



# Journey Mapping and Access of Opportunity Youth to the City and County Services



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## Description

The description of case management in clinical practice is highly variable which impedes quality analysis, policy, and planning. Case management makes a unique contribution towards the integration of health care, social services, and other sector services and supports for opportunity youth. There are multiple components and variations of case management depending on the context and client population. This study of case managers, contracted by The Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) and Workforce Development Aging and Community Services (WDACS), utilizes a journey mapping strategy in order to identify the experience of opportunity youth (OY) across the Los Angeles City and County youth centers.

Case management, also known as care coordination, is a complex integrated approach to providing supportive and referral services to OY across public systems in Los Angeles County. Effective case management depends on clearly designed and linked service and referral systems. The journey mapping conducted by the CSU5 Reconnecting Los Angeles Youth (ReLAY) Institute, which is headquartered at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), will shed light on challenges that youth encounter in the use of public systems.

In the 1960s, case management emerged in response to the de-institutionalization of large numbers of people with severe mental health conditions who required referral to outpatient health and other community services. During the 1970s and 80s, the increasing cost of health care and decentralization of health services expanded the role of case managers. Since the 1990s, case management has played a central role in managing and coordinating services for populations in need.

Case management tasks are now performed by people from various disciplines and are intended for individuals with different problems in diverse contexts and communities. These multiple interdependent and interacting parameters produce variability in the practice of case management. Furthermore, quality analysis, policy, and planning are all impeded by the lack of a common language for case management and care coordination.

There are multiple parameters that influence case management. Case management operates in very different service sectors (health, social, correctional, work/vocational, veterans, legal sectors), in different settings (public sector, private and non-government organizations) and with different community and support resources (high and low resource settings). Its presence in diverse contexts demonstrates the importance of case management in the horizontal integration of care across health services, social services and other sectors, as well as the vertical integration across primary, community, hospital and tertiary health care services.

## What Is a Process Journey Map?

A process journey map allows us to examine the sequence of actions that opportunity youth experience upon meeting and working with youth centers across the County. By mapping or examining each step, we can explain and visualize each part of the process. Symbols in various shapes denote different types of steps. Ovals represent starting points and endpoints, rectangles describe actions, inverted triangles indicate waiting, and diamonds refer to decision points. Symbols are linked by lines and arrows to reflect interactions and the direction of the process flow. This journey mapping process was funded by the City of Los Angeles in 2021.

Our journey mapping had two components: first, interaction with the youth, and second, what happens behind the scenes. This allowed us to identify commonalities in practices on both ends as well as find anomalies and differences in practice. These differences can be explained due to the type of clientele, unique neighborhood and regional challenges, and differences and scope and resources of the youth centers. We asked staff at the youth centers to outline the steps they take both before and after onboarding youth.

We identified and utilized the following items for the design of the journey mapping:

1. Service blueprint: A service blueprint is a diagram that visualizes the relationships between different service components — people, props (physical or digital evidence), and processes — that are directly tied to touchpoints in a specific customer journey.
2. OY Actions: Steps, choices, activities, and interactions that customer (OY) performs while interacting with a service to reach a particular goal.
3. Frontstage actions: Actions that occur directly in view of the customer (OY). These actions can be human-to-human or human-to-computer actions.
4. Backstage actions: Steps and activities that occur behind the scenes to support onstage happenings.
5. Processes: Internal steps and interactions that support the employees in delivering the service.
6. Line of interaction: The line of interaction depicts the direct interactions between the customer and the organization.
7. Line of visibility: The line of visibility separates all service activities that are visible to the customer from those that are not visible. Everything frontstage (visible) appears above this line, while everything backstage (not visible) appears below this line.
8. Line of internal interaction: The line of internal interaction separates contact employees from those who do not directly support interactions with customers/users.

The following instructions and questions were posed to every case manager across the five City and five County sites. In some cases, we spoke with two or three case managers at once.

**Instructions:** Please respond to these questions as they relate to workforce education, access and training at your site. We are utilizing the journey mapping method in order to identify a user’s end-to-end experience as they access and move through processes and services.

1. How does an Opportunity Youth (OY) get to your location (via bus, private vehicle, ridesharing, etc.)?
2. Please describe the typical OY journey in seeking services (step-by-step).
3. How do you assess skills for an OY? Do they know what they want when arriving to your location?
4. Does an OY arrive with digital skills?
5. Do OY have digital access outside of workforce training sites?
6. What challenges does an OY face?

