

Community Mapping: Identifying Barriers, Assets, and Resources

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Objective

Create a resource map individualized to one's strengths and areas of need

Agenda:

- Welcome and Warm-Up
- Discussion: Understanding Support Needs
- Community Mapping Activity
- Reflections and Wrap-Up

Warm-Up!

Human Bingo – Community Mapping edition





Introduction and Discussion

“When you hear ‘I just don’t have enough support,’ what types of support do you feel are most commonly needed but hard to find?”

Community Mapping Benefits

Community Mapping offers several key benefits, especially in behavioral health and community support settings:

1. **Enhanced Support Networks:** It helps individuals identify and connect with local resources such as healthcare, housing, social services, and peer support, creating a stronger network to support their recovery and well-being.
2. **Promotes Independence:** By mapping resources and understanding available supports, individuals gain confidence in navigating their community, fostering greater independence and resilience.
3. **Addressing Barriers:** Mapping can uncover obstacles, such as transportation challenges or financial constraints, allowing individuals and support teams to find workarounds or alternative resources.
4. **Strength-Based Approach:** Community mapping emphasizes an individual's strengths and natural supports, like family, friends, or hobbies, connecting them to resources that align with these strengths.
5. **Improved Engagement and Goal Setting:** Having a visual, actionable plan empowers individuals to set realistic goals and stay engaged in their recovery journey, seeing tangible steps and supports available to them within their community.



Activity Objective

Create a "Community Connection Map" for fictional participant Chrissy.

Meet Chrissy Martinez

Name: Chrissy Martinez

Age: 36

Background: Chrissy has lived in Saratoga Springs her entire life. She comes from a close-knit family but has grown more distant from them over the past few years. After a recent series of setbacks, she's found herself without a stable job and feeling somewhat disconnected from her usual social circles. Chrissy has a history of anxiety and depression, which she's been managing for several years, and has been sober from alcohol for two years.

Life Story: Chrissy has always been creative, with a strong love for drawing and writing, and she previously worked in retail and customer service. She finds herself at a crossroads, feeling ready to rebuild but unsure of where to start. She's seeking stability and connection and wants to regain a sense of purpose. Chrissy feels both hopeful and apprehensive about her future and often feels like she's navigating her path alone.

Current Situation: Recently, Chrissy has been staying in temporary supportive housing with Shelters of Saratoga in downtown Saratoga Springs after facing some financial instability and has been out of work for a few months. She is grateful for her progress in sobriety and continues to attend her recovery meetings. However, she misses having a regular routine and supportive network. She's expressed interest in getting back to work and finding ways to manage her anxiety more effectively.

Interests and Personality: Chrissy describes herself as introverted but finds joy in connecting with people one-on-one. She's open to exploring new opportunities but feels overwhelmed by where to begin. She values independence, creativity, and the idea of giving back to her community.

Meet Chrissy Martinez

Vignette

Chrissy sits with her peer specialist at the community center, gently tapping her pen on the table as she talks. “I don’t know what my next steps should be,” she says. “I just feel like I’m ready to get back on my feet, but I don’t have all the pieces to put it together.”

Her peer specialist suggests they work together on a community mapping exercise, which could help her explore some local resources and connect to her strengths. Chrissy agrees to the idea. “I’ve never done anything like this before, but it sounds like it could help me figure out what’s around me. I just need to find ways to build a life that feels...stable.”

Her peer specialist explains that this mapping exercise will help her identify people, places, and programs in her community that can support her. Chrissy expressed liking the idea of visualizing her options. She’s ready to start exploring what could help her move forward, but she’s unsure of what resources might be available and accessible to her.

- What are Chrissy's most urgent needs/recovery goal? Write these on sticky notes (e.g., social support, housing stability, mental health support) and place them at the center of the poster.



Step 1: Identify Core Needs

Social Support

Reconnecting with family and building new social circles.

Housing Stability

Finding secure, long-term housing solutions.

Mental Health Support

Managing anxiety and depression effectively.

Employment

Securing stable work and regaining financial independence.



Meet Chrissy Martinez

Background

36-year-old New Yorker, distant from family, facing job instability and social disconnection.

Strengths

Creative, two years sober, seeking stability and connection.

Challenges

Temporary housing, unemployment, anxiety and depression management.



Step 2: Map Available Resources

1

Health

Identify local clinics and support groups for mental health and sobriety.

2

Employment

List job training programs and networking events in the community.

3

Housing

Map out shelters and transitional housing options.

4

Social

Locate peer-led groups and faith-based communities for connection.



Step 3: Identify Barriers and Gaps

“What might make it difficult for Chrissy to access this resource? What workarounds or alternative solutions could help?”

1

Recognize Barriers

Identify potential obstacles like transportation issues or waitlists.

2

Mark on Map

Use colored sticky notes to highlight barriers next to resources.

3

Brainstorm Solutions

Discuss workarounds and alternative solutions for each barrier.





Step 4: Highlight Strengths

Identify personal strengths that could aid in accessing these resources. Mark these strengths on the map, connecting them to resources to visualize how personal assets can bolster recovery steps.



Let's share our Community Connection Maps!

Reflection Questions:

- “What surprised you about this process?”
- “What gaps emerged, and how could you creatively fill them?”
- “How can this map guide recovery conversations with real participants?”



Reflection and Takeaways

Community Connection Maps can become living documents, evolving with the recovery journey.

