Turnover Among Wraparound Care Coordinators: Rates, Causes, Impacts, and Remedies

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Overview

• Project Background
• Turnover Rates and Impact
• Reasons for Turnover
• Possible Remedies
• First Steps
“Staff turnover in mental health service organizations is an ongoing problem with implications for staff morale, productivity, organizational effectiveness and implementation of innovation, such as the introduction of evidence-based practices” (Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006, p. 289)
PROJECT BACKGROUND

Purpose, Methods, and Respondents
There Is Almost No Published Data on Turnover in Wraparound

• Lots of anecdotal information that turnover is a problem
• Explore questions:
  – Are turnover rates in Wraparound similar to rates for other public mental health services?
  – Is there wide variation in turnover rates?
  – What are the factors that might contribute to that variation?
  – Are these factors “malleable”? What can be done?
How We Have Tried to Fill the Knowledge Gap

• National survey, 331 complete responses
  – Estimate turnover rates, provide info on causes and impacts, also causes of retention
• Recruited some survey respondents for interviews
  – More than one from several states, 21 in total
  – Asked for in-depth explanations of most significant drivers of turnover, and what helped reduce it
We Surveyed and Spoke to People Around the Country
Turnover Among Wraparound Care Coordinators
Perspectives on causes, impacts, and remedies

Prepared by staff from the National Wraparound Initiative and the National Wraparound Implementation Center. Portland State University, Graduate School of Social Work, Research Institute and University of Washington, Medical School.

James A. McEvoy, Jennifer Wiltzius-Burkardt, Cindy E. Nifong

PURPOSE

There is no shortage of anecdotal evidence about the negative impacts that staff turnover can have on children, families, and other staff in agencies that provide Wraparound care coordination. In mental health service organizations, turnover is generally perceived to be an ongoing and serious problem (SAMI-03, 2010). bathmized research that suggests that high turnover rates of at least 20 percent to 30 percent, and that the cost of replacing a worker is 20-30 percent of annual salary (Rothstein & Glynn, 2002). The impact of turnover on mental health clients has not been well investigated, but it is assumed to be problematic.

There is almost no published data on turnover in Wraparound programs specifically, leaving many questions unanswered. For example: Are turnover rates among staff who provide Wraparound similar to rates for other public mental health services? Is there wide variation in turnover rates, such that some agencies experience much higher and others much lower turnover? And if so, what are the factors that might contribute to that variation? Knowing the answers to these sorts of questions could suggest strategies that might be effective for retaining staff, increasing job satisfaction, and, ultimately, contributing to more experienced and effective Wraparound workforces.

This line of reasoning led us to undertake a study focused on understanding more about turnover in Wraparound. This report focuses on turnover among care coordinators and provides findings from a national survey and follow-up interviews with selected survey participants.
SERIOUSNESS AND IMPACTS

RATES AND SERIOUSNESS

Average turnover: On average, about two of five care coordinators leave their jobs in Wraparound each year—both a diversity of experiences with turnover underlies this figure.

Low turnover: About 40 percent of organizations experienced turnover below 25 percent in the past year. Generally, these respondents didn’t see turnover as a serious problem for their organizations.

High turnover: On the other hand, more than 1 quarter of respondents reported high turnover—those organizations had replaced at least half of their care-coordination staff within the past year. In some organizations, turnover was more than 100 percent in the past year. Not surprisingly, respondents in these organizations tended to view turnover as a serious problem.

Percentage of care coordination leaving their jobs during the past year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Employees Leaving</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-74%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</table>

On the survey, 80% said that turnover in their organizations harmed children and families.

“I think it really does affect our families. Wraparound is such an intense process, and the Wrap facilitators are really vested in the family. They know that trust and build rapport early on. When the amount of engagement dips in the beginning, when there’s turnover, it creates a level of distrust among whoever steps in next because the family has already opened up.”

On the survey, 67% said that turnover in their organizations hurt co-workers’ morale.

“There are other care coordinators, it really affects them, because their caseload they go up. We have been really good about keeping within the ratio of 15 and under because if you get more than 15, you are not at best practice, number 1, and number 2, you are just not providing the quality of Wraparound that you want.”

On the survey, 52% said that turnover in their organizations hurt the agency and the quality of Wraparound care.

“I think it takes about a year for a care coordinator to understand their role and its continuity. So, when you have new people doing really hard work with complex kids and families… when you have the statement, the lack of knowledge of Wraparound and the field.”

CARE COORDINATOR PAY

Interviewees very frequently cited low pay as a major cause of care coordinator turnover. Care coordinators salaries are considered too low for the level of skill required and stress involved in the position. Interviewees shared that low pay can lead to resentment, burnout, and other stressors that ultimately push people out. Furthermore, salaries are often not competitive within the local economy, leading to pull from other social service employers or different industries.