## Understanding the Status Quo for Process Improvements

Understanding vulnerabilities and limitations in the current workflow provides a solid foundation for potential interventions and innovations. Most validated improvement models begin with an understanding of the current status. Process maps allow us to uncover non-value-added activities and pinpoint bottlenecks in service delivery. A process cannot be managed and improved if it is not first measured. Understanding the status quo with process maps allows for better baseline data collection and analysis.

## Common Practices & Barriers Across Youth Centers

The pandemic has exacerbated previous barriers and created new challenges for the youth who access various centers and receive services as well as the case managers who serve them.

### 1. TRANSPORTATION & TECHNOLOGY

Many youth arrive to centers through rides from family members or friends, as well as through the utilization of public transit and ride-sharing platforms. Due to the pandemic, many of these transportation options are unreliable or limited and disadvantage youth attempting to reach centers and job sites.

Many centers, such as Antelope Valley America’s Job Center of California (AJCC), site long transit times to worksites as additional hurdles in their interactions with youth. Lack of timely and reliable transportation is needed to support youth success in the job force. A possible remedy is a shuttle service similar to the one operated by LA County Office of Education (LACOE).

Some internship and job sites have utilized Zoom and/or alternative digital platforms for youth during the pandemic, which has alleviated the burden of finding transportation. However, this access is predicated on the availability of the internet and a computer, as well as a safe space to work. Many OY do not have reliable access to these necessities to perform their work successfully because many worksites lack computer terminals and youth do not always have access to the internet or a computer at home. Many youth rely on access to computers at youth centers, which in turn means they are once again reliant on lack of suitable transportation.

Another challenge for centers is the long commute and lack of suitable transportation for staff, sometimes to simply offer services. For example, many case managers must personally deliver checks to youth who cannot commute to worksites, which cuts into time serving other youth. This finding exposes the limitations of the transit system, particularly the availability of reliable means of travel.

## 2. CAREER & EDUCATION PATHWAYS

### **Internships**

Internships are a great way of engaging youth with new work opportunities. However, several barriers are in place that make internships less available and successful.

The Antelope Valley school district requires two permits to begin an internship, a process which takes 3-6 weeks and requires a school counselor. In summer, only one counselor is available, further complicating the permit process and lowering the odds of full youth participation (around 50). This is all compounded by homelessness, which, for Antelope Valley, is as urgent issue.

Another barrier is the fact that internships through the school district are limited to 100-120 hours. This dissuades many employers who are concerned that youth will simply leave when the hours are completed, even if training or projects are not complete. As part of the 100-120 hours, youth centers allocate resources to prepare youth for basic skills, such as proper etiquette. This preparation is necessary, but should not cut into the internship hours, which are already limited. Case managers suggest extending the limit of hours for internships to allow for this training and to encourage more employers to offer internships.

### **Employment**

Many OY come to youth centers seeking employment help. However, before case managers can engage with youth seeking employment, youth need to register on the Hire LA platform. This is a barrier for OY who need more hands-on support.

### **Education**

The County provides AJCCs with scholarships that youth can use to go to college. Unfortunately, many youths do not understand how to enroll in colleges or universities. Case managers suggest better integration with higher educational institutions, focusing primarily on available services to support college counseling.

### 3. EXCESSIVE DOCUMENTATION & DUPLICATIVE PROCESSES

One serious challenge expressed by case managers at all centers is excessive paperwork and duplicative processes that siphon time away from contact time with youth. Most public agencies find the volume of paperwork and processes challenging. However, there are some suggestions that may help streamline processes moving forward:

#### Excess Forms

Paperwork is a huge barrier, mostly coming from public funds, and often includes forms such as a safety checklist. For many staff, this checklist is especially vexing, as safety-related questions could make them liable. Case managers suggest reevaluating the use of such forms.

#### Duplicative Processes

Another complaint was the inconsistency of official documentation. In other words, not only is the volume of paperwork high, but documents vary depending on the source. For example, center staff must personally complete every LA Performance Partnership Pilot (LA P3) applications for youth, the City, and the County. Each entity uses its own application document and procedure, which is unnecessarily duplicative and adds another layer to an already complicated process. Case managers recommend a centralized process where the application need only be filed out once and disseminated to the appropriate agencies.

#### CASAS Process

In regards to youth currently in school, respondents suggest utilizing schools for registering youth and searching within a 20-mile radius for qualified participants. The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) process is time consuming, but if the youth are coming from schools, Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) Counselors do that. This would allow case managers to focus on the population of youth that are not in school.

