

# **Wraparound Maine Evaluation Report: Survey Results from Community Collaborative Board Members**



**April 2008**

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**SOUTHERN MAINE**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much appreciation goes to the following individuals for their hard work, support and cooperation:

- Michael Edwards, Muskie School, Wraparound Maine Statewide Coordinator, for his significant contributions to the survey design and strong commitment to the overall evaluation;
- Frances N. Ryan, LCSW, Office of Child and Family Services, Director of Special Projects, for her leadership, thoughtful feedback and ongoing support of the evaluation;
- Tanya Veleva, Muskie School, Research Assistant, for her assistance with the qualitative data analysis and editing of this report;
- Jeannine Bouchard, Muskie School, Administrative Assistant, for her office support and ongoing project coordination;
- The program staff of Sweetser, Wings For Children and Families, Inc. and Youth Alternatives for providing access to community collaborative board members and for their ongoing cooperation with the evaluation requirements.
- The youth and families of Wraparound Maine who guide our work and remind us why we must always strive for excellence.

In addition, we would like to recognize the support and oversight from the Maine Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Department of Health and Human Services:

- James Beougher, Director, Office of Child and Family Services
- Daniel Despard, Acting Director, Division of Child Welfare
- Joan Smyrski, Director, Children's Behavioral Health Services
- Doug Patrick, Children's Systems Manager, Children's Behavioral Health Services

Lastly, we would like to give special thanks to all of the anonymous board members who graciously volunteered their time to complete the survey and for their ongoing service to the Wraparound Maine Community Collaborative Boards.

# Survey Findings from Community Collaborative Board Members

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wraparound Maine Initiative relies on community collaborative boards (CCB) to play a major role in developing policies, ensuring that all eligible children/youth are being served, and leveraging local resources. To assess their progress to-date, evaluators from the Muskie School for Public Service at the University of Southern Maine administered an online survey to all known board members in February 2008. Seventy-three board members completed the survey (36%). A high majority had served on their board at least 6 months and up to one year. They reported experiencing many successes and challenges during implementation. The majority offered recommendations for improvement.

### Successes:

- Approximately 85% of board members reported that their board was making progress in developing new community partnerships and identifying new community resources.
- The majority of board members reported their meetings were successful in generating new ideas.
- Board members were developing a greater understanding of their role and the wraparound initiative.
- Boards successfully recruiting new members had positive experiences.
- Board members identified families they believed were being helped through the wraparound initiative.

### Challenges:

- Boards are struggling to involve youth and family representatives in their activities. Over 80% of members reported that their board had made little progress recruiting youth.
- Board members noted sporadic attendance at meetings and difficulty making a time commitment to participate on the boards.
- Boards were struggling with how to structure their membership. There were disagreements whether membership should be expanded, remain the same, or decreased.
- Boards face challenges managing internal conflicts within the group.
- Board members were unclear about their responsibilities and expressed concern that some communication lines were ineffective.

### Recommendations:

- **Rethink Membership:** This includes an examination of both the size of the board and member composition.
- **Provide More Structure:** Board members requested more information and clarification on their roles, responsibilities, mission and operational procedures.
- **Provide More Support:** Some members suggested that boards might function better if there were greater oversight from persons who were not directly employed by the lead agencies.
- **Provide More Hands-on Experiences:** Requests were made to have board members complete more concrete tasks and become more directly involved in problem solving with families.
- **Improve Communication:** This includes the use of best practices in scheduling meetings, developing agendas, eliciting group input and managing conflicts.

The Wraparound Maine Initiative would benefit from a review of these findings and the assignment of responsible parties to take the necessary action steps towards improved board functioning.

# Survey Findings from Community Collaborative Board Members

## I. BACKGROUND:

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), has funded a multi-site demonstration project establishing a High Fidelity Community Based Wraparound Initiative in Maine. The project, commonly referred to as “Wraparound Maine”, is considered a high level of care for youth with complex needs and is expected to serve as an alternative to residential treatment. The target population includes youth, ages 5-18, with serious emotional or behavioral disturbance who are either in residential care or at high risk of such placement.

