

Gap Analysis

What is a gap analysis?

A gap analysis identifies solutions for gaps in victim services and resources. This analysis answers four basic questions about victim services in a community:

- (1) What are the current victim services available in our community?
- (2) What is the ideal set of victim services our community might offer?
- (3) What gaps exist between the current and ideal states of victim services?
- (4) What steps are needed to move from the current state toward the ideal state so that victims' needs can be met more effectively?

A gap analysis may be a standalone activity or part of a broader **community needs assessment**.

How do I plan a gap analysis?

A gap analysis is most effective when multiple community stakeholders are involved in the process. Each stakeholder has one view of community resources based on the nature of their work and who they interact with most frequently. To start a gap analysis, a group must identify a diverse, knowledgeable set of community stakeholders to involve in the process. This planning team can work together to determine the specific goals of the analysis, the data sources to be used, and strategies for interpreting and responding to findings from the analysis.

How do I conduct a gap analysis?

- **The first step in conducting a gap analysis is to identify the specific focus area(s) and envision an ideal response.** This step answers the question: *Where do we want to be?* The planning team should specify what specific resources to focus on. For example, they may be interested in addressing gaps in crisis services for victims of sexual assault, or they may be interested in resources for meeting the mental health needs of victims of any type of crime. At this step, it is useful to develop an “ideal” state of services and resources. This will establish what the stakeholders would like the community to look like when providing effective services to victims.
- **The second step is to collect data to gain a comprehensive, accurate understanding of the current state of victim service resources in the community.** This step answers the question: *Where are we now?* Some potential strategies for identifying sources and

Understanding Gap Analysis



gathering data at this phase include creating a geographic map of relevant community organizations, interviewing other community stakeholders (including victims), and using existing data from community organizations to determine rates of service use. The data should be organized and presented in a clear and understandable manner.

- **The third step is to analyze the current state of the community compared to the ideal state of the community.** This step answers the question: *What is the gap between where we are now and where we want to be?* Stakeholders should discuss and agree about the specific gaps in the community with respect to victim service resources.
- **The fourth step is for stakeholders to work together to identify solutions to the gaps.** This step answers the question: *How do we get there?* This work will result in a plan of action with specific steps to improve the state of victim services in the community. From there, the stakeholders on the planning team can continue to collaborate with each other and with other community leaders and partners to determine which changes are feasible and the strategies that could be used to accomplish them.

Additional Resources

The Center for Victim Research offers **free technical assistance** to victim service providers with research and evaluation questions. No question is too small! Email TA@victimresearch.org for help now.



The Community Tool Box from the University of Kansas offers **useful tools** for assessing local needs and resources, including a **resource** on identifying community resources and assets.



The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition offers a **detailed document** about the community resource mapping process, including tools that can be adapted for use during this process.



The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research provides a **guide** for community asset mapping, which can be a useful step for determining current resources and needs in a gap analysis.

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