

# Collaborative Adventures



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## *One Family's Story: How Individualized Care Makes a Difference*

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For wraparound to meet with high fidelity it is critical to ensure each family team and plan is *individualized*. Programs are generally designed with a predetermined goal or objective. In contrast, wraparound is a **process** by which each family plan is developed in consideration of the distinctive characteristics of each family in order to strengthen and improve their lives. According to Bruns (2004, 2008), theory and research both support the notion of customized strategies, supports and services for children with complex needs and their families. Application of the wraparound principle of family voice and choices helps to insure that the wraparound plan is designed build on each child and family's unique strengths to meet their needs.

One system of care coordinator's favorite example of individualized care is Mamma C and Joey. She fondly remembers the day she stood and watched the two of them riding their bikes up the road to their team meeting together. They were on their way to the middle school to facilitate their child and family team meeting. Because this coordinator recognizes the value of developing a team and a plan that is uniquely tailored to fit each family, she coordinates activities that embrace who they are and not who she and society think they should be. So, before starting to work helping to build the family supports, she spent time getting to know the family and gaining a deeper understanding of their culture, beliefs, strengths and needs.

By doing this, she learned that Mamma C took pride in taking responsibility for her family. She also learned that Mamma C had a rocky history with the school her son attended. Mamma C didn't feel the school was supportive and that they didn't value her input in the care and treatment of Joey. Meetings held in their conference room were inundated with negativity and unproductive deliberations. Neither school personnel nor Mamma C were able to effectively communicate with the other. In addition, Mamma C and Joey lived fifteen miles from the community mental health center and Mamma C didn't drive. Mamma C understood Joey's condition better than anyone and she knew how easily distracted Joey could be at home. She wanted Joey to be able to participate on their team. Mamma C also understood how important it was to know how Joey was doing in school but did not want school personnel to be on her team. Because Mamma C didn't drive they finally decided that the school would be the best place for the team to meet. Mamma C decided she would meet with the school staff before each team meeting, and then share that information with her team.

Instead of taking a "cookie-cutter approach" to serving this family, simple strategies were implemented to honor their choices and meet their needs. By allowing the family to choose who would be a part of their team, the wraparound process created a safe space for them to exchange pertinent information. Though Mamma C never did invite the school to be a part of her family team, she did find a way to obtain their support.

### References

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