

ECOMAPS

An ecological or ecosystems perspective, in which clients' transactions with environmental systems are taken into account in assessment and intervention, is a hallmark of social work practice (Germain & Gitterman, 1986; Meyer, 1976, 1983; Whittaker, Schinke, & Gilchrist, 1986).

Collaborative use of the Ecomap with clients can dramatically decrease clients' defensiveness. Clients often feel the worker who is using it is making a genuine effort to understand their life circumstances. The use of ecomaps reduces the amount of narrative required to capture a case situation, portraying relationships with extended family, formal systems like schools and public welfare offices, informal friendships networks, and many other relevant factors. It also provides a way of examining each of these factors in the context of the others.

Creating an Eco-Map

An example of an "empty" map is on page 16 of your Case Management for Child Abuse, Neglect & Dependency Guidebook. It includes some of the common systems in the lives of families, while others have been left non-designated to individualize each map for different families.

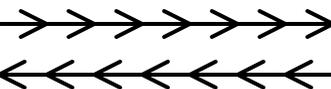
Symbols used on an eco-map include:



Strong Relationship 

Tenuous or Weak Relationship 

Stressful Relationship 

Flow of Energy or Resources 

A completed eco-map is illustrated on page 17 of your Case Management for Child Abuse, Neglect & Dependency Guidebook and includes examples of additional information that can be used on the eco-map.

Once the eco-map has been completed a more holistic picture of the family begins to emerge.

The Protection and Safety Worker should be able to begin to understand:

- What significant resources are available in the family's world;
- What resources or supports are nonexistent or in short supply;
- The nature of the relationships between family and environment (strong, stressed, tenuous, etc.)