Community Mapping Guide

Conducting community mapping within the
ACCESS Open Minds framework of youth mental health care

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This guide outlines the objectives for community mapping within the ACCESS Open Minds framework, and provides youth mental health sites with a variety of methods in which Community Mapping might be conducted. The guide is written so as to lead site teams in discussion through the community mapping process. Throughout the guide, Action Items are noted to prompt teams through the process. A Community Mapping Worksheet, summarizing these Actions Items, can be found at the end of this guide, and can function as a tool for youth mental health sites wishing to identify existing capacities and strengths, as well as any gaps in resources that might hinder the provision of service to young people in distress. In going through this process, sites are participating in a crucial step of service transformation upon which the ACCESS Open Minds framework of youth mental health care is built.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY MAPPING

What is community mapping?
Community mapping is a process that allows the people or groups who are providing a youth mental health service (for example, a community health centre) to assess the existing services in their community that help and support youth and their well-being, as well as what services are needed. Knowing what is available in a community – and making connections between what is available – is an important step in providing the best care to young people in distress, as well as to their family members and carers.

Growing evidence supports the utility of community mapping as a method of better understanding a community, and identifying these assets and resources for the purposes of positive transformation. Resources such as the Community Tool Box, developed out of the University of Kansas, provides an online resource

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for teams who want to "build healthier communities and bring about social change;" this tool has been accessed more than 2 million times from 200 countries (Fawcett et al., 2013), and the most frequently viewed content is the section on identifying community assets and resources (Holt et al., 2013).

It is important to note that community mapping is not just the creation of an inventory of services and assets – it is more than just another resource list. It is an engaging process for all participants that can work to bring different partners together and unite them in a common goal, and produce something together which can ultimately support youth in having better access to mental health care sooner.

How does community mapping support the ACCESS Open Minds framework?

The process of community mapping is congruent with one of the core tenets of the ACCESS Open Minds framework, specifically an emphasis on the inherent importance of local cultural, socioeconomic, and historical circumstances and strengths that make up a community. This process also supports the 5 objectives of the ACCESS Open Minds project, namely: early identification, rapid and engaging access to care, continuity of care, youth and family member/carer engagement, and appropriate care:

The following 6 identified objectives of community mapping link to the ACCESS Open Minds objectives:

1. Identify and strengthen relationships with individuals and institutions that come into contact with youth in need of mental health care

The first objective of the ACCESS Open Minds project is to identify youth in need of mental health support sooner. By strengthening connections and relationships with individuals and institutions that come into contact with youth on a regular basis (e.g. teachers, schools, coaches, group home workers, etc.), mental health service providers can target these people and groups for outreach and early identification activities. Identifying these assets also works to engage community members in participating in supporting the mental health of their community's youth.

2. Identification of mental health services to increase awareness and collaboration with existing service providers

Creating an inventory of local mental health service and service providers will make it easier for youth in need and their family members/carers to be informed of options for help-seeking and services. An inventory might include formal and/or institutional mental health services, as well as community mental health and/or other types of support services (e.g. youth employment services, drop-in centres, YMCA, etc.). This inventory can also promote help-seeking, as youth will be more likely to experience the feeling that they have come to the right place in seeking support – or at least the person they are consulting knows what is available in the community. Relationship building between service providers is important, as youth will experience their care as more personalized when service providers know each other (or, at least, know of each other).

3. Identification of mental health services to allow ACCESS Open Minds sites to assist youth and family members/carers in accessing suitable services and resources

ACCESS Open Minds teams meet with youth, and families and carers, to provide an initial assessment of needs, and if appropriate, help to navigate the access of appropriate mental health care services. In order to best perform this task, the ACCESS Open Minds team needs this inventory of local youth mental health care services – including relevant details, such as hours of operation, referral needs, contact person, etc. This inventory also acts as a list of important community partners, which can work to ensure continuity of care and reduce wait times.

4. Identification of non-stigmatizing, community-based resources that support youth's general well-being

As noted above, it is important to consider all organizations that support youth mental health, not only formal mental health resources. Community places and organizations that support youth well-being

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might include local sports facilities (e.g. open gym, arena), YMCA/Boys and Girls Club, places of worship, food banks and kitchens, youth employment agencies, youth volunteer organizations – the places where youth receive support are really quite numerous. ACCESS Open Minds teams should be mindful of where the youth in their communities are spending time, as such organizations would be useful targets for outreach, and can be helpful when working with youth in developing individualized plans of care.

