Community Mapping

CAFO | RESEARCH *center*

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# PART 1: WHAT IS COMMUNITY MAPPING?

WHAT IS COMMUNITY MAPPING?

[▶] View this video to learn more about what Community Mapping is.

Vulnerable children and families have very diverse needs, and no one program can fulfill all of them. "It takes a village to raise a child," is an African proverb that means that children grow best when supported by an entire community of people. Supporting the development of that system is one way organizations can support children and families, understanding that we can only meet their needs by working together.

Community Mapping

Building a system to care for vulnerable children and families starts with community mapping. Community mapping is a process of identifying and cataloguing who is doing what in a given geographical area. It allows us to identify key stakeholders, learn about currently available services, pinpoint gaps in services, and facilitate collaboration.

Imagine...
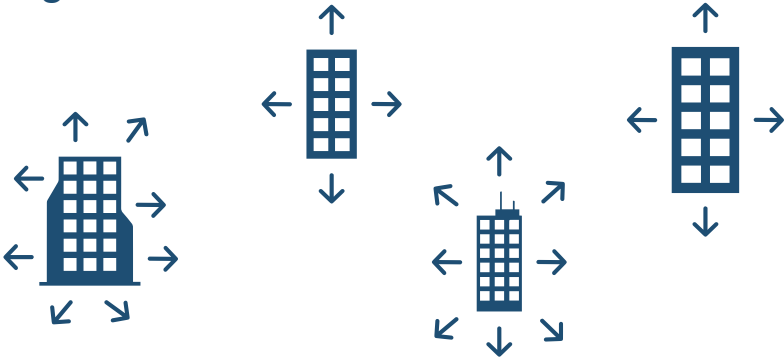
A city in which every program serving vulnerable children and families is trying to provide all services to every child and family they work with. Each of them needs to become experts in child development, child protection, education, healthcare, vocational training, the transition to adulthood, government advocacy, and so on. They feel overwhelmed. There are never enough funds and staff to meet the needs, and they feel like they are the only ones doing the work.

Now imagine a different city...
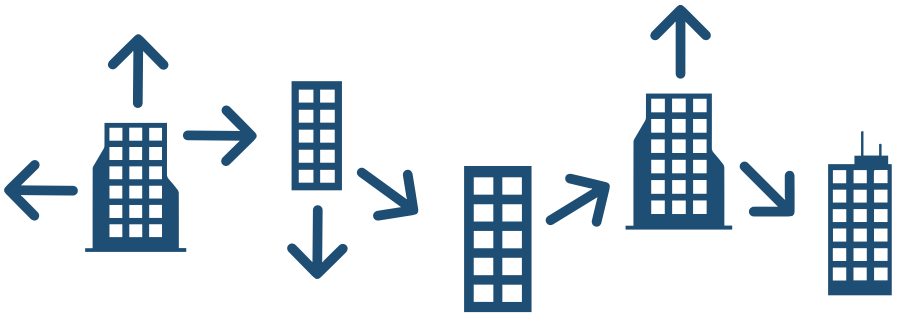
One in which there is a collective, public map of all of the programs in the community, and which services each is providing. Each program knows exactly who is doing what, and where they are serving. The government can ask NGOs for support in their areas of expertise. Families themselves know where to reach out for services, when needed. Case managers can easily find support services for the families they work with.

Programs work together to fill gaps in services, as opposed to replicating one another. Programs are interdependent, rather than competitive. Stakeholders feel as though they are part of something bigger, and children and families are well served.

This is possible through community mapping. No one organization will ever be excellent at every component of caring for vulnerable children and families, but together, we can make a community system that supports children and families at risk.

How does Community Mapping relate to caring for children and families in adversity?

