

# A Community Based Approach To High Need Children and Families

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# What is Wraparound Milwaukee?

WAM was a response to the observation that Milwaukee County and the State of Wisconsin were spending more and more money in an effort to “treat” and “care” for children and families with little or no evidence that the children, families, and community were actually benefitting.

We decided to spend our resources (both money and expertise) differently.

<http://vimeo.com/38060393>

- WAM is a publicly operated HMO.
- WAM pools funds from multiple sources (Courts, Children's Services, T-19)
- WAM contracts with dozens of agencies to purchase a wide variety of traditional and nontraditional services
- WAM organizes services around certain philosophies and values, and an individualized treatment plan that is shared by everyone working with the family
- WAM started by serving children facing court-ordered care or treatment
- WAM now serves qualifying children outside the court system
- Mobile crisis services, originally created for WAM, are now available to all children in Milwaukee County

- Almost 20 years ago WAM began with:
  - A handful of professionals, judges, and agencies
  - Very few services ready for purchase in the community
  - A rudimentary crisis team
  - A philosophy
  - Many doubters

and...

... 10 children whose needs had overwhelmed the system, for whom there was no real plan except to wait until they turned 18, forget about them for a while, and wait to hear from them as adults.

- WAM currently serves well over 1,000 children and families in voluntary, court-ordered, corrections diversion, young adult transition, and foster care programs.
- Mobile Crisis serves many thousands more, from the poorest neighborhoods and the wealthiest.
- Mobile Crisis is available to schools, hospitals, police, and families. Our average response time is less than 45 minutes. We charge nothing.