5. Identification of mental health services to ensure appropriate services/referrals and to promote links between services

Mapping current services creates an opportunity to provide young people with a customized approach to care, where they are recognized as individual people rather than just being labeled as having a "disorder." This personalized approach can be useful, as different services or combinations of services may support individual people in diverse ways. Mapping available services might highlight current gaps in service delivery, and can allow for links to be made between existing services – all with the aim of providing integrated services that feel less disjointed for the youth and their family members and carers.

6. Identification of service requirements based on local needs and contexts

An aspect of a community's strength comes from its people, and the ACCESS Open Minds framework of providing youth mental health care celebrates the unique nature of all communities. Community mapping provides a setting for outlining each site's specific context, taking into consideration the community's cultural, socioeconomic, political, and historical realities. In mapping the existing services for youth – mental health and otherwise – each site team might evaluate whether these existing services and resources are aligned with local values and beliefs, and meet the needs of the community's youth and family members and carers. This process might also highlight gaps in the community's capacity to respond to a wide range of mental health problems in a way that is deemed appropriate to the communi-

ty, and assess whether these services are considered youth-friendly.

GETTING STARTED

Who should participate in community mapping?
Community mapping can be used as a process to start engaging, or continue to engage, the participation of youth from the community and their family members and carers in all aspects of service transformation. This engagement includes their involvement from individual-level plans of care to organizational-level structural change, and everything in between. The importance of youth and family member/carer involvement lies in the essential voice that they can provide; by engaging in the community mapping process, their experiences and perspectives are crucial in highlighting community assets, as well as what is missing.

Within the ACCESS Open Minds framework of service transformation, a site team is composed of as many different stakeholders as needed, with specific emphasis on the involvement of youth from the community, along with family members and carers. In the process of community mapping, site teams should also work to seek and incorporate the perspectives of individuals from each of the following groups:

> Youth

> Family members/carers

> Service providers

  • Broadly defined as anyone who provides a service to youth and family member/carers, including but not limited to medical professionals; allied health and other helping professionals; peer engagement/support specialists; partners from education, judicial, child welfare/youth protection systems; etc.

> Community organizations and their representatives

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> Elders and other interested community members

> Decision and policy makers

It is important to note that some people might experience varying levels of comfort to participate openly in the community mapping process depending on who is present. For instance, if service providers are present (especially service providers who might provide a direct service to youth and family members/ carers), those youth and/or family members/carers may not feel comfortable in fully contributing. Site teams are encouraged to recognize this possibility, and to address this matter if appropriate or applicable so that all partners and stakeholders have a safe space that facilitates open and honest dialogue, in which everyone is able to provide their feedback in comfort.

ACTION ITEM #1:
Create a site team with multi-stakeholder representation and invite their participation
in the community mapping process

Review and prioritize objectives
Of the 6 objectives outlined above, decide as a team which objective(s) is/are the most important given your local context, and discuss why this is the case. The team might identify other objectives that are not listed, and include them in a list of objectives for engaging in the process of Community Mapping.

ACTION ITEM #2:
As a team, decide on which objective(s) your community mapping efforts will focus

Which resources to map?

Geographic area
Establishing a geographic region in the community mapping process is useful to identify the extent of the area being mapped, and to help identify which services and resources will be targeted in follow-up efforts, for example, in delivering early identification activities or in building or strengthening partnerships with other organizations. In some communities, these boundaries might be set by virtue of physical geography, for example in remote communities. Other communities might choose to set their boundaries based on the region and/or territory served by their organization. Regardless of the chosen geographical area, it is important to also include external partners that might play a role in meeting the mental health care needs of youth in the community, for example provincial or territorial partners providing specialized care, or specialized tertiary/quaternary health care provided outside the regional boundary.

Type of services to be mapped
As outlined above, community mapping identifies existing mental health services, as well as other services in a community that support youth well being. By including all services, the community mapping process allows a site team to leverage a community's resources and strengths; in essence, everyone involved bands together to support the well-being of the community's youth. As the site team begins the community mapping process, it is helpful to identify targets for outreach activities that will act as the first audience of early identification activities provided by the ACCESS Open Minds team. Some examples of these targets include school guidance counsellors, after-school programmes, community centres, organizations that provide specific services (e.g. community food and clothing banks); child welfare/child and family services/youth protection agencies, youth sports clubs, etc.

