



WASHBURN
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LAW

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Assessing Community Resources and Needs for More Effective Legal Services

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Assessing Community Resources and Needs

- Why spend time assessing communities?
 - To make connections between non-legal and legal needs in the community;
 - To better understand community resources, needs & conditions;
 - To create a plan for Washburn Legal Clinic (WLC) to most efficiently reach those with pressing legal needs;
 - To plan for longer-term legal services delivery;
 - To create referral pathways so that non-legal needs of residents can be met;
 - To engage the community and its resources as a whole in order to adequately provide representation.



Assessing Community Resources and Needs

- Methods of assessing communities?
 - Asset Mapping
 - Eyes and Ears
 - Community-based groups/grass roots models



Asset Mapping

- “Asset Mapping” began in the community development field
 - Strategy of looking for resources in communities that can help to advance those communities
 - Focus on assets that already exist to help determine gaps



Asset Mapping

Traditionally, 6 categories of community assets*:

1. Physical Assets
2. Economic Assets
3. Stories
4. Local Residents
5. Local Associations
6. Local Institutions

*AmeriCorps Vista, <https://www.vistacampus.gov/what-asset-mapping>



Washburn SB&NT Clinic

- **Community Assessment Process:**
 1. Identify Communities – create geographic focus
 2. In-Person Survey
 3. Community Asset Strata
 4. Analysis - Conditions and Opportunities Chart
 5. Strategies



Identify Communities

- Research:
 - boundary descriptions
 - past and current demographic and economic trends in the area
 - organizations, agencies, businesses
 - transit
 - home ownership v. rental
 - food and retail resources
 - parks or other green spaces
 - places of worship
 - community highlights or landmarks
 - recent issues or efforts in the area



In-Person Survey

- Identify individuals in community to discover their ideas about resources, needs & opportunities
 - Schedule appointments to interview nonprofit executives, retail owners, community leaders, police, etc.
- Surveyors (clinic students) have a prepared survey to help collect information



Information Strata

- **Primary Tier**
 - Resources and capacities located inside the community and largely under community control. Can be individuals or entities.
- **Secondary Tier**
 - Resources located inside the community, but largely controlled by outsiders.
- **Outside Tier**
 - Resources originating outside the community and controlled by outsiders.



Analysis – Conditions and Opportunities Chart

- Once the survey is completed a table of conditions and opportunities should be created for relevant categories, such as:
 - Physical development patterns and access
 - Neighborhood revitalization
 - Economic development



From Assessment to Action: Conditions and Opportunities Chart

Problems	Opportunities	Strategies/Action Steps	Benchmarks	Partners



Other Assessment Methods

- Eyes and Ears
 - Keep alert to determine needs, identify constituencies, and recognize resources in community
 - Pro: Opportunity to make clinic a resource
 - Con: Too haphazard – risk that community needs will go unnoticed. Also reactive instead of proactive.



Other Assessment Methods

- JUMP (Justice Unity Ministry Project) and DART (Direct Action and Research Training)
 - <http://thedartcenter.org/category/topeka-jump/>
 - Large coalition of smaller community groups
 - Small group members meet to brainstorm and compile list (“What keeps you up at night?”)
 - Leaders meet with small groups and look for overlaps/commonalities in concerns to identify slate of potential issues.
 - Full membership of large coalition meets to discuss and rank slate of potential issues.
 - Results are tallied and people are designated to perform various tasks.



Other Assessment Methods

- Community-based groups/grass roots models
- JUMP (Justice Unity Ministry Project) used this method to:
 - Get Topeka Public Schools to hire an education specialist to close the achievement gap.
 - Obtain funding for an employment specialist for people living with mental health issues.
 - Address lack of low cost housing, which resulted in an affordable housing trust fund.
 - Persuade the City to create a public bus route from low income areas to job areas.



Break-Out Groups

- Use Conditions and Opportunities Chart to identify and assess issue in your home community
- How might this be used in your clinic practice?