

Debating “Persistence” and “Unconditional Care”
Results of a Survey of Advisors of the National Wraparound Initiative
April 29, 2008

In 2004, the National Wraparound Initiative (NWI) used a collaborative process to create two publications to help meet its stated goal of increasing clarity and consistency of wraparound implementation for youth and families. These two documents were the *Ten Principles of Wraparound* and the *Phases and Activities of Wraparound*. Since these publications, the most contentious aspect of these formative documents has been the reframing of the “Unconditional Care” principle of wraparound as “Persistence,” which was done in order to acknowledge the fiscal and logistical challenges of providing unconditional care in real-world systems.

In advance of publishing all the NWI documents in an upcoming *Resource Guide to Wraparound*, it seemed important to revisit the question of how best to present this core principle: Using the newer term of *Persistence*, or returning to the traditional wraparound term *Unconditional*. To help figure this out, approximately 200 NWI advisors were sent a two-page document presenting the definition of the *Persistence* principle as it has been worded since 2004, as well as a new description of the principle *Unconditional Care*. Advisors were provided a link to an on-line survey. The survey asked the advisors to give their opinion on whether or not the change represented an improvement to the ten principles of wraparound, and also invited open-ended feedback on the wording of the principle as well as the issue overall.

The results are in and presented in the attached report. Briefly, results showed that:

- One hundred members of the NWI Listserv (approximately 49%) responded to the request for input.
- 73% expressed preference for the new description of *Unconditional Care*.
- 15% expressed a preference for the definition and description of *Persistence*.
- 12% endorsed the option “Neither version is clearly better.”
- Looking at the open-ended feedback, there was little disagreement with the content of the descriptions of either principle. The debate seemed to mainly be between those who want to highlight the more value-based ideal expressed by the title *Unconditional* and those who want to highlight a more practical or applied version of the principle expressed by the title *Persistent*.

Thus, while a majority expressed a preference for the title *Unconditional* and for the wording of the revised principle, a significant minority viewed *Persistent* as more appropriate. However, advisors’ comments did not suggest disagreement either with the ideal of unconditional care **or** with the reality that systems are often not set up to provide care that is fully unconditional. As a result of this exercise, our thought is to use the feedback that was received to try to make the definition and extended description as clear as possible in both of these areas and post a revision of the definition of the principle under the heading of *Unconditional Care*. In the spirit of the NWI, we will also want to post a full discussion of this debate and the opinions held by advisors, to help families and practitioners fully understand the issues as they support implementation of wraparound in their communities.