Site teams are encouraged to consider the services

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that are formally meeting the mental health care needs of youth (e.g. hospitals, health clinics), both publicly and privately, as well as any specialized or alternative mental health community resources. Some examples of these services might include psychiatrists, mental health professionals, peer support workers, art and/or drama therapy.

In addition to the physical resources available in a community, consideration should also be given the online resources available to youth and accessed by youth in a community. These supports might be found through online forums, social media, smartphone applications, and other online resources, as well as telephone support lines such as Kids Help Phone and local suicide support and/or crisis lines. A thorough community mapping process will include these "virtual" resources, ensuring input from the community's youth, so as to reflect the ways in which youth seek support in – and outside of – their community.

ACTION ITEM #3:
Define a geographical area that your community mapping will include, keeping in mind virtual support resources

Methods of conducting community mapping

Building on strengths and existing work
As the site team prepares to carry out the community mapping process, considering the following questions might help to guide what format the community mapping process will take:

› What type of community mapping work has already been completed in the community, or is ongoing?

› What are the strengths of the community?

› How much time does the site team have to conduct and complete the community mapping process?

› Who will be participating in the process, and what are their strengths and limitations (e.g. work and school schedules, levels of literacy, etc.)?

1. **Artistic forms of expression**: Youth perspectives can be elicited and collected through artistic forms of expression such as photography, poetry, painting/mixed media, spoken word and rap, song, dance, etc. Skinner & Masuda (2013) collaborated with a community-based drop-in youth art centre, specifically in collecting youth perspectives on health threats, as well as barriers that limited their mobility within and outside of their neighbourhoods. Partnerships, such as mentoring relationships between youth and local artists and/ or program staff, can foster personal growth in any given artistic form, and can help youth/youth groups to create, showcase, and interpret their artistic products/performances to support sharing knowledge and mobilize action. Artistic forms of expression can also provide space for qualitative analysis, and a multi-faceted narrative description of and experience of community.

2. **Using digital software**: The Community Tool Box identifies geographic information system (GIS) software as a valuable tool for graphical representation of an area's assets and/or weaknesses. This type of spatial mapping can help to identify where in the community specific resources are located, allowing for the identification of where transformation efforts should be concentrated. Additional layers can be added to the spatial mapping, given the local context and needs, to further explore the layout of the community. For instance, this tool can be used to incorporate local sociocultural elements or population characteristics within an area of focus, which might affect the use of assets (i.e. resources). Other examples of additional layers might include languages, income and education levels, and rates of involvement with the criminal and/or justice systems. See the Community Tool Box website for additional information on using GIS software.

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3. **Using flip charts**: Beginning with a blank piece of paper, some markers, and sticky notes can be an effective starting point in mapping a community's assets and needs. Using this strategy, Ensign & Gittelsohn (1998) conducted a community mapping exercise with homeless youth, in which participants were asked to map common hangout and/or meeting spots, both safe and unsafe, as well as locations where they would access health care. The resulting map helped to identify these spaces, as well as which resources were being accessed by youth, and why (or why not) they were being used.

4. **Using a physical map**: In contrast to starting with a blank piece of paper, starting with a map of the community and/or defined geographic area can facilitate the process of community mapping, as well as in the collection of geographic data, particularly when working with populations that use many languages, as well as younger participants. Having the physical space as a part of the community mapping process can be experienced as a more inclusive method to sharing ideas and feedback about a community.

5. **Creation of a survey**: Obtaining information directly from community members – particularly in their own words – is a valuable method of community mapping. Described as a participatory action research tool, Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005) performed community mapping by working with youth to develop questions that would prompt respondents to provide their experiences with health services using words and images. They included youth in the data analysis process, as well; graphics and text were transformed into categories that defined health service attributes that were deemed important to youth. This project resulted in the development of a health service evaluation survey. In transforming or creating a youth mental health hub within the ACCESS Open Minds framework, sites are encouraged to create surveys to evaluate youth's needs and desires, notably including the community's youth throughout the process so as to reflect their unique languages, realities, and situations.