Participating sites were required to establish a Community Collaborative Board (CCB). Each board helps to develop program policies, ensures that gate keeping is uniformly done (all eligible children/youth are being served) and takes a lead role in resource development. Membership can be extended to a wide range of stakeholders, including: parents, educators, mental health providers, and local representatives from juvenile corrections, child welfare, children’s behavioral health and early childhood.

Currently, there are six community collaborative boards active in the Wraparound Maine Initiative. These include (*see Table 1*):

Table 1: Wraparound Maine Community Collaborative Boards

Collaborative Board	Lead Agency	Contract Start Date
Aroostook	Wings For Children and Families	March 1, 2007
Cumberland	Youth Alternatives	January 15, 2007
Knox/Waldo	Sweetser	May 1, 2007
Penobscot	Wings For Children and Families	March 1, 2007
Sagadahoc	Sweetser	May 1, 2007
York	Sweetser	January 15, 2007

## II. GOALS FOR SURVEY:

The community collaborative boards are expected to play a major role in the promotion, development and sustainability of effective wraparound services in the communities. By the end of January 2008, all boards had been operating under the Wraparound Maine Initiative for at least nine months. At the same time almost 80 youth had been enrolled in the initiative across the state. This time period represented an optimal time to collect feedback from board members about their early experiences on the boards.

In February, evaluators from the Muskie School for Public Service at the University of Southern Maine administered an online survey to all known board members. The main purpose of the survey was to:

- 1. Describe the level of implementation and functioning of each board;**
- 2. Identify early successes and accomplishments;**
- 3. Identify challenges and areas for continued improvement.**

### III. SURVEY ADMINISTRATION:

Evaluators from the Muskie School for Public Service at the University of Southern Maine administered an online survey to all known board members. There were 205 board members with valid email addresses on file with the participating programs. The survey was voluntary, anonymous and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Board members were recruited to complete the survey for four weeks. The evaluation team received 73 responses or a 36% response rate (see Table 2).

Table 2: Community Collaborative Board Survey Responses

	# Survey Responses
Aroostook	16
Cumberland	9
Knox/Waldo	10
Penobscot	25
Sagadahoc	7
York	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

### IV. SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

Little demographic information was collected on the survey respondents to ensure anonymity of responses. The majority (78%) of respondents were female and between 36 to 55 years old. Approximately three quarters of the respondents had served on their board at least 6 months and up to one year. Only handful of respondents had been involved with their board for only three months or less.