$32,500/YR
$15.65/HR
Average BA-level care coordinator salary across all interviewees

“$14 an hour—when you count in overtime and maybe 30—really not insuring”

“The pay for what we do, it is not adequate. It’s not good.”

“The sickies make that salary $20,000 a year.”

“A lot of our staff, unless they’re doing with multiple people, are not paid enough to afford to live in the county where they work.”

Bar chart: Bachelor’s-level Median Income vs. Care Coordinator Salary by State

- NJ
- CA
- MA
- WA
- MI
- TX
- OR
- IN
- SC
- OK

2019 State Median Income for BA-level 25-44YO

Average Care Coordinator Salary (BA level) at Interviewee’s Orgs

Data Median Income source: U.S. Census National Information Center for Higher Education Policy and Analysis
Care Coordinator Salary source: Interviewees consulted by NWIC
The Scale of the Problem

TURNOVER RATES AND IMPACT
Turnover Rates Varied Widely, Averaging About 40%

Respondents’ Estimates of the Percentage of Care Coordinators in their Agencies Who Left their Jobs in the Past Year

- 43% of care coordinators turning over had been in their jobs less than a year
Clients’ Suffering Seen as Most Significant Impact of Care Coordinator Turnover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible problems caused by CC turnover</th>
<th>% ranking this as a “significant” problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children and families suffer when CCs change</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased workload of other CCs</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased workload of supervisors</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower quality of Wrap provided</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and other costs are higher</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New people can't work as effectively with other systems</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to fit people into the team that provides Wraparound</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Care Coordinators Leave

REASONS FOR TURNOVER
Pay: An Extremely Common Reason Cited for Care Coordinator Turnover

• Low pay leads to resentment, burnout and other stressors that push people out.

• Salaries are often not competitive within the local economy, leading to pull from other social service employers or different industries.

“"The number one thing would be the salary. I think that’s our main reason for turnover. The folks that can do this job and do it well and enjoy doing it and the ones we want to stay, salary is the reason they leave.”

3/4 of respondents said that “better job opportunities elsewhere” was a significant cause of turnover (tied for top cause)
Salaries Considered Too Low for the Level of Skill and Stress Required

$32,500/yr

$15.65/hr

Average BA-level CC Salary across all interviewees

“The $14 an hour, when they could go to McDonald’s and make $15, really felt insulting.”

“The pay, for what we do under the stress we’re under, it’s not good.”

“The Schwan’s [frozen food delivery truck] driver was making more money than I was, and I had a Master’s degree.”

“A lot of our staff, unless they’re living with multiple people, are not paid enough to afford to live in the county where they work.”

“Probably a third of our staff have a second job.”
Care Coordinator Salary is Often Well Below State’s Median Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2010 State Median Income for BA-level 25-44YO</th>
<th>Average CC Salary (BA-level) at Interviewee's Orgs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salaries are typically a direct function of Wraparound reimbursement rates.

State Median Income source: US Census/National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis
CC Salary source: Interviews conducted by PSU/UW
Stress and Burnout a Big Culprit in Care Coordinator Turnover

On the survey, 78% said that stress and burnout was a significant cause of turnover in their organizations.

“Yeah, the workload is a lot, and I think stress could be a contributing factor for when people leave.”

“I think when people don’t feel like they can get to everything and accomplish all their tasks, it feels overwhelming and I think it contributes to burnout. That lack of satisfaction, the ability to do your job.”

Wraparound families need a lot of support.

Care coordination requires a lot of work.
What Are Productivity Requirements in Wraparound?

Requirements that CCs spend a certain percentage of their time in direct face-to-face contact with Wraparound-enrolled youth and caregivers.

– Often stem from funding structures that reimburse Wraparound on a “fee for service” basis based on units of service delivered.

Many sites had requirements around 50 or 60%.
Productivity Requirements Cause Stress and Distract From Quality

“If you were always worried about meeting your productivity, you’re going to go out and see the family who is cooperative, obviously that family isn’t the one in greatest need. We need to be visiting the families that are struggling and those are a lot of no shows, you can’t bill for those and that stresses staff out.”

“It’s constantly being under the gun and feeling the anxiety of billables...and really missing the whole purpose of Wraparound.”

Also increases already big documentation burden.

“They got to a point where they felt they couldn’t handle that anymore...it was difficult for staff to know you were doing really good work for a family, but a major component of your job is making sure that you’re holding to your productivity expectations and some couldn’t do it because the productivity is linked to documenting.”
Other Factors Also Cited as Contributors to Stress and Turnover

Long hours, after-hours meetings, on-call policies, high caseloads and driving distances contribute to stress and burnout, particularly in combination with the high levels of family needs.