Children and families in adversity often have a variety of needs simultaneously. One family may need parenting skills, income generation, marital counseling, education support, medical treatment, home improvement, and substance abuse treatment - all at the same time. It is ineffective and inefficient for one program to try to do all these things well. However, by knowing what services are provided where, and acting as a hub of connection, programs can play a vital role in seeing that all these needs are met.   This is part of the Case Management process that every child and family in our programs should receive.
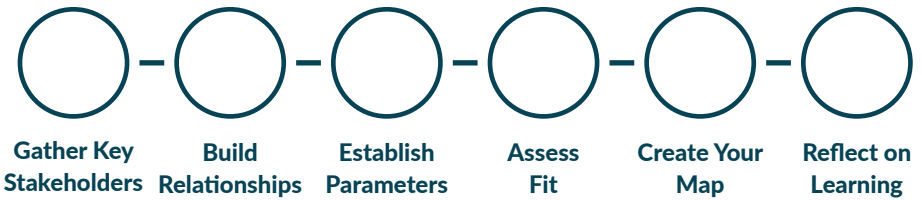[For more on Case Management, see our Case Management Training Module].

The scope of this training module is limited to mapping at the community level, although some of the principles may apply more broadly. For a framework for mapping at the national level, view Child Protection Systems: Mapping and Assessment Toolkit (Unicef). Further, it is intended that this activity will be completed primarily by adult stakeholders. For a resource on community mapping with children, view Child Participation Tool: Community Mapping (World Vision).

PART 2: HOW CAN MY PROGRAM IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY MAPPING?

HOW CAN MY PROGRAM IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY MAPPING?

Gather Key Stakeholders — Build Relationships — Establish Parameters — Assess Fit — Create Your Map — Reflect on Learning

Where do we Start?

1. Gather Key Stakeholders

The process of community mapping and establishing partnership begins with gathering key stakeholders. It is a time to share knowledge and learn from one another, and to attempt community mapping alone is to miss the opportunity for collaboration. The key is having a sufficient number of programs represented in the room, including those focusing on different goals. This can expand the pool of knowledge, leading to a richer experience and product.

As programs serving vulnerable children, we will want to include representatives from:

- Children's homes
- Adoption agencies
- Foster care providers
- Kinship and family strengthening programs

However, rather than limiting the gathering to only those involved in placement of children outside of parental care, consider representatives from:

- Schools
- Churches and faith communities
- Government departments
- Medical facilities
- Feeding programs
- Community networks
- Children and families
- Universities
- Child protection agencies
- Substance abuse treatment
- The business sector

The only prerequisite is a solid understanding of the happenings of the community. Some of the most valuable people to have at the meeting may be the elderly, who have often lived in a community for decades and know everything that happens. Don't be afraid of large groups. If you end up with a lot of people, feel free to break up the group into smaller sections for discussion, perhaps divided by geographic area of the community.

To facilitate an excellent community mapping session, we want to do the following:

1. Establish a meeting time in a neutral location. It can be hosted by a specific program, but be aware of political dynamics. If hosting it at a given location may lead some invited participants to decline the invitation, choose a different location.

2. Block out an entire day for the meeting and plan for food, water, etc. It is fine to ask everyone to bring their own food, but would be helpful to offer it. Just make sure everyone knows what to expect.

3 Have a brief conversation with each invited participant to help them understand the objectives of the meeting. It should be clear that the meeting is:

- Collaborative in nature - all parties involved will have equal voice

- Collective in product - no one owns the community map, and everyone can use it

- Focused on impact - the purpose is to help us all to serve children and families better

- Locally owned - this is created by local people, for local people

4 Ask every participant to bring their own list of who is doing what in the community.

5 Ask each participant to identify 2 other people who should be involved, and invite them.

6 Gather your materials. Some groups like to print a giant map of their community and add notations. Some use post-its, stickers, or tape. Some draw maps by hand. Don't be afraid of taking a more creative approach with materials like play-dough, paint, pipe cleaners, or recycled materials.

Then send as many reminders as it will take to gather people together!