### V. MAIN FINDINGS:

#### A. Implementation of Community Collaborative Boards

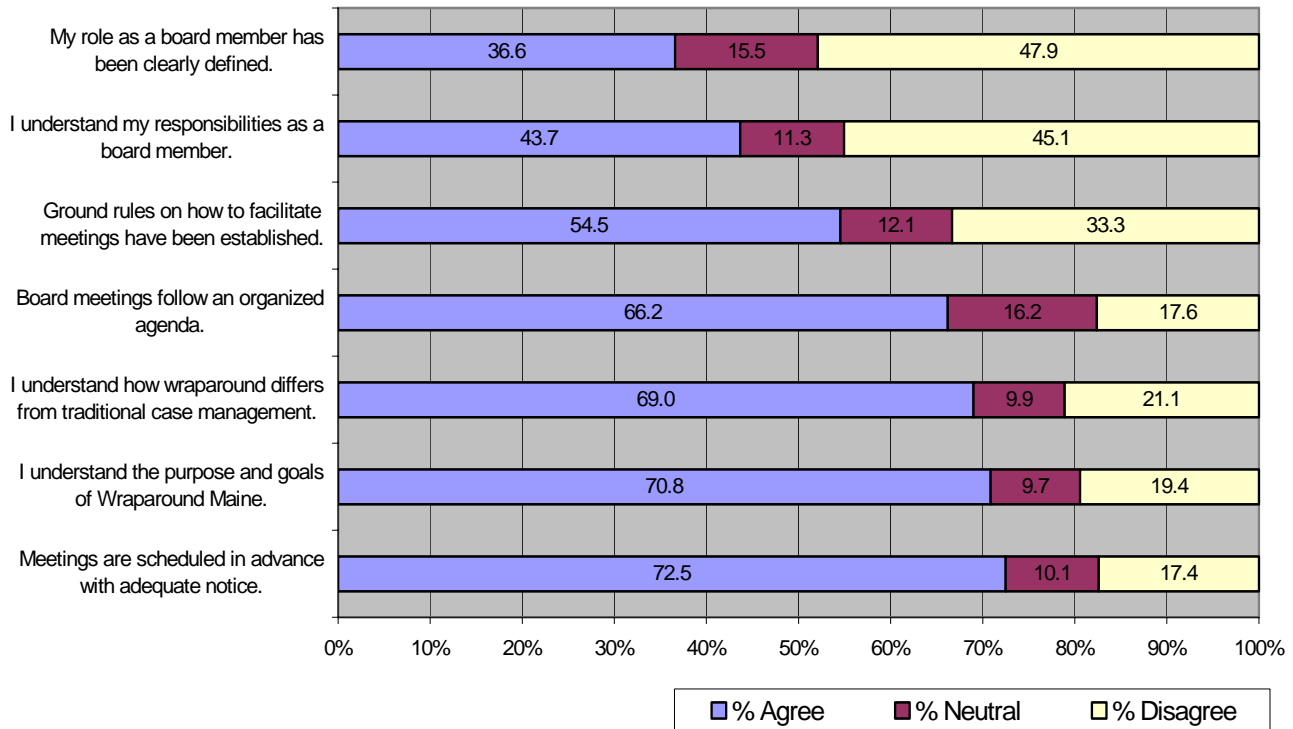
Overall, the majority of board members (n = 73) agreed that many of the early milestones related to community collaborative board implementation have been achieved. These include a shared understanding of the goals of the wraparound initiative and how it differs from traditional case management. This also includes laying the foundation for effective meetings through the development of ground rules, meeting schedules and organized agendas (refer to Figure 1).

However, there were two areas where the respondents indicated a need for further development. These were a need for further clarification on both the role of board members and the responsibilities they assume (refer to Figure 1).

Several board members volunteered additional comments that further documented this need:

- *“The collaborative board is a great idea. However, it seems the whole structure of wraparound has too many layers of committees and boards. It’s quite complex and somewhat ambiguous.”*
- *“Board members’ roles [are] not defined. We just attend and ask questions – [which] can be a very scattered meeting.*
- *“It is not clear what decision-making authority the board has been given...”*
- *“Things were not clearly defined from the get go - it was up to the group to decide their mission. I’m not feeling like that was done.”*

Figure 1: CCB Implementation: Percentage Respondents Who Agree/Disagree/Neutral (n=73)



**B. How the Boards Function**

Overall, there was no clear consensus on how well the respondents believed the community collaborative boards are functioning (refer to Figure 2). The only item that produced a clear majority was concerning the ability to express opinions. Three quarters of respondents (74%) agreed that board members are encouraged to freely express their opinions at meetings.

For the remaining items, approximately half of the respondents agreed while the other half remained neutral or unconvinced (refer to Figure 2). It is unclear from the survey responses whether board members perceive that they are using time effectively, making consistent follow-up efforts and adequately sharing responsibility.

