**Self-Advocacy Activity: Community Resource Mapping Transcript**

**Introduction:** Welcome to our activity on Community Resource Mapping. Community involvement is an important part of adulthood. Community resource mapping is a self-advocacy activity that helps students with disabilities become more aware of the resources available in their communities. By identifying these resources, and learning how to access them, students are able to decide what community supports and activities are most important to them as they transition out of high school and into adulthood. In this video, we will explore what community resource mapping looks like, how you can facilitate student participation, and the benefits of community resource mapping.

**Community Resource Maps:** Let’s first explore the features of community resource maps. Community resource maps are—

* Resource-based: They highlight services and resources that students can access.
* Community-specific: Maps focus on what is available in the local community and individualized: Each student makes their own community resource map based on their specific preferences, interests, strengths, and support needs.
* Resources can be disability-specific, like Vocational Rehabilitation office; or something that anyone in the community can use, like the local library.

**Community Resource Maps:** In order to support students in creating their own community resource maps, consider using the following steps:

(Note: Information in parenthesis is NOT included on the slide; it’s only read-aloud)

* Define what geographic area will be covered in the map (First, help students determine how large of an area they are able to access through transportation that is available to them where they live. For example, does everything need to be walking distance, is there access to public transportation, do they drive?)
* Select the types of resources you want to identify (Support students to determine community resources that reflect their interests and needs.)
* Collect information on community resources (It’s recommended to gather information by looking up information online or asking for information over the phone, then visiting in person.)
* and Create a community resource map (Once information is gathered, students can be creative in how they would like to compile their community resource maps. Students can create anything from a basic list, to a spreadsheet, to visual representations using actual maps, whichever way they prefer to organize their community resources).

**Working Collaboratively:** To begin the activity of community resource mapping with your students, group them based on their post high-school transition interests and goals. This will allow them to collaborate with each other. For example, if you have a group of students who are interested in learning more about local postsecondary education opportunities, focus on supporting them in gathering information on universities, colleges, and community colleges nearby. For a group of students interested in learning more about employment options, support them in gathering information about their local Vocational Rehabilitation and American Job Center offices.

**Resource Categories:**

[B-Roll video footage begins playing. Video cuts to young male speaking with microphone. Video cuts to young male washing dishes at employment. Video cuts to small group of people playing Uno. Video cuts to young male cooking with an adult.]

Considering their interests and potential needs for adulthood will help students create a plan for what types of resources to include in their community resource map. Let’s take a look at the resource categories that can potentially be on students’ community resource maps. These categories include—

* Advocacy and Disability Rights
* Employment
* Family Support
* Independent Living
* Postsecondary Education
* and Recreation

**Now, let’s explore each resource category:**

• **Advocacy and disability rights** resources provide information about organizations and services that support people with disabilities to participate more fully in the community. A few examples of advocacy and disability rights organizations that can be included on community maps include the Arc of Tennessee, STEP, and Tennessee Disability Coalition. A helpful resource to use for locating advocacy and disability rights organizations in your community is Tennessee Disability Pathfinder.

• **Employment resources** assist students in exploring careers and finding employment in the community. Students might include organizations that provide resources on employment like Vocational Rehabilitation, the American Job Center, or Benefits to Work Program. It might also be helpful to contact your local Chamber of Commerce for a list of local businesses for students to learn about and include on their community resource map.

• **Family support resources** offer families with supports and goods for living healthy, happy, and safely in the community. These supports might include emergency housing, food, domestic violence assistance, clothing, and health care. On their community resource map, students can include organizations and agencies that provide family support, like the YMCA or YWCA, Goodwill, or the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

• **Independent living resources** provide assistance with finding appropriate housing and supports for students to live on their own. These supports include housing agencies, in-home assistance programs, and transportation associations such as the United Way, Tennessee Respite Coalition, the area Center for Independent Living (CIL) and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

• **Postsecondary education resources** assist students in continuing their education after high school. These resources include local four-year colleges or universities, colleges of applied technology, community colleges, inclusive higher education programs, and vocational training programs. Each of these institutions will have an on-campus office specifically dedicated to disability services and accommodations.

• Finally, **recreation resources** assist students in structuring their free time by identifying leisure activities in the community in which they may be interested in participating. Recreation resources may include libraries, gyms, parks and recreation centers, community workshops or classes, social clubs, and volunteer organizations.

**Organizing Resource Information:** Once students have gathered information about community resources, the next step is to organize the information into one place. There is not one correct way to create a community resource map, and final products can be in different formats. Provide students with formatting options so they can choose a design that is meaningful to them. This promotes student autonomy and engagement.

**Common Map Formats:** While there is no wrong way to create a resource map, let’s explore a few common formats:

* maps: A literal take on creating a community resource map is labeling resources on an actual, geographic map of a community. Maps can be created physically or electronically. Students can label a printed map or use a software program to drop pins on a virtual map.
* lists: Information on community resources can also be organized in a list, table, or spreadsheet. Students can use categories like agency name, program summary, address, and contact information.
* or abstract formats: This format allows students to think creatively!