#### Centralized Data Tracking

Center staff collect data in binders for LA P3. However, these binders go to no one, rendering the exercise mostly futile outside of proper bookkeeping. Case managers suggest the use of an online platform to track data, recommend improvements and establish best practices. The data can be divided by zip code, allowing other agencies to have access so they can make better decisions and check for duplications to ensure youth are not being overenrolled at multiple locations.

### 4. CONTACT TIME & STAFF SHORTAGES

The pandemic has created additional barriers for access, leaving case managers to help youth complete paperwork, often for necessary services. Case managers can sometimes use Zoom to fill out paperwork, which does help speed up the process. However, case managers are also required to upload “activation logs,” and are given a short deadline to finish the process. If the logs are late, the system dings the case manager on performance, distracting them from more essential tasks such as contact time with youth.

Various sites mentioned that digitally filling out paperwork takes important time away from directly serving youth. Since foster, probation, and other agencies have their own platforms, the volume of necessary paperwork is a major time sink for most staff. Referrals also take a great deal of time. If County departments would handle referrals, sites would face fewer issues.

Staffing shortages also hamper youth outreach efforts, as well as attempts at client follow-up. One site suggested lack of resources by explaining it this way: the site has four case managers who serve 400 youth in addition to following up with existing clients. Overall, they work with 900 participants. The focus should not be on quantity, but quality of services. Los Angeles County also has youth coming from other states, posing new challenges.

One main challenge with justice-involved youth is the need for more contact time if they disappear quickly. This poses a challenge because of heavy casework load, etc. Justice-involved youth, if they don't get immediate benefit from any program, will simply walk away.

## **5. COMMUNICATION**

The pandemic has expanded the use of digital forms of communication, which is a more successful way of reaching youth compared to more traditional forms of communication, such as email, community boards, and mail. Google text, Snapchat, and Instagram are more useful tools to reach youth. Case managers suggest the City and County create a Snapchat account to access youth communities.

Homeless youth are the most challenging to reach, as their situation is migratory and we often lose contact. Consistency across online platforms, such as Snapchat and Instagram, is key to reaching transitory youth, many of whom will maintain an online presence regardless of their location.

## **6. COORDINATED WRAP AROUND SERVICES**

Access to mental health services for the youth is challenging as well. Youth centers want to services to move beyond a simple referral system towards systemic connections, meaning official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)s and exact identification of people at the mental health facility. Such connections facilitate easier and more frequent follow-up care, while also streamlining the communications systems between agencies. This is particularly challenging for the City youth centers. Each AJCC needs one county office designee for contact and referral of youth (Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), etc.).

The streamlining of communication system between agencies will also aid in fixing the lack of clarity with communication between agencies and centers. For example, at times some DPSS offices tell families on CalWORKs that an internship will terminate their benefits. This is an obvious deterrent, which discourages youth from applying for important services. By encouraging a more direct communication line between agencies, these types of issues can be prevented.



## Unique Challenges & Lessons

### 1. POPULATIONS WITH VARIED NEEDS

Los Angeles County encompasses over 4,000 square miles and is home to nearly 10 million people. Each community faces its own set of challenges and needs. Some areas, such as those in the Hub Cities Consortium (HCC), have a larger number of foster and probation youth. Hub cities include seven cities and two unincorporated areas: Lynwood, South Gate, Huntington Park, Cudahy, Bell Gardens, Maywood, Bell, Florence, Buena Park and Vernon/Florence Firestone. Some sites therefore need more resources.

The size of the city (population) does not reflect the reality of how many people live in the area. Many households double up, meaning more people, more youth and, by extension, the need for more services. For example, on paper, the City of Maywood has a population of 15,000-20,000, but the reality is closer to 30,000 people. In Pico Union, food insecurity is a major issue, and youth parents often need access to formula food and diapers. Many youths in Pico Union are also kicked out of their homes, leaving us scrambling to find emergency housing to accommodate the newly homeless. The prevalence of gangs is another major issue faced by many communities in Los Angeles, limiting safe routes for youth.

### 2. UCLA SITE

The UCLA youth site saw 700-800 youth, only 100 of which were from the Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA:RISE). At the UCLA site, case managers always have youth from South and Central Los Angeles. Agencies serving that area are 12 miles from Central Los Angeles and we are 2.3 miles from Robertson. Youth typically come to the UCLA site before they go downtown. The site has seen increased numbers of youth from South and Central Los Angeles, as well as many from the middle part of the City. Youth utilize services that are convenient for them rather than simply location oriented. Therefore, EWDD and the City of Los Angeles need to collect and access better data from these sites to adjust expectations and outcomes.