Several board members provided additional comments further documenting both the inconsistency and the complexity of responses:

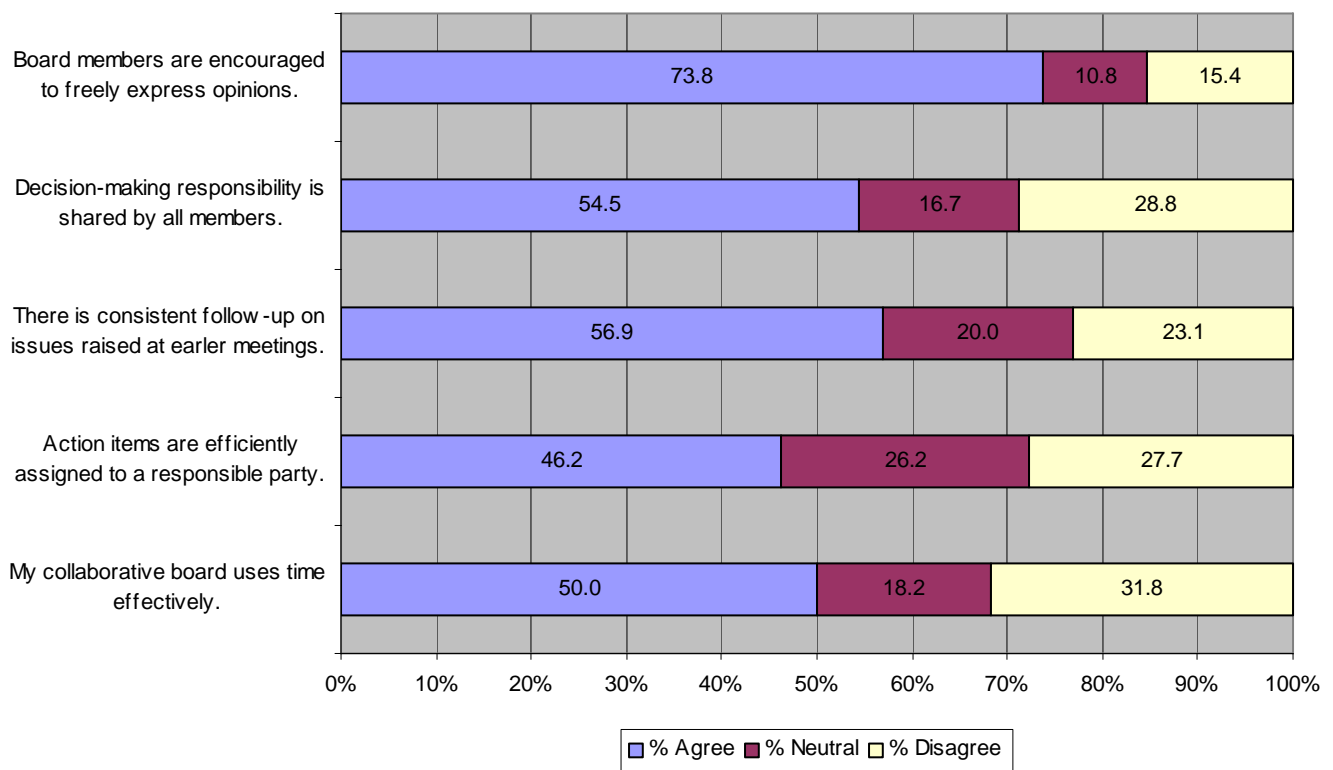
Time Effectiveness

- *“Too much talk, meetings do not accomplish a great deal.”*
- *“We got off to a bit of a slow start, but I believe we are in better shape now. There is more consistency in how things are managed within the meeting time and agendas are clearer.”*

Quality of Facilitation

- *“We have a very good facilitator who helps to bring order to this work and who has helped to keep us on track and making forward progress.”*
- *“The meetings are long and seem to be ‘led’ rather than guided or facilitated. Not a good community process at all...”*

Figure 2: CCB Functioning: Percentage Respondents Who Agree/Disagree/Neutral (n=73)