2. Build Relationships

As community mapping is a highly interactive process, begin the meeting with building relationships. Introductions can be brief, but should cover:

- Name
- Organization
- Role
- Length of time living in the community

You may want to add an icebreaker question like: "What is your favorite hobby?" or "What superpower would you like to have?" You may have another idea entirely, get creative! Getting people talking is the goal.

3. Establish Parameters

Start with a conversation about the purpose of community mapping. Even if you have stated it many times, you cannot be too clear. Cast vision for the process. Discuss as a group:

- When the community map is complete, what will happen to it?
- Who would use the map and how?
- How will a community map help children and families?
- How will a community map help programs that support children and families?
- What do group members hope to see?
- Why is this important for the community?

Then, begin to establish parameters. How will the community be defined? What is the border of what we are and are not mapping? It is more effective to begin with a smaller area and expand, rather than to try to do too much at once. What types of services will be mapped?

It may be helpful to consider:

- Educational services, such as preschools, elementary schools, secondary school, and universities.
- Health services, such as hospitals, clinics, prenatal care, or feeding programs
- Psychosocial services, such as marriage and family counseling, spiritual support, and support groups.
- Training, in such topics as parenting skills, hygiene, nutrition, positive discipline, trauma, etc.
- Alternative care services, family support, such as adoption, foster care, and residential care.
- Income generation support, such as vocational training, community savings accounts, microloans, and financial management courses.
- Other family support services, such as housing assistance and repairs, legal advisement, and others.

Other domains can be found on p. 7 of Mapping Community Assets for Transitioning Youth (Annie E. Casey Foundation).

These ideas are just a starting point, and should not constrain your process.   Simply ask the group, "What kinds of services might be helpful for children and families at risk?"

4. Create Your Map

- Name
- Address
- Email Contact
- Phone Contact
- Website
- Services Provided

The goal is not to get every detail of information that someone might want, but rather to create a framework understanding broad categories of what services are provided and where.

Utilizing a tool like Cerca de Mi, share your learning publicly. Cerca de Mi is a web-based global mapping tool (in English and Spanish), focused on mapping services to support at-risk children and families. There may be key stakeholders who weren't able to be part of the meeting who will benefit from seeing what you have learned. Making this information publicly available will ultimately benefit vulnerable children and families.

Community Mapping is one way partnerships can develop. For more on this process, view this video on Community Mapping in Practice.

5. Concluding Debrief

Community Mapping is the start of activity and partnership, not the end of it. To do this activity and walk away without a plan for next steps would be a loss of great potential. As a mapping group, reflect on the following questions:

- What did we learn from this exercise?
- What services are readily available?
- What services are lacking? How might we fill those gaps?
- Are there any natural partnerships that could be forged?
- Who else needs to know about what we have learned? Who will be responsible for telling them?
- Who can we share this map with?
- Should we plan to gather again?
- What are our next steps?

PART 3: COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHEET

COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHEET

Meeting Date & Time:

Participants:

Vision Casting:

- When the community map is complete, what will happen to it?

- Who would use the map and how?

- How will a community map help children and families?

- How will a community map help programs that support children and families?

- What do group members hope to see?

- Why is this important for the community?

Parameters:

- How will the community be defined?

- What is the border of what we are and are not mapping?

- What types of services will be mapped?

Create Your Map:

For each service provider, record (through a recorder, on post-its, etc.):

- Name
- Address
- Email Contact
- Phone Contact
- Website
- Services Provided

As you record each program, add them to the map!

* Don't forget to utilize a tool like Cerca de Mi to share your map publicly. Making this information and your learnings available to all meeting participants and other stakeholders in the community will ultimately benefit vulnerable children and families.

Reflect on Your Learning:

- What did we learn from this exercise?

- What services are readily available?

- What services are lacking? How might we fill those gaps?

- Are there any natural partnerships that could be forged?

- Who else needs to know about what we have learned? Who will be responsible for telling them?

- Who can we share this map with?

- Should we plan to gather again?

- What are our next steps?

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