



# YOUTH ERA

## Talking with Youth About Natural Supports

Having natural supports on a wraparound team is a principle of wraparound. This is because natural supports will continue to be an integral part of the youth's life after the team has disbanded. Natural supports are unpaid, supportive individuals who the youth identifies as important to them. These people can be relatives, friends, collected family, etc. Whilst natural supports are one of the most important members of wraparound teams, oftentimes teams lack natural supports. This happens for a variety of reasons, however, there are some things you can do as a youth partner to help facilitate the involvement of natural supports.

### **Normalize Natural Supports**

Many times, youth are not comfortable asking natural supports to be on their team because they feel some shame or embarrassment about being involved in wraparound. They often need someone to acknowledge that their apprehension is common and to normalize the need for natural supports, as well as normalize the circumstance they find themselves in. This is the job of the youth partner - they will share their perspective, their story, and some insight on the benefits of natural supports. As a youth partner, you can also offer to help them plan on talking with their natural supports or go with them to help them do so.

### **Help Identify Natural Supports**

Some youth have very few natural supports in their lives and may state that they do not have any natural supports. Have conversations with your youth about who they go to when they need to talk, who they see on a regular basis, who they feel comfortable talking to even if they've not seen them in some time, and who they generally feel comfortable around. Usually, youth will be able to identify a handful of people, and you can brainstorm with them about if/how these people can be natural supports on their team and in their lives. If a youth does not identify any natural supports, then talk with them about what their natural support "wish list" is - what would they do, how would they help, etc. and speak with them about options to identify with said people.

### **Help Connect Youth With Natural Supports**

If a youth identifies that they do not have natural supports, or if they want to increase their number of natural supports, then work with them to connect to community organizations. This can include, but is not limited to - youth drop-in center, places of worship, support groups, teams, classes, etc. This is a good strategy for youth to learn about how to increase connections. Also, talk with the youth about bringing the need for natural supports to the team; team members may have creative ideas or be able to access other resources (such as family search and engagement).



# Y O U T H E R A

## **Acknowledge that Natural Supports Can Change**

It is important for youth to know that they can bring natural supports into the wraparound process after the team has already been established. It is the youth's decision regarding who they would like to have on their team and so they are welcome to invite new members after the engagement phase of wraparound. They are also welcome to request that natural supports no longer be a part of their team.