### C. Accomplishments

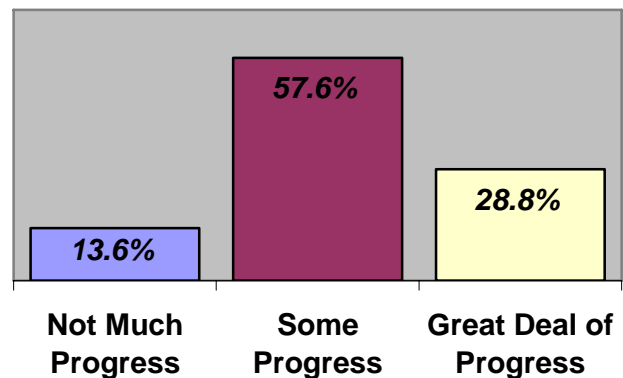
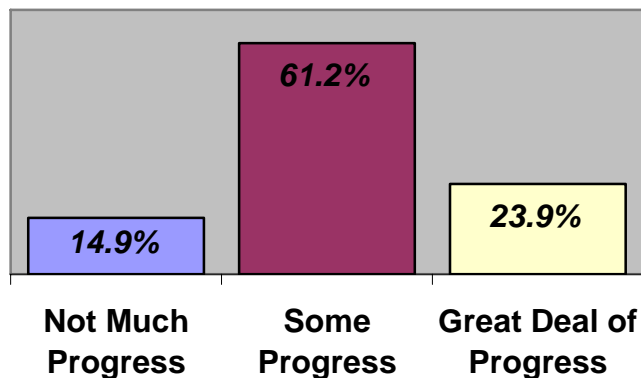
Board members provided feedback about their accomplishments through the use of closed ended-survey items and open-ended comment fields. The combined results indicate that board members see progress being made in several areas:

- 1) Making Community Connections – Approximately 85% of board members reported that their board was making progress in developing new community partnerships (see Figure 3).
  - “ [We are] building strong and new relationships”
- 2) Information Sharing – Several comments indicated that boards were exploring community resources and sharing useful information that could support their work. Additionally, 85% of board members reported their board was making progress generating new ideas (see Figure 4).
  - “Our board has turned a corner working with specific cases to identify community resources”
  - “The meetings I have attended have been so helpful to me as a professional that is new to the territory.”
- 3) Developing Clarity/Roles – Despite initial uncertainty, some board members were developing a greater understanding of their role and the wraparound initiative.
  - “Lately the meetings have come together more smoothly and I’m beginning to understand the purpose and methods used better.”
  - “Meeting with [name of wraparound training consultant] was wonderful. It was the first time I understood why Wraparound includes a CCB.”

- 4) Recruiting New Members – Several reported that the recruitment of new board members was a positive accomplishment for their board.
  - *“Recruitment of new board members has given new energy to the board.”*
- 5) Anecdotal Success with Families – Board members shared anecdotes about particular families that they believed were helped through the wraparound initiative.
  - *“I know of several youth who have been placed out of home repeatedly and since placed in the wraparound initiative they have stayed in their home.”*

Figure 3: Progress Creating New Community Partnerships

Figure 4: Progress Developing New Ideas



#### D. Challenges

Board members provided feedback about the challenges they have experienced through the use of closed ended-survey items and open-ended comment fields. The combined results indicate that board members see challenges in several areas:

- 1) Involving Youth And Families – Boards are struggling to involve youth and family representatives in their activities. Over 80% of members reported that their board had made little progress recruiting youths (see figures 5 & 6). This challenge was repeatedly cited in the comment fields:
  - *“We have had some youth involved in the past and we continue to recruit but have had limited success.”*
  - *“It is not easy getting or asking youth/parents to participate on this board when current board members don't even have an idea why they are here as we have no goals or work to do.”*
- 2) Time Commitments – Board members noted sporadic attendance at meetings and difficulty making a time commitment to participate on the boards.
  - *“The initial excitement has worn off. The board suffers from attrition and lack of interest.”*
  - *“Meetings have been poorly attended, or cancelled due to lack of attendance.”*

3) Membership Struggles -- Some of the most frequently cited challenges pertain to community inclusion and membership. However, board members disagreed whether membership should be expanded to include more community representatives, remain the same so existing members have more time to develop cohesiveness, or decreased to create a more manageable size.