Abstract community resource maps could potentially include—

* picture collages
* videos
* or PowerPoint presentations

To access helpful templates for community resource maps, check out our supplemental materials.

**Choosing Which Map to Use:** Here are a few things to consider when helping students decide which format they want to use to create their community maps:

* When students want to include information on community resources that don’t have a physical location, such as an online resource, it might be hard to use a literal map. In this case, suggest using a list, or an abstract format.
* Also, if a student decides to use a map, Google Maps has a great tool called My Maps that can help easily label and keep track of contact information for local resources.
* Or, for students with visual impairments, encourage them to use an abstract format. For example, students could compile recordings from community visits to create an audio story of available community resources.

**Contacting Resources:** As students begin to compile resources for their community resource maps, encourage them to contact, or visit these places with their families. This will help students become more familiar with each resource on their list, as well as gathering the most up-to-date information. For example, if a student is interested in getting a job after high school, then it would greatly benefit that student to contact or visit their local Vocational Rehabilitation office to learn more about the process for enrolling in services. Keep in mind, the students might be visiting some of the community locations on field trips.  By collaborating with the classroom teacher, you will avoid duplicating any services or tips. Next, we will hear from Erin, a special education teacher, who will describe how she has used community resource maps with her students.

**[Video of Erin Maves, Educational Consultant begins playing]**

“Community resourcing mapping is systematic way to list and investigate all of the resources that are available to families in the community.”

[Text on screen reads: Community Resource Mapping is a tool for self-advocacy]

“There’s lots of different ways to do a community resource map. I think a good way to start is to just get a lot of people together who have a lot of connections in the community. If a district has a Transition Advisory Board, that’s a great group to use because generally that has educators and community leaders already on that board, so they’re going to be familiar with the different resources that are available. It’s important for them to investigate the agencies, not just to look online and say “oh well this says that serve people who need advocacy help.” But to really call, talk to somebody there, get a contact name, so when the student needs the contact they’re not just calling the agency and getting whoever answers the phone. They’ll have a contact name and their information. And you’ll know that you’re putting down the correct information for that student.”

[Text on screen reads: Personalizing a Community Resource Map]

“I’ve seen community maps done on like a spreadsheet. That’s my preferred way for making a giant community map. But then when you boil it down to the student, I think it’s more important to personalize it. If you just hand them that giant booklet, it’s going to do nothing for them. So, to use something that’s going to be more personalized for them. Whether it’s a print-out map. Um I’ve seen a great program where students use Google My Maps because then that’s available on their phones, so they have it with them at all times. They can add pertinent information. They can add photos—if they want a picture of the front of a building. And then they can also use that for transportation because using Google My Maps you just click on it and you can get walking directions, you can get Uber, you can um see what bus you’re supposed to take or train. So that’s a really nice link that you want to start where you’ve really boiled it down the student level.

You can also do them as a video format if a student is more visually stimulated, I guess, or if they learn better visually you can do it through a video where they can learn the map that way. There’s a million ways to do it as long as it’s something that works for the students and it works on their areas of strength for learning, that’s the way to do it. Self-advocates become more independent and self-sufficient when they’re able to do things on their own—that’s the ‘self’ part of it. So, if they have their community resource map, then they can kind of in a way cut out the middle man. They can look up what they need, they can find the things that they need, and they’re able to go out and do them mostly on themselves. That doesn’t come without practice. This is something that hopefully their teachers worked with them throughout high school—throughout middle school would be great—but definitely throughout high school and so they’re able to go out and do things on their own and know what their needs are and then, then most importantly, how to have those needs met in their community.”

**Tool for Self-Advocacy** As Erin shared with us, community resource maps are an essential tool for self-advocacy in that they assist students in deciding what they want their lives to look like after high school—by choosing what activities they would like to participate in, and identifying what supports they would need to be successful as they transition into adulthood.

**Leadership Opportunities** When completing self-advocacy activities, it is important to provide students with multiple opportunities to take on leadership roles. This will help them to build confidence with problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. When building their community resource maps, students can practice their leadership skills by calling agencies and organizations and gathering information about the services they offer.

Another leadership opportunity might also be to pair a student who has completed their resource map with a student who is just beginning theirs and lives in the same community or shares some of the same needs. Allow the student with the completed map to guide their peer through the process of completing the map. This will give students experience with collaborating and problem-solving with others with a common goal in mind. Schedule some time to regularly meet with the student so that they can self-reflect on what leadership skills they have demonstrated and if they are in need of any coaching or support.

**Conclusion:** We hope you enjoyed this activity on Community Resource Mapping. Discover additional activities and supplemental materials found in our self-advocacy course.