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Children and Opioids in State Courts Project:

Lessons Learned in
Targeted Resource Mapping





The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges® (NCJFCJ) provides cutting-edge training, wide-ranging technical assistance, and research to help the nation's courts, judges, and staff in their important work. Since its founding in 1937 by a group of judges dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the nation's juvenile courts, the NCJFCJ has pursued a mission to improve courts and systems practice and raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of many of our nation's children and families.

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Introduction and Background

In 2019, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) received funding support from the State Justice Institute (SJI) to work with juvenile and family courts across the country to address the effects of opioid use disorders (OUDs) and other substance use disorders (SUDs) on children and families. The Children and Opioids in State Courts Project, a training and technical assistance project, provided national training on OUDs and other SUDs based on dedicated resource mapping along a SUD continuum of care tailored to site stakeholder groups.

The NCJFCJ selected 15 judicially-led site stakeholder groups to facilitate a process for targeted community mapping to build a substance use continuum of care, which includes identifying a range of local interventions and services around: prevention, treatment/intervention, harm reduction, reducing death and overdose, and recovery.

The NCJFCJ's targeted resource mapping process helped the stakeholder groups:

- Map services that are currently available along a substance use continuum of care from prevention services through residential treatment;
- Consider developing interventions that may be viewed as controversial (e.g., needle exchanges);
- Develop a local resource directory that can be disseminated and used across systems; and
- Develop a sustainability plan to update the resource directory on an annual basis.

NCJFCJ staff collected key lessons learned throughout the facilitated mapping process so that future work can be improved upon.

This report includes lessons learned based on the challenges experienced and solutions used by the stakeholder groups during the targeted mapping process. The NCJFCJ considers the lessons learned throughout the project

Download and read the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit – Mapping Resources along a Continuum of Services to Address Substance Use Disorders – for more guidance on targeted resource mapping in your community.

as recommendations for future stakeholder groups to follow when conducting targeted resource mapping around a continuum of care that can effectively address OUDs and other SUDs. Many of the lessons learned discussed below provided guidance for the structure of the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit.

Key Lessons to Leveraging a Multi-Disciplinary Team

Determine a Starting Point

The NCJFCJ found that a majority of the stakeholder groups already

had some type of resource directories in place in some form or another. Unfortunately, many of the existing resources were outdated, created in silos, or were individual-dependent. For example, some jurisdictions had several isolated, agency-specific directories around different types of resources such as behavioral health or other specialized resources. In addition, a significant amount of the information resided in the minds of the judges, community stakeholders, or other professionals, rather than being organized in a formal resource directory.

To leverage the multi-disciplinary stakeholder group, it was crucial to explore existing resource directories and integrate that knowledge into the targeted resource mapping, which helped to eliminate the need to start over from scratch. Leveraging a multi-disciplinary team also increased information sharing. The NCJFCJ found that many of the stakeholder groups were surprised to learn about existing resources that were known to some stakeholders but not others. Using a multi-disciplinary team to conduct targeted resource mapping is an opportunity to learn about the resources in the community.

The NCJFCJ suggests bringing together a multi-disciplinary team in your community to accompany the guidance outlined in **Step 1: Build a Targeted Resource Mapping Team**, as outlined in the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit.

Key Lessons to Developing a Targeted Resource Map



Map Existing Resources to Build New Pathways

As stated above, most of the stakeholder groups had some form of resource directory or institutional knowledge to start with. However, very few of the existing resource directories included the full continuum of services developed by the NCJFCJ for this project, which includes prevention, treatment/intervention, harm reduction, reducing death and overdose, and recovery. Moreover, even fewer of the existing resources contained all of the detailed sub-categories in each of the major resource areas that can lead to a comprehensive continuum of care.

Because there is an added layer of detail to targeted resource mapping, the stakeholder groups first had to become familiar with these concepts. The NCJFCJ found that some of the discussions were not without controversy. For example, duplication and separation of resource categories was a reoccurring concern, especially in the area of harm reduction and reducing death and overdose. Thus, reducing death and overdose can be considered a harm reduction approach. The NCJFCJ found that further defining these terms on a local level was important so that the targeted mapping process met each sites stakeholder groups' needs.

In addition, prevention is normally outside the purview of courts; however, including such pre-intervention services like education and other community programs provided valuable information related to diverting youth and families away from the system if they were not in need of deeper system support.

Change Environments to Increase Flexibility

Conducting targeted resource mapping during the current health crisis lent itself to additional lessons learned around flexibility and adaptability. Judges, court staff, child welfare workers, as well as OUDs and other SUDs service providers moved to remote work in early 2020, due to the worldwide pandemic. The telehealth field expanded and created new challenges and solutions. For example, community twelve-step meetings and other support groups went virtual, which greatly affected access due to the difficulty in finding accurate information on how to access those meetings and services

online. However, over time, individuals and agencies adapted to the online, remote world, which led to increased attendance and access. The NCJFCJ determined that stakeholder groups found value in adding telehealth and other virtual services to directories as an option even after social distancing restrictions were removed.

Encourage Equity to Decrease Disparities

Every community has unique demographics and cultural needs. The NCJFCJ found that these discussions should occur during the mapping process so that stakeholder groups are aware of issues related to access to services as well as disparities in overrepresentation in the courts. In most cases, the stakeholder groups raised concerns regarding ensuring that culturally responsive services were identified. For example, one stakeholder group had a resource that was dedicated to transgender and gender-expansive youth. This is a prime example of a targeted resources directory that can be integrated into a larger community-wide resource directory. The NCJFCJ found the need to expand the targeted resource mapping categories and sub-categories around cultural responsiveness. Specifically, the NCJFCJ added the following to proactively address equity in the community:

- Demographic considerations,
- Identify service delivery disparities, and
- Specific services for marginalized populations.

