

Inclusive Early Childhood Services System Project: Institutional Mapping as a Tool for Early Childhood Professionals

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Objective

To develop a professional development tool for resource consultants and early childhood professionals.

Method

We reviewed the Interview 1 data of the IECSS project to create preliminary maps for each participant, then reviewed the literature and applied the following approaches to mapping that were consistent with our technique. We interviewed resource consultants as secondary informants within two communities in our study in order to better understand their role within the early childhood education and intervention system and the usefulness of the mapping technique as a professional tool.

The larger IECSS project is an Institutional Ethnography of families' interactions with the early childhood intervention and care system. *Institutional mapping* brings visibility to the power texts have on how an institution operates and how that influences people's lives (Turner, 2006 and Campbell & Gregor, 2004). Resource consultants identified 2 types of documentation they typically ask families to complete in order to gain access to service.

Approaches to Mapping

- *Eco-mapping* can be used to better understand a person's relationship with their environment. It highlights a person's interactions with the larger social system and uses different shapes, colours and linear linkages to indicate different types of interactions (Baumgartner et al., 2012). Our technique used diamonds, squares and circles to indicate the agency. Program and personal levels of interaction in the system.
- *Journey mapping* is used to display an individual's experience through their lens and each journey is unique. In the IECSS project we developed 67 individual maps for each participant. The sequence of chronological events are unique for each participant (Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015).
- *Community mapping* involves mapping the available services within the community (geographical space) that a person could potentially access and mapping the services that the family has already accessed (Brooks et al., 2013). Our maps use information from Interview 1 and Interview 2 to show all the services a family has accessed or were on a wait list for, often spanning across geographic areas.

Discussion

- Using mapping as a tool can help professionals to see a system's level viewpoint from the experience of families and how they interact with the system.
- The family lens of the system can help identify institutional patterns of need within the system instead of at the individual level.
- Mapping contextualizes the family experience so that professionals may identify alternative ways to support families.

Recommendations for Professionals

Using mapping as a tool can reduce duplication of documentation with a pictorial representation of a families' experience with multiple systems. The map can also highlight interactions with the service system that may be overlooked in a standard documentation that is generated by the system. This approach supports a family-centered approach which can support professionals to be more responsive to families' needs, aside from what the system dictates.

References

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