- *“I think the folks on the board need to have a bit more time together before adding more to the pot.”*
- *“The board is not currently reflective of natural supports as there are no community, business or clergy present.”*
- *“The group is too large and therefore less effective”*
- *“I joined as a [community] representative. I have pretty much dropped out because I saw no role for community folk”*

4) Dealing With Difficult Personalities -- Boards face challenges managing internal conflicts within the group.

- *“[There is] another member who tends to be contrary on all issues...”*
- *“I find the folks that worked in traditional child development systems to be dismissive of folks who did not use their language or who expressed views that were counter to theirs.”*
- *“One of the [members] tends to dominate the meeting and is hard to redirect.”*

5) Poor Communication – Board members expressed concern that communication lines were ineffective.

- *“The lack of frequency in meetings makes for a lack of continuity.”*
- *“I’m not sure we’ve ever discussed having parents or youth involved in our activities.”*

Figure 5: Progress Involving Youth in the CCB

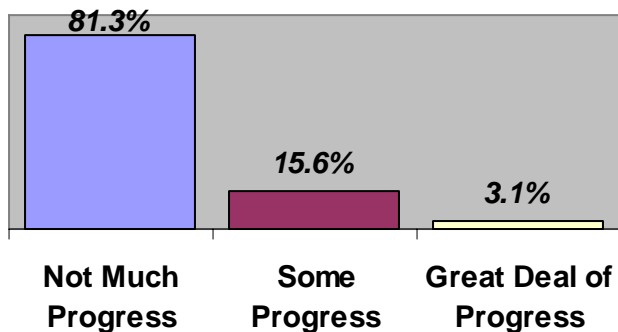
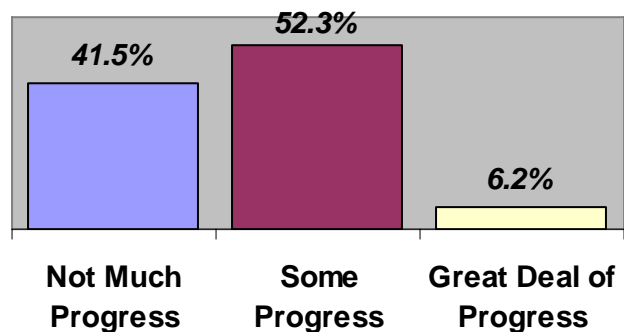


Figure 6: Progress Involving Parents in the CCB



## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**More than half of the participating board members offered suggestions to improve their community collaborative board. Several major themes emerged from these comments:**

### Recommendation #1: Rethink Membership

Consistent with the membership challenges cited earlier, the most frequent recommendation from board members was a request that membership be revisited. This includes an examination of both the size of the board and member composition.

### Recommendation #2: Provide More Structure

Board members requested more information and clarity on their role, responsibilities, mission and operational procedures. Suggestions included having these processes be written down or be made more consistent across all CCBs.

### Recommendation #3: Provide More Support

Several members suggested that boards might function better if there were greater oversight from persons who were not directly employed by the agency providing the services. Suggestions included having a professional facilitator lead the board meetings or having state/OCFS staff become more involved.

### Recommendation #4: Provide More Hands-on Experiences

Several board members requested the opportunity to have more hands-on experiences. Requests were made to have board members complete more concrete tasks and become more directly involved in problem-solving with families.

### Recommendation #5: Improve Communication

Board members requested that efforts be made to improve communication so their meetings would become more effective. These include best practices in scheduling meetings, developing agendas, eliciting group input and managing conflicts.

In addition to the recommendations above, many board members raised miscellaneous concerns that they felt were important but were not adequately being addressed in their meetings. Though these topics were not a main focus of the survey, boards may want to explore the following issues with members using a more comprehensive approach:

- The use of flex funds with families
- Reimbursement rates for services
- Role of residential services in wraparound
- Similarities/differences between Wraparound Maine and other wraparound programs

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS:**

Board members have experienced many successes and challenges during their first year of operation in the Wraparound Maine Initiative. Members offered many recommendations on how the boards could be improved in the near future. The Wraparound Maine Initiative would benefit from a review of these findings and the assignment of responsible parties to take the necessary action steps. Given the wide range of stakeholders, there are many parties who could play a role in CCB improvements, including: State representatives, university partners, Wraparound Maine committees members, lead agency staff, community stakeholders, youth and family representatives, and CCB members.