6. **Creation of a zine**: A zine is a self-published booklet with a specific focus or on a particular topic, made with the purpose of expressing personal ideas and experiences. It can take on various formats, including textual narratives, mixed media/artwork, captioned photographs (related to the photovoice methodology, described below). The youth participating in Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005)'s study were also encouraged to qualify their experiences with health service through the media of their choice, with the aim of telling their stories and conveying their personal lived experiences.

7. **Focus groups or in-depth interviews**: In the transformation of a youth mental health service, there are many individuals and groups who would be able to provide insightful information about community, including service providers, community members, and youth and family members/carers who have received a service, or have unsuccessfully attempted to access services. Discussions can be facilitated to describe different community resources, as well as experiences of participation in these services. Saito (2006) provides an example of categorizing and analysing community resources through focus groups, as well as qualifying reason for (or barriers to) participation.

8. **Photovoice methodology**: Increasingly popular with younger populations, photovoice methodology involves participants taking pictures of a subject at hand, along with captions, to provide both visual and verbal responses to posed questions. In the process of community mapping, any number of questions might be posed to a photovoice participant, such as "Where/what/who in your community supports you when you are in distress?" or even as general as "What story does this photo tell about health and well-being in our community?" (Mmari et al., 2014). Often this type of project includes the instruction of the participants on art of photography/basic photography skills and tenets of composition.

9. **Podcasts**: A podcast is a digital audio recording, made available online for mass consumption, of-

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ten recorded in a series about a specific topic/with a specific focus, and with various instalments. One way of learning about a community and mapping its assets and resources is to create podcasts or audio recordings of community experiences. As a multi-media project, some youth might find this method more accessible than larger-group activ-ities. It can also be a method for youth to engage with their community in a different or novel way, and it might be considered an appropriate form of community mapping for younger groups.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Answer the questions posed at the beginning of this section. Considering your community and site team's strengths and needs, which method(s) will be used in your community mapping process, and why?

When reviewing the methods of community mapping, consider your community and your site's strengths, as well as what sort of existing work has been done to map community services. The following table provides a comparison of the different methods of community mapping:

	This method of community mapping will:			Characteristics of this method		
	Provide an inventory of services and community assets	Strengthen collaboration with relevant services and partners	Incorporate community input	Technological expertise	Appropriate for adolescents/ youth	Requires travel within the community
Artistic forms of expression	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Community Mapping using digital software	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Using flip charts	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Using a physical map	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Creation of a survey	✓	✓	✓			
Creation of a zine	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Focus groups or in-depth interviews	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Photovoice methodology	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Podcasts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Potential products of community mapping

What comes out of a site team's community mapping process will depend on the way that the community mapping was carried out, who was involved, what sort of resources and expertise was available to support the team, and what sort of community mapping already existed and/or was previously available. A site team should consider **who** or **what group(s)** might be potential users of the information gathered during the community mapping process, as it might influence both the methods chosen, as well as the finished products.

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These individuals/groups might include:

Possible user	Intended use of the community mapping output
Site team	Engage in early identification activities
Youth and/or family members/carers	Identify appropriate help-seeking portals and services
ACCESS Open Minds youth mental health team	Support youth and/or family members/carers in better navigating the youth mental health care system, and accessing appropriate care
Other service providers/ community organizations	Supporting youth and/or family members/carers in accessing community services and resources that supports their health and well-being

The following are suggestions of what might come of the community mapping process.

1. Community event(s):
Events can bring all stakeholders together, showcase community resources, and facilitate information sharing between service providers and service users. Site teams can tailor such events to their local community wants and needs, as well as what type of information will be shared and who will be invited/ present. An event might be based in the community mapping process, or might be embedded within another community event.

2. Distribute physical maps:
Site teams might choose to create a geographical map, using the information gathered through the community mapping graphic design, using youth-friendly graphic design, to distribute to youth, family members/carers, and service providers who might make use of the information gathered. The format of the map would be based on the community's needs, as well as the overall volume of services and/or components the site team wishes to include in the map. This map could include details of the available services (e.g. hours of operation, transportation) considered important by the site team. Site teams should consider implicating youth in both map creation and dissemination in an effort to increase participation in youth programs (Saito, 2006).

3. Online portal:
Some sites might consider creating an online presence for their youth mental health service, both

to advertise the services and to make the scope of services known to youth, family members/carers, and other service providers in the community. Such a tool can also be useful to share information gathered through the community mapping process. An online presence might take the form of a website and/or social media presence, and a variety of media might be included, such as annual reports, video and audio clips, maps and photographs – the site team will likely have plenty of ideas about how they would want to share their information, and given the temporality of an online presence, it is malleable over time.