### 3. P3 RECOMMENDATIONS

P3 is not high on public agencies radar, and case managers believe they can run it collectively by coalescing their resources in the area. Operational issues are very important, and youth centers need to have a coalition of resources in the region, focused on strong collaboration. Additionally, the case managers noted that the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) is currently not a part of P3 and should be included. Finally, P3 meetings should be actionable items, not just meetings and reporting.

### 4. EWDD RECOMMENDATIONS

Case managers expressed that EWDD needs to improve their procedures, communication, and expectations. That means including providers in the program design process, and letting them know what works and what doesn't. EWDD often creates programming without understanding the procedures or capacity. Involving case managers in the process would help remedy such shortfalls. Part of that is leaving adequate time for communication and planning and not arranging last minute meetings. Major investments must be made in staffing to reduce the burden on individual case managers. In some circumstances, one case manager is responsible for up to 100 youth. It's urgent we reduce such caseloads.

## Areas for Further Study

1. **More Meaningful Work Experience**
  - a. Career Pathways
  - b. Career Assessments
  - c. Permanent Employment
  - d. Employers
  
2. **YouthSource Centers Processes**
  - a. Documentation
  - b. Staffing
  - c. Excessive Case Loads
  - d. Staff Development / Training
  - e. Communication with Partners
  
3. **Comprehensive Wrap Around Services**
  - a. Mental Health Services
  - b. Childcare Services
  - c. Food Insecurity
  - d. Need for Rapid Response System for At-Risk Youth
  
4. **High Barrier Youth**
  - a. Homeless Services
    - i. Housing
    - ii. Housing Services
  - b. Justice Involved Youth
    - i. Increased Training / Collaboration
  
5. **Digital Divide**
  - a. Increased Access to Technology

## References

- Lukersmith, M. S., Millington, M., & Salvador-Carulla, L. (2016). What is case management? A scoping and mapping review. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 16(4),2. <https://ijic.org/articles/10.5334/ijic.2477>

## Abbreviations & Glossary

<b>AJCC</b>	LA County America’s Job Center of California is a network of public and private organizations offering a range of comprehensive employment and training services to the public at no cost.
<b>CalWORKs</b>	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids is a public assistance program operated by county welfare departments that provides services and financial aid to eligible families with children in the home.
<b>CASAS</b>	California Adult Student Assessment Systems provides testing of basic and academic skills for youth and adults, and curriculum tools for instruction.
<b>Case management</b>	Case management, also known as care coordination, is a complex integrated approach to providing supportive and referral services to OY across public systems in Los Angeles County.
<b>CSU5 ReLAY Institute</b>	CSU5 Reconnecting Los Angeles Youth (ReLAY) Institute is a collaboration of public, private and philanthropic agencies from across LA County and serves as an essential resource for those who serve opportunity youth in Los Angeles and the surrounding area.
<b>DCFS</b>	Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services
<b>DMH</b>	Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
<b>DPSS</b>	Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services
<b>EWDD</b>	Economic and Workforce Development Department steers economic development by offering a broad range of programs in business support, employment assistance and youth development
<b>HCC</b>	Hub Cities Consortium is a joint powers agency that provides a wide range of services including employment assistance, job training and workforce development services to job seekers and businesses.
<b>Journey mapping</b>	Journey mapping is a visualization of a process from beginning to end, allowing one to examine the sequence of actions taken and assess the journey for successes and weak points.
<b>LA P3</b>	Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot is collaboration of public and private entities in Los Angeles County with the goal of transforming service delivery systems to improve the education, employment, housing and well-being of disconnected youth in Los Angeles.
<b>LACOE</b>	Los Angeles County Office of Education

<b>ODR</b>	Los Angeles County Office of Diversion and Reentry
<b>OY</b>	Opportunity Youth are youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are <i>disconnected</i> – neither working nor in school; includes youth in foster care, experiencing homelessness, and/or in the juvenile justice system.
<b>PSA</b>	Pupil Services and Attendance counselors serve students in the LAUSD Unified school district by supporting students’ academic, social-emotional, and career development by improving student attendance and engagement.
<b>WDACS</b>	Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services is a comprehensive community resource that provides personal, social, and economic services for residents and businesses.
<b>YSC</b>	YouthSource Centers; EWDD’s 14 youth centers for opportunity youth in underserved neighborhoods, aimed to support youth education and workforce development.