

## Community Resource Mapping

Youth with disabilities and their families often work with many agencies and service providers. These relationships help ensure that necessary supports are in place to meet each individual's needs. While these relationships are beneficial, families can sometimes experience confusion due to the abundance of service providers available or frustration by not knowing which services are available in their community.

Community resource mapping is identifying, defining, and organizing the available resources in a community so that students and families are aware of what is available and how to access services and supports. This process supports transition planning and work-based learning experiences by locating nearby supports and opportunities to expose students to various employment and education opportunities, agencies, and services.

### Four Steps to Mapping Community Resources

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Community resource mapping is a process that assists educators, families, and service providers to build a clear understanding of what their community has to offer. This process has four steps which identify and organize the many systems, entities, and professionals that students will come into contact with as they transition to post-school life.

#### Step 1: Pre-Mapping

There are two critical decisions to make before the mapping process begins. First, identify the team that will collect and organize the resources for the mapping process. Second, determine the goal or vision for the mapping process.

The team should include an educator, vocational rehabilitation counselor, and representative from the local social or human service agency. The team will work together to identify the vision for the community resource map. The vision could be determining resources for a specific student, a group of students with similar needs, or a broader audience of all students in a particular high school. Once the team establishes the vision, the team can expand to include other individuals.

Others who may contribute to the process include:

- youth or youth program leaders
- school administrators and counselors
- parents
- business owners
- representatives from postsecondary institutions
- workforce development officials
- faith-based organization representatives

## Example

If the focus of resource mapping is on helping a student identify postsecondary education and training options in their community, team members could include representatives from local two- and four-year colleges, workforce development officials, a military recruiter, a school counselor, and the student. The team would be much larger if the goal is to organize the existing resources to have a “starting” map for all students and families.

## Step 2: Mapping

The next step is for the team to determine roles and responsibilities for gathering the information needed to create the map. The table below shows one method of organizing community resources. In this example, team members would list agencies in the first column, the services they provide (e.g. postsecondary education supports, supports for independent living, etc.) in the second column, and their contact information in the third.

After identifying the resources on the table, the team should identify and discuss any resources that overlap, are duplicates, or are missing from the list. As the team is organizing resources to share, they should discuss how to communicate with students and parents about duplicate or overlapping resources. Further, the team can determine how to address any gaps in services, which could include follow-up research with community stakeholders to identify which resources could meet a student’s unique needs. Then, the team can organize services into a logical, sequential flow using a chart or graphic organizer, such as included in the sample below.

## Sample Mapping Tool

Agency/Program/Organization	Service	Website/Phone Number

### **Step 3: Taking Action**

In this step, the team should develop an action plan on how to share with stakeholders the information collected during the mapping process. This could include teaching case managers about the resources available so they can help their students access services in a sequential manner. It could also include developing products to share with students, families, and staff, such as one-pagers, referral lists, directories, or brochures.

### **Step 4: Evaluating and Sustaining**

Community resource mapping is never truly finished. The fourth step is to evaluate and update the community resource map. That way it continues to meet the vision set by the team, which can add new resources or delete those that are no longer available.

## **Conclusion**

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Community resource mapping is a process that assists educators, families, and service providers in building a clear understanding of what their community has to offer. It promotes a seamless transition for students with disabilities and gives families and youth more flexibility and choice in navigating a variety of systems. Community resource mapping provides a network of resources to assist schools, families, and community agencies in collaborating to achieve students' desired school and postschool outcomes.

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