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# **Introduction**

The Engaging Community and Youth Supports toolkit and workbook are meant to be used by district, school, and community leaders to identify needed supports for adolescents and then develop action plans through collaborative discussion and by collecting lessons regarding processes, challenges, and successes using the guides included in the toolkit. Use this workbook in concert with the Engaging Community Supports toolkit slide deck. This workbook contains corresponding worksheets and materials for toolkit activities and additional resources for qualitative data collection, including sample outlines of interview and focus group protocols. These resources are designed to be customized and modified by the user to suit the work being carried out in specific contexts.

# **Module 1: Setting the Stage**

## Activity 1. Adolescent Vignettes

***Goals***

In this activity, participants will

* Think deeply about the challenges that adolescents (e.g., those of middle and high school age) face in a variety of scenarios.
* Begin to think about the various resources and supports those adolescents need as they face different scenarios.
* Understand the important roles of the community and the school district working together to support each adolescent in the school and community.

***Instructions***

Participants will work in small groups to read one of the vignettes and respond to the follow-up discussion questions. If there are more groups than vignettes, an individual vignette can be assigned to more than one group. Vignettes represent scenarios that might happen in your school and community. The characteristics of the students in the vignettes and details of the scenario vary across vignettes. User can modify these vignettes to reflect their own scenarios.

***Vignettes***

**Vignette 1****: Imez.** Imez is a 17-year-old male. His mother is Puerto Rican, and his father is African American. He lives with his parents and younger sister. Imez is in the fall semester of his junior year at the local high school and has a grade point average of 3.8. He has high hopes for attending the college of his choice. He is active in the National Honors Society, is on the academic decathlon team, and is active in a summer chemistry classes for advanced credit at the local community college. Imez expressed to his friends that he is really concerned about paying for college and hopes all his hard work gives him a chance to get a scholarship to help pay for tuition and not stress out his parents. He seems puzzled by the scholarship requirements, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and the overall financial aid process and mentioned that his family cannot help him because the forms are in English, and his family members are not English speakers, nor did they graduate from high school.

**Vignette 2: Jessica.** Jessica enjoys fine arts and has a lot of good friends from her art club. She has been super excited about a summer trip to New York City to check out New York University and visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As a sophomore, Jessica is not yet fully committed to college going, but she has been saving up for the trip to not stress out her mom. Recently, Jessica found out she is pregnant. After a fight with her mom, Jessica has been couch-surfing at friends’ houses and is feeling increasingly depressed and without options.

**Vignette 3: Michael.**Michael is a 16-year-old junior in high school. He finds himself behind in credits after failing several classes in his sophomore year. This summer, he started working 25 hours per week at the neighborhood convenience store to help his family. When he is not at work, he takes care of his younger siblings. Because he is so busy, he does not have time to catch up at school and feels discouraged about being behind on credits. Even though he would like to graduate, he is starting to think that dropping out and working full time is his best option.

**Vignette 4: Peter.** Peter is a freshman who loves computers, technology, and gaming. His love for tech really distracts him from schoolwork, and he has a hard time concentrating on assignments. Peter also has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). His parents have high expectations and encourages him to stick with his academics. Peter feels a lot of pressure to live up the high expectations of his parents. His grades are not horrible, but his teachers report him distracting other students by acting like the “class clown” and resisting opportunities to volunteer or join clubs for extra credit. His teachers struggle to engage Peter or get him to stay focused and to complete his work.

**Vignette 5: Rose.** Rose just moved to the area after her father was incarcerated in another state. She is living with her aunt and doesn’t see her mother because of conflicts with her mother’s new boyfriend. Prior to the move, she was excelling in culinary classes at her school. She used to love to cook for her siblings who are now living with extended family, but now she feels disconnected and lonely. Since the move, Rose has tried to help her aunt and uncle with their two children, but she feels like an outsider. In school, Rose finds herself behind in her classes. In art class, she paints a broken heart and explains that it represents how much she misses her brother and sister. During a conversation with her school counselor, Rose tries to use her sleeves to hide her arms because she has self-inflicted wounds. School counseling is not enough for Rose because she knows she needs much intensive help.

