound standards in this area. In addition, it was found to be difficult in Aurora to get service providers and agencies to attend team meetings when they were needed.

Element 10: Flexible Resources and Funding

Wraparound Practice Standards: Successful wraparound teams are creative in their approach to service delivery and have access to flexible funds and resources to implement their ideas. Team meetings are also held when and where it is convenient for the family, including evenings and weekends.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: Federal regulations allow for seventeen types of services. Although the services are dictated, the way they are delivered can be creative. Funding is easily available for these allowable services.

According to federal regulations, team meetings must be at time and place that is convenient for families.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: Fremont County received a perfect score and El Paso and Mesa received almost perfect scores with regard to flexible resources and funding. In Aurora, the IFSP appeared to meet wraparound practice standards in some areas and not in others. Specifically, teams did use non-traditional services when a traditional service existed and they typically did not develop new services or supports. Also, funding was reported as not being easily available.

Element 11: Outcome Based Services and Supports

Wraparound Practice Standards: Wraparound uses specific, measurable outcomes that are monitored to assess the child and family's progress toward goals. Wraparound teams use this data to inform their decisions. Wraparound teams also measure child and family satisfaction with services.

Federal/State IFSP Plan Requirements: According to federal regulations, IFSP teams must review children's progress towards goals every six months. In spring 2007, communities will report baseline data as to the new 'child and family outcome measurement' and repeat the measure in the fall 2007 to determine progress made.

There are no specific requirements that IFSP teams measure family satisfaction with services. Therefore, this practice varies across Colorado.

Wraparound Comparison Study Findings: Across all four communities, the IFSP planning process met wraparound practice standards with regard to outcome-based services and supports. Both Aurora and Fremont County received perfect scores and El Paso and Mesa Counties received almost perfect scores with regard to this element.

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the IFSP was the most similar planning process across all four BLOOM communities to wraparound than the other planning processes studied. Areas with the strongest comparability between the IFSP and wraparound were:

- Family Voice and Choice with one exception noted. Federal regulations dictate who must participate on the IFSP team.
- Community-Based Services and Supports.
- Outcome-Based Services and Supports.

Areas with consistent differences between the IFSP and the wraparound process were:

- IFSP teams met less frequently than wraparound teams.
- The IFSP did not include a crisis or safety plan as part of its process that was comparable to the one developed through the wraparound process.
- IFSP teams were typically comprised of more professionals than non-professionals on them.
- It was unclear whether the IFSP planning process included a ‘strengths, needs, and culture discovery’ that was comparable to the one conducted in wraparound. Although two of the communities received a perfect score, further exploration is still needed to determine if the ‘routine spaced interview’ is comparable to the ‘strengths, needs, and culture discovery’.
- Services and supports can be terminated in following situations: when the family voluntarily withdraws from the program; when a child is no longer eligible; when the family does not respond to efforts to contact them; or when a family moves out of the county. The IFSP, however, appears to include a process for those children and families who require continued services by transitioning them to the IEP and the family support planning processes.
- The typical IFSP caseload for service coordinators significantly exceeded wraparound practice standards.

If Project BLOOM determines that the IFSP is an appropriate alternative process to wraparound, the following are some recommendations to consider:

- A monitoring process to ensure that the IFSP is being implemented with fidelity just as Project BLOOM monitors fidelity to the wraparound model through the WFI. Families as well as staff should be included as part of the monitoring process.
- An assessment process to determine which families would benefit from the wraparound process and which families would benefit from the less intensive IFSP process based on factors including family voice and choice, and the complexity of the child and family’s needs and concerns.
- A transition process so that families have the ability to switch from one planning process to another as their needs and issues change.
- Adaptation of the IFSP planning process to incorporate some of the key elements of the wraparound process that are lacking, including crisis/safety plans, ‘strengths, needs, and culture discovery’, reduced caseloads for IFSP service coordinators, and increased numbers of informal supports on IFSP teams.