Consultation and Community

Reach

Focus

MUTT

**WAM**

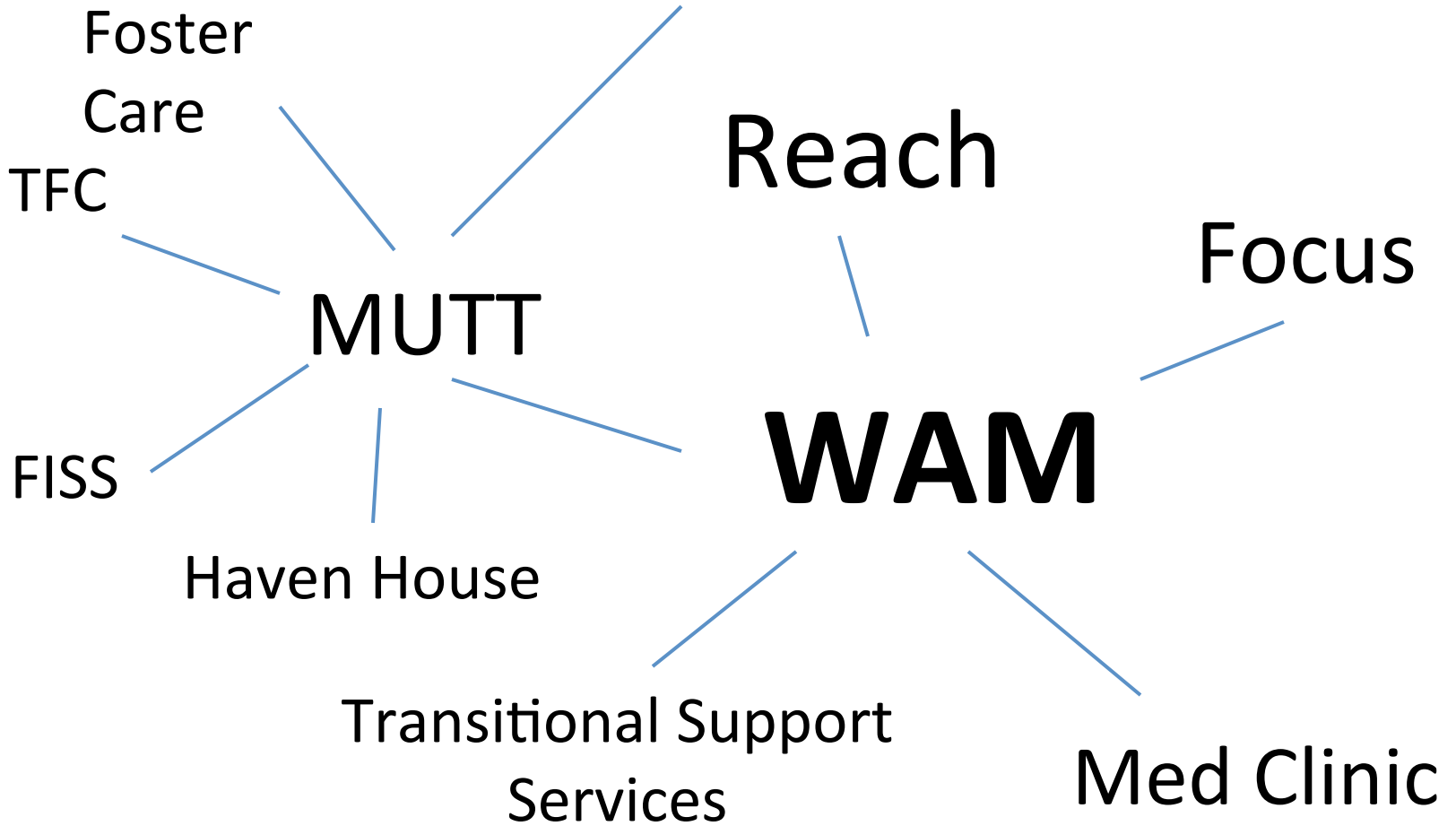
Foster  
Care  
TFC

FISS

Haven House

Transitional Support  
Services

Med Clinic



Some of what we learned along the way

# What you believe matters

- A guiding philosophy and set of beliefs makes it a lot easier to coordinate services and fit the pieces together
- It helps if those beliefs are based in reality
- The most important belief (based in reality) was that the regular way of doing things didn't work for children, families, or the community



# What we believe

- Children are better off at home than away someplace
- A placement is not a plan
- The people over there do not have the answers
- Children and families must be part of their own solutions
- You can help children by helping the people around them

# Community Care

- Community care isn't just office care done in the community
- The community is your partner, your resource, your client
- This has to be more than just words or a slogan
- Our crisis team and care coordination agencies barely have offices

# You can get their money, if...

- You take their problems, too
- If you want the court system's money, you have to take care of their kids
- We make their work easier
- We are capitated
- With court, we're "doubled capitated"
- We turn down the "easy" cases

# School is a big deal

- A huge percentage of our kids struggle in school
- The rate of reading struggles in our children is through the roof
- We do whatever we can to help schools because that helps our kids
- We now employ a team of special education advocates

# Professionals...

- Usually mean really well
- Often have no idea what they're doing
- Don't individualize care as much as you think
- Don't usually think like we do
- Aren't always necessary

# Which is why...

- We have our own network of professionals
- Help our families find professionals who can work with them and us
- Include professionals in our team meetings and pay them to be there
- We all share a common treatment plan
- Provide them with SYNTHESIS

What I think I've learned along the way

- I would never go back to an office
- This is not for everyone
- It pays to know what you and everyone else is, and is not, good at
- It is much better to be there when it happens than 3 days later
- We can and should work much faster than we often do, but we should never hurry



- It is good to have an audience
- Sleep is a big deal
- I will do (almost ) anything
- Find a point of agreement
- Everyone will talk to me
- Don't pick a fight you're unwilling to win,  
and
- Win every fight you pick

- Understanding development is really important
- Almost no one understands development
- Skinner ruined people
- Humble arrogance is a good thing
- Be sure who it is you're trying to help
- Don't shrink from their fear and misery
- Give hope

- Be conscious this is a privilege... always