# APPENDIX:

## Site Specific Summaries

The following are survey results reported separately for each community collaborative board. *Caution should be exercised in the interpretation of these numbers due to the variation in response rates.*

Table 3: Average Rating of CCB Implementation Items Per Community Collaborative Board\*

Survey Item	York	Sagadahoc	Knox Waldo	Cumberland	Aroostook	Penobscot	Statewide
<i>My role as a board member has been clearly defined.</i>	2.67	4.29	3.10	4.11	<b>4.53</b>	3.83	3.86
<i>I understand my responsibilities as a board member.</i>	3.17	4.29	3.10	<b>4.67</b>	4.40	3.88	3.96
<i>Ground rules on how to facilitate meetings have been established.</i>	4.17	4.71	4.00	3.86	<b>5.00</b>	4.45	4.45
<i>Meetings are scheduled in advance with adequate notice.</i>	5.33	5.14	<b>6.70</b>	5.44	5.79	4.91	5.48
<i>Board meetings follow an organized agenda.</i>	4.33	4.57	<b>6.00</b>	3.75	5.79	4.96	5.04
<i>I understand how wraparound differs from traditional case management.</i>	5.50	<b>5.86</b>	5.00	5.63	5.40	4.88	5.24
<i>I understand the purpose and goals of Wraparound Maine.</i>	4.67	<b>6.00</b>	5.00	5.44	5.47	4.88	5.18

\* Likert Scale: Strongly Agree (7) – Strongly Disagree (1). The highest average rating for each item has been bolded.

Table 4: Average Rating of CCB Functioning Items Per Community Collaborative Board\*

Survey Item	York	Sagadahoc	Knox Waldo	Cumberland	Aroostook	Penobscot	Statewide
<i>My collaborative board uses time effectively.</i>	3.83	4.14	4.10	4.00	<b>5.21</b>	4.91	4.59
<i>Action items are efficiently assigned to a responsible party.</i>	4.50	4.14	4.10	4.00	<b>5.29</b>	4.41	4.49
<i>There is consistent follow-up on issues raised at earlier meetings.</i>	4.33	4.29	4.40	4.50	<b>5.29</b>	4.59	4.65
<i>Decision-making responsibility is shared by all members.</i>	3.50	4.57	<b>5.20</b>	4.33	4.87	4.41	4.56
<i>Board members are encouraged to freely express opinions.</i>	4.17	4.86	<b>5.90</b>	5.33	5.79	5.45	5.40

\* Likert Scale: Strongly Agree (7) – Strongly Disagree (1). The highest average rating for each item has been bolded.

Table 5: Average Estimates of Board Progress

Survey Item	York	Sagadahoc	Knox Waldo	Cumberland	Aroostook	Penobscot	Statewide
<i>Involving youth in the board's activities</i>	1.00	1.14	1.80	1.67	<b>2.43</b>	2.27	1.95
<i>Involving parents in the board's activities</i>	3.40	2.86	2.20	<b>3.83</b>	3.29	3.22	3.11
<i>Encouraging creative thinking/developing new ideas</i>	3.80	4.71	4.20	3.83	<b>4.93</b>	4.52	4.47
<i>Creating new partnerships within the community</i>	3.40	4.43	3.40	3.50	<b>4.80</b>	4.63	4.27

\* Likert Scale: Extremely Successful (7) – Not at All Successful (1). The highest average rating for each item has been bolded.

To ensure the confidentiality of respondents, comments are not displayed separately for each board. CCBs are encouraged to explore with their board members to what extent the statewide themes are applicable to their site.