In addition, the NCJFCJ found that approaching the mapping process with flexibility allowed stakeholder teams to better identify other ancillary services that are not directly related to OUDs and other SUDs (e.g., domestic violence, transportation, homelessness, housing, legal representation, and other sub-categories).

The NCJFCJ notes the importance of examining the continuum of services to address OUDs and other SUDs to accompany the guidance outlined in **Step 2: Develop a Targeted Resource Map**, as outlined in the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit.

Key Lessons to Finalizing a Resource Directory

Reach Consensus to Improve Efficiency

The NCJFCJ identified several challenges that had to be addressed prior to finalizing a formal resource directory that would ultimately benefit the communities and all the stakeholders at the table. These challenges included:

- **Integration and Ownership** – The stakeholder groups had to come to consensus around integrating agency-specific directories into one main resource directory. This was made more difficult because agencies or individuals had a stake in maintaining existing directories. Coming to consensus on the front end will ensure that all stakeholders understand the purpose and goal behind targeted resource mapping.
- **Public versus Private Service Options** – In some cases, services were strictly contracted options for the county and courts through the child welfare department and were not accessible to direct public use. In most cases, the stakeholder groups had to consider accessible service and intervention options, which included payment scales, private insurance conditions, and public assistance options. Stakeholder groups should have this discussion as they map resources in their community, which will ensure that youth and families being referred for service delivery will not be surprised by requirements for services.
- **Location of Directories** – The stakeholder groups had to reach consensus regarding where to house comprehensive resources directories. These decisions included discussions around the end user. It is important to consider several different approaches that could be used – printed hard copies, online resources, and other applications that increase accessibility and flexibility.

The NCJFCJ recommends using the resource directory template to codify a comprehensive directory of OUDs and other SUDs resources along a continuum of care to accompany the guidance outlined in **Step 3: Develop the Resource Directory**, as outlined in the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit.

Key Lessons in Identifying and Targeting Service Gaps



Reduce Gaps in Service Delivery through Targeted Mapping

All of the stakeholder groups identified gaps in services and resources, which is to be expected. For example, many groups faced shortages of adolescent-based treatment and psychiatrists for children. Others had little or no local residential facilities for youth or housing and treatment programs to keep families together. No amount of mapping and improvement in resource directories could overcome this reality. However, identifying these gaps can help courts and the communities make decisions about how to fill those gaps or make decisions about whether or not those gaps need to be filled.

In addition, the NCJFCJ found that simply identifying services and resources through mapping did not fully capture the need in communities as it relates to effective service delivery. In most cases, the stakeholder groups identified several challenges in service delivery itself, for example accessibility issues (e.g., transportation, language barriers, etc.). Gaps in service delivery presented themselves in different ways, for example:

Rural or Smaller Communities:

- Used smaller resource directories, which were easier to develop because the services and resources were well-known;
- Relied on larger metropolitan areas for major programs and services; and
- Took advantage of the close-knit ties in the community to ameliorate service delivery challenges (e.g., transportation issues and access).

Larger Metropolitan Areas:

- Took advantage of a plethora of resources commonly available in larger communities;
- Struggled nevertheless to fully understand the service and resource options available in their community; and
- Navigated challenges related to larger catchment areas that included suburbs to ensure that effective service delivery occurred.

Stakeholder groups should consider the strengths of their communities to help them make decisions about gaps in services. Given the findings above, rural or smaller communities have different strengths that should be leveraged in service delivery. The same reasoning applies to larger metropolitan areas.

The NCJFCJ suggests that stakeholder groups fully understand how to make decision about gaps in services to accompany the guidance outlined in **Step 4: Identify and Target Service Gaps**, as outlined in the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit.

Key Lessons in Using and Sustaining Resource Directories

Invest in Technology

NCJFCJ staff worked with a stakeholder group that collaborated with a major technology company in a process of finalizing an app-based resource directory. This collaboration was fruitful, especially considering that the stakeholder group was developing a statewide resource. This may be aspirational for many communities; however, the NCJFCJ found that this investment supported many of the recommendations that found themselves in the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit. Investing in technology takes significant financial and governmental resources to be able to sustain end-user resource directories that provide access to local, regional, and statewide services. This technology can lead to increased access and reduced barriers in addition to utilizing comprehensive networking and coordination to better serve children and families.

In addition to this lesson learned, the NCJFCJ recommends following the guidance outlined in **Step 5: Using and Sustaining Your Resource Directory**, as outlined in the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit, to consider fully the ways communities will use and sustain resource directories.

Final Thoughts on Lessons Learned

NCJFCJ staff found that creating buy-in and ownership is critical to targeted resource mapping. Judges, stakeholders, and local and state entities all have a stake in providing viable, accurate, and accessible resources for families and children. The NCJFCJ concluded that local and state government officials would also be helpful stakeholders to have at the table or at least in support of the project. Therefore, it is important to engage political and local leadership in targeted resource mapping.

The NCJFCJ recommends using the Targeted Resource Mapping Toolkit – Mapping Resource to address a continuum of services needed to address OUDs and SUDs. The NCJFCJ suggests bringing together a multi-disciplinary team to conduct resource mapping in your community to build a continuum of local interventions and services around prevention, treatment/intervention, harm reduction, reducing death/overdose, and recovery to better serve children and families impacted by OUDs and SUDs.



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