**Activity Steps**

1. Separate into smaller groups either by table or in online breakout rooms.
2. Individuals read the student vignette assigned to their small group.
3. Small groups should discuss the questions below (and on slide 7 of the slide deck) and record highlights of their discussion.
   1. What are the obvious and less obvious needs and issues?
   2. What community or district resources might they access?
   3. What barriers might this student come across in accessing resources?
   4. What resources might be tapped locally or do not exist in your community?
   5. What process can the school undertake to help the student get the support they need?
4. Share out with the larger group the content of the vignette and highlights from the small-group work.
5. What were the major issues in your vignette?
6. What are the actions to be taken in priority order?
7. How can school and community coordinate and share resources to help solve this student’s problem(s)?
8. Once all groups have shared, the facilitator(s) will lead the full group in a discussion using the prompts on slide 9. Take detailed notes on responses. The notes will be used to introduce the next activity.
9. [Facilitator read aloud] Reflecting on the vignette activity, discuss the following questions about adolescents in your community:
   1. For adolescents **not connected** to the school or district, or **weakly connected**,where do they go for support and services?
   2. Are some adolescents **better positioned** to access resources and services? If so, which students are better positioned? Why might this be?
   3. Are there adolescents who **lack ready access** to supports? Why might this be?
   4. Where are **existing intersections** between community resources and schools or the school district?
   5. Where do **resources exist** within schools that are not being used? Where are adolescents going for support or resources instead? Why might this be?

# **Module 2: Community Resources Charts**

## Activity 2. Community Resources Brainstorm

#### Goals

In this activity, participants will

* Identify and discuss the different groups of high school age adolescents in their community.
* Prioritize subgroups of adolescents to focus on for data collection and analysis.
* Identify existing resources and supports plus gaps in resources to support the prioritized adolescent groups and needs.

#### Activity Instructions

This activity requires both small-group work and large-group sharing and reflection. To prepare for this activity, each small group should have a copy of the Community Resources Template (Chart 2B), and the facilitator should have a copy of the Community Resources Brainstorming handout (Chart 2A). Activity 2A is intended to be implemented after the vignette activity, so participants are already thinking about the different adolescents in the community. Begin by discussing and ranking the priority of addressing the needs of different subgroups. The highest ranked subgroups will be your starting point to discuss the first round of data collection, analysis, and action planning. This process should be repeated until all adolescent groups have been addressed.

##### Activity Steps

1. As a large group, brainstorm all the different groups of high school age adolescents living in your community.
2. For each group identified, prioritize addressing the needs of each group from low to high. There will be multiple groups in each category. The highest ranked groups will be the groups of focus for the first round of data collection and action planning.
3. In small groups, complete the Community Resources Charts. Include one subgroup of high-priority adolescents for each small group.
4. Each small group will share with the larger group what they recorded on their chart.
5. Once all groups have shared, the facilitator will lead the full group in reflecting on the following questions:
   1. Where are there common needs or resources between charts?
   2. What resources exist that might be strengthened to better serve youth in the community? *Indicate the student groups this applies to.*
   3. What needs are largely not being met currently in the community or district? *Indicate the student groups this applies to.*
   4. Where do issues of access and availability occur in accessing currently existing resources? *Indicate the student groups this applies to.*

#### 2A. Community Resources Brainstorming: Identifying and Prioritizing Groups of Adolescents

Use the following table to document the subgroups of adolescents in your community. Be as specific as possible in describing the adolescent groups. Discuss as a full group which priority category each subgroup represents (high, medium, low).

| Adolescent group description | Priority (high, medium, low) |
| --- | --- |
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#### 2B. Community Resources Template

Use one Community Resources Template for each group of adolescents in the high-priority areas from the Activity 2A chart. Complete the entire chart for each group of adolescents in small teams.

| Column A. Adolescent group profiles | Column B. Possible needs or challenges | Column C. Resources available in the community | Column D. Resource gaps |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | Gaps |
| Barriers |

# **Module 3: Checking Your Assumptions**

## Activity 3. Data Collection

#### Goals

In this activity, participants will

* develop actionable questions that will guide data collection activities,
* develop an understanding of which data collection approaches are appropriate for what kinds of research questions, and
* create an action plan for data collection and analysis.

