

The Connectedness Map

The Connectedness Map is a technique used to clarify the connections or lack of connections of a child by showing family members and others connected to a child. Caseworkers view the Connectedness Map as less intrusive than mobility mapping. Using the Connectedness Map may help the child avoid recalling traumatic events from the past that may surface during mobility mapping. The Connectedness Map activity allows the caseworker to discover not only the family members to whom the child feels connected, but also other people important to the child.

This is an activity that can be done with children and adults in phases over a course of days, weeks and months. People can be added to the map as new connections are formed or the child remembers additional people.

Prior to completing the Connectedness Map, explain to the child the purpose of the activity:

- To find connections that could be involved in the child's life,
- To find connections that can help in planning for the child's future, and
- To reconnect with connections that may have been lost or faded.

Explain this will not be the only opportunity to do this exercise; the child can add to the map in the future and there may be an opportunity to ask relatives or other adults to add to the map.

Strategies for engaging the child:

- Be mindful of the child's developmental stage,
- Allow the child to take the lead,
- Work with the child at their convenience and in a safe place,
- Encourage caregiver's involvement only if the child feels comfortable with their participation,
- Keep a sense of humor,
- Be flexible and patient,
- Respect individuality, and
- Understand that a genuine rapport with a child takes place over time

Materials Needed: An assortment of markers, including a RED marker, poster size paper, tape, and a private space that ensures the child feels safe and can share information without concern of others overhearing. It is preferred the Connectedness Map be done in the child's home.

Instructions:

1. Tape paper on the wall or lay it on a large table.
2. Split the paper into 4 rows with 2 columns (see sample at end of instructions).
3. Place the child's information in the center; you could use a photo, write the child's name, or have the child draw a self-portrait.
4. Ask the child to think of all the people (living or deceased) they feel connected with; include family members, friends, foster parents, mentors, teachers, coaches, pastors, neighbors and others.

If the child is having difficulty identifying people they are connected to, ask probing questions, such as:

- How big is your family?
 - Who do you miss?
 - Who is important to you?
 - Who believes in you?
 - Who pays attention to you?
 - With whom have you shared holidays or special occasions?
 - Who looked out for you?
 - Is there anyone that is deceased that you want to make sure is on the map?
5. Place individuals who are of similar age as the child on the same level as the child, older people above the child, and younger people below to show different generations. Peers and professionals are placed in the bottom row of the map.
 6. Next to each shape, write the person's name and age (if known). Use a square to represent males and a circle to represent females.
 7. Once the child has identified everyone they want on the map, have the child draw lines, using a colored marker other than red, from him/herself to the person(s) that the child loves. Once the child has drawn the lines to those people, ask the child to draw lines using a **RED** marker from the person(s) who they believe loves them to themselves in the center.
 - Draw dotted lines between a person and the child with whom there is an established formal or genetic connection, such as a foster parent or relative, but with whom the child does not feel a connection with or has a conflicted relationship.

Once the map is complete, which could be over a series of meetings, give the child the final map. Prior to giving the map to the child, make a copy and save it in eWiSACWIS or take a picture and scan the image into eWiSACWIS.

Biological Connections

Non-Biological Connections

Grandparents
Generation

Parents
Generation

Child's
Generation

Peers and
Professionals