– Stress increased when these factors compounded one another, such as when unreimbursed driving time drove stress around billable hours and/or productivity.
Turnover Itself Can Also Lead to Further Burnout

The departure of one CC usually meant the redistribution of their work.

“Typically what we’ve done in the past is we have had to stretch our staff who cover a neighboring county and have them help cover that county that’s shorthanded, which then of course can burn that staff member out.”
Care Coordinators Not “Fitting” With The Role Can Compound Stress and Burnout

Often a mismatch between what potential hires expect and have learned about versus what the job actually entails.

– Can leave them doing the job of CC in a way that amplifies stress and contributes to turnover.

“I think if you have people that maintain a clinical mindset, they’re not going to understand it and therefore won’t stay into it. Helping them understand they’re not the sole person to get everything done. This is the point of a team. And helping them rely on the team. I think that’s when people start to get it. If you have people that don’t get that, than yes, the demand of the job becomes too much and people can’t handle it. I have had staff that struggle there.”
POSSIBLE REMEDIES TO CARE COORDINATION TURNOVER

Reduce the Push and Strengthen the Pull
Supervisors are Key to Reducing Turnover

• Provide support
• Reduce or buffer against stressors
• Strategically lift burden

“I have a very supportive immediate supervisor and I think that is key. I think a position is made by the supervisor.”

“So balancing as far as letting them select time, letting them be here one day longer and take off earlier a different day...I have started, hey now put all your filing in here, we’ll take it down to the chart room and we’ll get it filed weekly that way you guys don’t have that extra step. I’ve been working on getting them laptops that way they can be mobile and hopefully do notes on the go. Just anything and everything that we can think of creatively.”
Skills Coaching, Whether by a Supervisor or Other, Can Also Help

Consistent with research showing that a targeted focus on supporting improvement in practice skill can combat burnout.

“I really believe having a good coach is important...they need to be able to contact their state coach and get feedback that they need because I [as a supervisor] don’t have all the answers...and when they can’t get that or they get the wrong answer, that creates frustration and has been an issue.”

“The majority of our supervisors were, in fact, care coordinators before they were promoted into a leadership position. So the really beneficial thing about that is having that been-there-done-that knowledge.”
Hiring the Right Person From The Start Makes a Difference

Improved hiring practices are helpful in addressing this issue.

– Behavioral questions

– Job shadowing and clear role descriptions

“What we have changed in the last few years, before people actually say yes to the job, if they have passed our interview, we ask them to shadow one of us before they actually say yes to the position to see if that is really what they want to do... I have a ton of new people that have come out with me that have said, ‘This is not for me.’ They said that it was very helpful to see what we actually do instead of hearing it.”
Lower or Ditch the Productivity Requirements

Productivity requirement of 25% may be more reasonable.

Some organizations use different metrics all together and align their funding accordingly.

- Payment for each CFTM held
- Payment based on staffing

Breakdown of CC Time Spent Delivering Wraparound

Based on time study conducted in FL
Good Pay and Career Paths: Two of the Top Ways to Retain Good Staff

Improve compensation
- Modest pay increases
- Create a step structure to entice longevity

Provide CCs with something to look forward to by creating career ladders that reward experience
- “Senior” CC positions
- Local or state-level coaches or other trainers
Retention is Enhanced When Organization’s Values Resonate With Staff

Our interviewees stressed the importance of a climate and culture that understands Wraparounds and supports its values.

Not just for work with families, but also for staff:

• Emphasizes strengths
• Values wellness and self-care
• Celebrates accomplishments
• Recognizes the hard work
• Promotes teamwork and fun
• In return, staff are intensely loyal and say they are willing to make some sacrifices

“The work is tough and hard but we have support around getting it done. At any given time if somebody walks through, you’d hear laughter, you’d hear joking but then you would realize wow, they get their work done.”
Retention is Values Based

The top reasons for care coordinator retention in our survey are connected to these kinds of values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible causes of CC retention</th>
<th>% ranking as “significant” cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to children/families they work with</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Wraparound/enjoy the work</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from/loyalty to co-workers</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty to organization</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality professional development</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay/benefits/job conditions</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other jobs not readily available</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At Your Organization

FIRST STEPS
Start by Understanding Your Own Drivers of Turnover

• Track turnover rates
• Conduct exit interviews
• Gather information (confidentially) concerning:
  – Job satisfaction
  – CC perceptions that supervisors are expert, competent, supportive (“upward performance appraisal”); suggestions for improvement
  – Get feedback re: job conditions, policies, management
Identify “Malleable” Factors and Act on Them

• Many interview examples of creative responses
  – Documentation reduction initiatives
  – Technology (tablets, laptops) to aid in efficiency
  – Training to enhance understanding of the role
  – Different staffing patterns
  – Enhanced hiring for better fit
  – Wellness and self-care initiatives
  – Policy changes within the agency and in the larger local/state context
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