



## FAMILY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES ON TELEHEALTH:



June, 2022

*Findings from an NWI Survey*

In January of 2022, the National Wraparound Initiative produced a report on a survey of Wraparound staff members' experiences with telehealth during the pandemic. The introduction of that report reviewed relevant research on the effectiveness of telehealth versus in-person visits for delivering mental health services for children, youth and families. Overall, existing research suggests that telehealth is a useful and beneficial option for the provision of services and supports similar to those that are typically part of Wraparound. On the survey, Wraparound staff were generally very positive about their experiences with telehealth and optimistic that telehealth can be integrated into ongoing Wraparound with positive results.

***"When using telehealth there can be distractions, but I think the convenience of having it as option so that more people are available to meet outweighs that."***

**– Survey Respondent**

After several months of additional recruiting, 38 family members have now completed the survey, allowing us to add their perspectives to those of Wraparound staff. While this is not a large number—substantially smaller than the number of staff who responded—their responses allow at least a tentative comparison of their experiences.

Family respondents were generally positive regarding their experiences with telehealth, with 85% reporting overall satisfaction of “excellent” or “good” (40% and 45%, respectively), with another 13% describing their overall experience as “OK” and 3% as “terrible.” Figure 1 compares these responses with those of family partners (n=46) and care coordinators (n=129). Average satisfaction across the three groups was virtually identical.

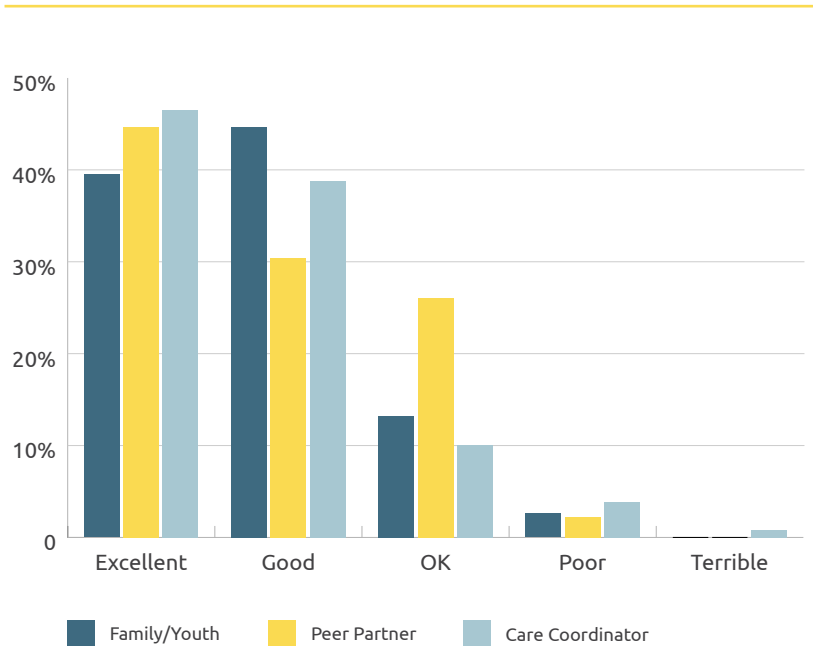
A large majority (84%) of family members agreed “strongly” or “somewhat” that “Having telehealth as an option can improve the effectiveness of Wraparound and systems of care.” This compares to 91% of family partners and 92% of care coordinators agreeing with the statement. The remaining survey participants said they disagreed “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement. The mean level of agreement was significantly different across the three roles.

Similarly, 86% of family members agreed that “Having telehealth as an option can improve family and youth participation in Wraparound and systems of care.” This compares to 91% of family partners and 92% of care coordinators agreeing with this statement. However, the mean level of agreement was not significantly different across the three roles.