#### Instructions

This activity builds on the progress made in Modules 1 and 2, where groups of adolescents were identified and gaps in knowledge about the experiences and needs of those adolescents were determined. In this module, use the discussion guides and the data collection table to develop a plan for collecting lessons regarding processes, challenges, and successes. These activities can be done as a large group or in the smaller groups from Module 2 focused on individual groups of adolescents. The module begins by asking the full group to reflect on their discussion points and decisions made in Module 2. Then the group moves to defining a research plan and determining a timeline for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

##### Activity Steps

1. In small groups, participants will review their Community Resources Chart and discuss any changes or additions they would like to make.
2. After small groups have had a chance to reflect on their Community Resources Chart, the facilitator will review the discussion notes and decisions from Module 2 and will ask the full group to reflect on the following questions:
   1. Do the points from your discussion still seem to hold true?
   2. Do you have any additional thoughts to add?
3. The facilitator will review “The whys of data and data collection.”

*Steps 4–10 can be done as a large group or in individual small groups, focused on one subgroup of adolescents and the related pressing questions that will guide the research agenda.*

1. Review the Community Resources Charts. Identify where there are ready data sources to verify the areas you’ve identified in each column. Where are you missing a verifiable source for the areas in each column?
2. The facilitator should ask each group to reflect on the following questions:
   1. Are the assumptions you made in the chart, correct?
   2. Could there be other resources that youth turn to that you haven’t captured?
   3. Do you have an accurate reflection of the barriers and challenges these adolescents face?
   4. Would talking to youth and the people who support them give you a better understanding?
3. Once groups have reflected on the data questions, they will complete the first column in their New Data Collection chart: “Questions.”
4. The facilitator will review the different methodological approaches and considerations.
5. Groups will complete the second column in their New Data Collection Chart.
6. The facilitator will review the guiding questions for developing a sample population. Groups will discuss and complete the third column. The facilitator should encourage groups to be as specific as possible when identifying their sample population.
7. Groups will then develop a plan for data collection, identifying what tasks will be carried out, by whom, and within what timeline.

| Questions | Data collection approach | Target sample population | Preliminary data collection tasks (who is responsible and timeline) | Data collection (who is responsible and timeline) | Data analysis and summary (who is responsible and timeline) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
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**Chart 3A. New Data Collection**

# **Module 4: Bringing It All Together**

## Activity 4. Action Plan

#### Instructions

This module provides a discussion guide for sharing and interpreting the information collected and beginning to develop an action plan to address resource gaps.

##### Activity Steps

1. Small groups will use the information they collected to reflect on the original assumptions made in their Community Resources Charts. The facilitator will ask them to reflect on the following:
   1. What have you learned?
   2. What was surprising?
   3. What assumptions were verified? Which were challenged?
2. Each small group will share their findings and reflections from their research.
3. The facilitator will guide a full-group discussion using the following questions:
   1. What surprised you the most about the findings?
   2. What questions did the findings raise for you?
   3. Where are areas for improvement in resources that might be more easily approachable?
   4. Are any resources not being leveraged appropriately?
   5. Are there priority areas for improvement that strike you given each group’s findings?
4. The facilitator will ask the large group to use the following discussion questions to identify a plan for action.
   1. Given your findings, what needs have you identified to improve resources for all youth? Record these action steps in alignment with the adolescent subgroups.
   2. Discuss any associated tasks to improve resources or develop new resources. Assign specific tasks and timelines.

What other audiences might find the information you gathered useful? How might you share it?