4. Report:
If a site team chose to create a survey and gather information from community members, an appropriate product of their community mapping process would be a compilation of these survey results. In disseminating a report, site teams might help to identify actionable items required for service providers to provide a more youth-friendly service (Amsden & VanWynsberghe, 2005). Youth who might potentially use the services of the youth mental health site might use a report to decide whether they will access services, and/or whether they deem the site's services as meeting their needs. Reports can be produced in both hard copy, and posted online for wider dissemination.

5. Showcase of artistic products and performances:
When the community mapping process produces the creative output of community members, put on a show! Having youth participate alongside other stakeholders in presenting their artistic products

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(e.g. photovoice exhibits, spoken word slams, artistic endeavours, etc.) also acts to bring various partners together, and encourages youth ownership of the project of making a youth mental health initiative their own in their community.

6. Video:
As both a way of documentation/record-keeping throughout the process of community mapping, as well as a way to present the outcome, site teams might want to record their process in a video and present it to their stakeholders, or post it online, at the end.

ACTION ITEM #5:

Considering the site team's desired outcomes of the community mapping process, what format will your team choose to present the final product? Who is your audience?

Community mapping: an ongoing process
People come and go, and communities change – because of this, the process of community mapping is never done! Community mapping is an ongoing process that site teams will want to update, revise, and revisit periodically as the community evolves and services continue to transform.

A key objective of the community mapping process is that the products of the process are usable by youth, family members/carers, community partners, and the site team members at the youth mental health site. To best assess whether your community mapping process was useful to community members and partners, develop a method of evaluating whether the information that was gathered is being used, and if so, how it is being used, by whom, and to what extent. Much like a continuous feedback loop, this information will foster further community mapping efforts, and will help to improve service transformation and provision at the youth mental health site.

ACTION ITEM #6:

Evaluate the effectiveness of your community mapping process, and plan to revisit the process on a regular basis

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For more details about ACCESS Open Minds, visit www.accessopenminds.ca

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COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHEET

ACTION ITEM #1: Create a site team with multi-stakeholder representation and invite their participation in the community mapping process

Who will participate in the community mapping process at your site? List everyone involved:

❯ Site lead: _____

❯ Youth(s): _____

❯ Family member/carer(s): _____

❯ Community members: _____

❯ Service provider(s): _____

❯ Other: _____

What plans has your team made to ensure that all voices are heard, in the case that some stakeholder groups are not represented?

❯

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ACTION ITEM #2: As a team, decide on which objective(s) your community mapping efforts will focus

Which community mapping objectives are the most important to your team, and why?

❭

❭

❭

Are there any other objectives not listed that would be important to consider when conducting community mapping at your site?

❭

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ACTION ITEM #3:   Define a geographical area that your community mapping will include, keeping in mind virtual support resources

What is the geographical region that will be mapped?

❭

Are there any other forms of resources other than physical portals of entry that are pertinent in your community? (e.g. online mental health resources)?

❭

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ACTION ITEM #4: Considering your community and site team's strengths and needs, which method(s) will be used in your community mapping process, and why?

What type of community mapping work has already been completed in the community, or is ongoing?

〉

What are the strengths of the community?

〉

Who will be participating in the process, and what are their strengths and limitations (e.g. work and school schedules, levels of literacy, etc.)?

〉

Which method(s) will your site team use for community mapping?

Method:_____

Reasoning:

〉

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Method:_____

Reasoning:

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ACTION ITEM #5:   Considering the site team's desired outcomes of the community mapping process, what format(s) will your team choose to present the final product? Who is your audience?

Format:_____

Reasoning:

❭

❭

❭

Format:_____

Reasoning:

❭

❭

❭

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ACTION ITEM #6: Evaluate the effectiveness of your community mapping process, and plan to revisit the process on a regular basis

What process have you put in place to ensure that community mapping is revisited on a regular basis?

❭

❭

Are the products of the community mapping process being used by the target audience?

Possible user	Yes	No
Site team		
Youth and/or family members/carers		
ACCESS Open Minds youth mental health team		
Other service providers/community organizations		

Describe any other ways that the product of the community mapping process is being used:

❭

❭