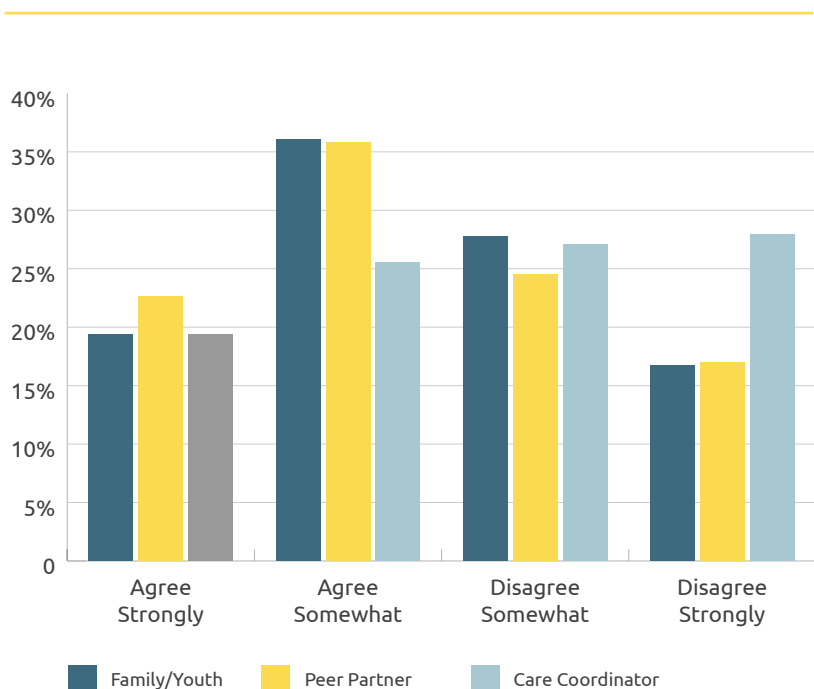
Finally, 55% of family members agreed that “Providing Wraparound and system of care services and supports via telehealth is *not* as effective as in-person.” A majority of family partners (58%) also agreed with this statement, though only 45% of care coordinators did. (See figure 2.)

In their responses to open-ended questions about the benefits and challenges associated with the use of telehealth in Wraparound, families provided answers that mirrored those provided by Wraparound staff. Family members said that telehealth made it easier for them to participate because they didn’t have to travel to appointments, and because meetings could be scheduled more flexibly. They also noted that natural supports and other providers (e.g., therapists and case managers) were more likely to attend virtual meetings

**Figure 1. Rating of Overall Telehealth Experience By Role**



**Figure 2. Responses to the Statement "Telehealth Is *Not* as Effective as In-Person"**



than in-person meetings. Representative examples included these:

*Telehealth sessions could increase participation overall from families and support people outside the families, such as teachers and other support people. Also, families are likely to be more comfortable in their home setting and speak and behave more naturally than if they were in an office or other artificial setting.*

*The fact that I don't have to drive somewhere and be early, is a huge relief. And, part my son's problem*

*is being around new people, so the virtual meetings helped tremendously in getting him acclimated to his doctors.*

*Obviously, when using telehealth, there can be the distractions, but I think the convenience of having it as option so that more people are available to meet outweighs that.*

*No disadvantage for me. All very helpful since most appointments are about 45 minutes from my home. I like the telehealth options.*

The top challenge by far was the difficulty in engaging children and youth, particularly in therapy but also in Wrap-around team meetings. Family members also noted that Internet connectivity and access to appropriate devices could be problematic. For example:

*Many therapists are still only doing telehealth and it's not necessarily as effective or easy to connect. Some therapists have closed their offices entirely to save money, but that's not fair, especially for kids.*

*My granddaughter does much better one-on-one, she engages more with her provider.*

*The only disadvantage would be that our son didn't always participate well. I don't know that he would have done better in person, but there would have been fewer distractions.*

*Families and providers still struggle with technology, sometimes the platform of family choice is not used and only the one the agency uses is available.*

On the whole, family members were quite positive about their own experiences with telehealth, and optimistic that telehealth can be successfully integrated into ongoing Wraparound. However, their comments cautioned against expecting that children and youth could be effectively engaged in therapy and team meetings via telehealth.

Despite the overall positive assessment, some families had negative experiences with telehealth and/or expressed pessimism about its usefulness as a replacement for in-person services and supports. This is a

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reminder of the need to monitor family satisfaction with Wraparound—and the services provided through the Wraparound plan—in an ongoing way. Tracking satisfaction can help ensure that decisions—including decisions about when and how much to provide services via telehealth—can be individualized to fit family needs and preferences.

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## Suggested Citation

National Wraparound Initiative. (2022). *Family Members' Perspectives on Telehealth: Findings from an NWI Survey*. Portland, OR: National Wraparound Initiative.



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