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What Is Business Process Mapping?

Business process mapping is the process of creating visual representations, or maps, of a current or future end-to-end business process. A business process map (BPM) is a visualization of a procedure or practice. A BPM can serve as the foundation for aligning policy, procedure, and IT development. This form of documentation illustrates a standard process or procedure, specific action steps and decisions that must occur, who is responsible for each action step and decision, and the order in which steps are completed. BPMs provide an important tool for engaging diverse stakeholders around a common understanding of and language for the ways a system currently functions or how it may function in the future. The mapping process promotes awareness of improvement opportunities and highlights discrepancies in the ways various stakeholders understand and experience a process. Mapping also serves to highlight gaps or inefficiencies in the sequencing of tasks, pinpoint bottlenecks, identify inconsistencies and unsupported decision points, and clarify opportunities to streamline. Once a new process has been finalized, process maps become an important means for communicating expectations to others, making them valuable for training and ongoing quality improvement efforts.

Purpose of Business Process Mapping in the Context of Family First

Process mapping is an informative planning activity for Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) implementation. Mapping enables stakeholders to identify the appropriate end-to-end activities that should be completed to successfully implement key provisions, such as those related to prevention services and others designed to promote family-based placements through reducing the inappropriate use of congregate care (i.e. qualified residential treatment programs [QRTP]).

The following steps should be considered as part of BPM development:

1. Define the purpose. Before initiating process mapping, clearly establish the purpose(s) for which the maps will be used. For instance, will maps be used to determine how a caseworker will develop and submit the child-specific prevention plan, how various data elements will be collected to fulfill child-level reporting, to clarify the continuous quality improvement process, or some other purpose? Often, multiple purposes are served through mapping.

2. Set parameters/boundaries of what will be mapped in terms of: a) process start and end points, b) which “actors” need to be depicted and c) what level of detail is needed.

For example, is the team mapping activities from case opening to closure or a more narrowed set of activities, such as from the point where a child is identified as a *candidate at imminent risk of entering foster care* to when an individual is referred to a service provider? Additionally, in terms of roles involved, will the map depict only the caseworker's activities or other actors as well (e.g., supervisor, family, provider, quality improvement team, etc.)? Maps are often most useful when they capture the greatest degree of detail, as this is how inconsistencies and bottlenecks are identified; however, a flowchart showing only high-level steps can be a useful input to a practice manual or desk guide.

For each FFPSA prevention candidacy subgroup, it may be advisable to develop a map identifying the following activities (see [ACYF-CB-PI-18-09](#) for more detail). These bullets outline key domains associated with implementing the Family First prevention provisions. They are often highly interconnected and are not meant to be mutually exclusive.

- Identification of candidacy –Who is responsible for determining candidacy? How and when is that decision made and documented? For example, how will a caseworker identify and document in the system of record a youth who is either pregnant or parenting?
- Assessment – What informal and formal assessment activities will assist a caseworker in determining imminent risk and identifying the child's and family's strengths and needs?
- Prevention plan development and service matching – How does a caseworker, in tandem with the family, develop the prevention plan and identify appropriate services? How is this documentation captured in the system of record (SACWIS/CCWIS)?
- Individual service referral – What action steps do the caseworker and provider take to complete a service referral?
- Ongoing monitoring and assessment and contact with families– After service linkage has occurred, how should the caseworker continue to support ongoing safety and risk monitoring and case planning for the family?

- Provider service information – How will information be collected from providers (e.g., service costs, service sessions) to support monitoring, federal reporting, claiming and ongoing CQI/evaluation?
- Required changes to prevention plans – When and how should caseworkers update the prevention plan due to changes in risk, candidacy, closure of the service, etc.?
- Prevention services that extend beyond 12 months – How will prevention plans be updated for services that continue longer than the initial 12-month window?

For children or youth who may be placed in a QRTP setting, it may be advisable to develop a map identifying the following activities (see [ACYF-CB-PI-18-07](#) for more detail):

- Level of care determination – How is level of care determined, and what will notify the Qualified Individual to begin the assessment process?
- Qualified Individual (QI) – What steps will the QI take to complete the assessment within 30 days of a child’s placement into a QRTP, and what are the processes for communication and documentation?
- Assessment tool – What information-gathering activities will the QI undertake to complete the assessment tool and other required activities to make a recommendation regarding the most appropriate and least restrictive placement that is able to meet the child’s needs and goals?
- Family, Juvenile or Tribal Court or Court-Appointed Body – How will the agency partner with the court to develop a shared process to complete the required court review within the 60-day timeframe?

- 3. Review relevant resources before a mapping session.** For instance, if a state’s prevention plan has established that families in a voluntary in-home program will be a defined candidate subgroup, be sure to review the policies and procedures for how families are generally served through this program (e.g., how families are typically engaged, formally assessed, etc.).
- 4. Create a draft BPM and a set of questions to guide mapping sessions with system partners.** The facilitator of the mapping sessions should develop a BPM from existing documentation to serve as a foundation for process enhancements. Highlighting areas where the process is unclear and developing a set of guiding questions will support an effective mapping session with partners. Frontline staff and supervisors are critical participants in BPM sessions, and they have the best understanding of the current process, as well as its strengths and shortcomings. As maps are created, reviewing the appendix in this document is helpful to understand the appropriate use of symbols and to consider which types of process maps would best support project goals. For each activity/task box, use an action verb to show what

is happening in each step/task. Make sure to include comments about required inputs and potential challenges for a particular activity.

Guiding questions to be used during a mapping session may include:

- Who is responsible for (or who are the participants in) this step?
- What is the decision or action that takes place at this step?
- What criteria are used to make this decision?
- What is the trigger for this step?
- How is this step documented?
- What is the intended outcome of this step?
- Does this always happen?
- Is there a handoff that is missing in this process?
- Who are the partners (existing and desired) collaborating in this action?
- Is anything missing in between these steps?
- Which of these steps adds the most time to this process?
- What are the key decision points at which change or reform might be proposed?
- What are the necessary resources at each step (workforce and program)?
- Is data collected or shared?
- What additional information should be noted to further clarify this step?

5. Refine the process in real time during the mapping session and afterward by removing extraneous steps that are not mandated by regulation or policy. Often during a mapping session, questions will arise regarding whether certain steps in a process—often signatures or multi-level reviews—are necessary. A review of regulations or a conversation with the legal team can often clarify whether these steps can be removed or combined to streamline a process.

6. Refine the map(s) after the initial meetings as more information is gathered.

Throughout the design and implementation of a new program, process or initiative, BPMs should be refined as the team gathers additional information during mapping sessions or by circulating the draft map(s) for further feedback and confirmation from key partners and stakeholders.

7. Develop different case examples and walk through the BPM to verify that the map takes into account various scenarios. A map should take into account the various permutations of a process. When the team discovers that a BPM does not account for a

particular scenario, this is often a chance to clarify the process for such situations and fix a "broken link" in the process. This may reveal the need for new policy or procedure.

8. **Review and optimize.** Once a map is final, it should be reviewed by the multidisciplinary team of staff, partners and stakeholders to support shared understanding of the current or future process and to further streamline extraneous steps. If the process being depicted is designed to meet new federal, state or local regulations or requirements, the maps should be reviewed to assure they conform to these requirements.

Once maps are completed, they can be used as part of the procedure and policy writing, training and quality improvement processes. BPMs are readymade to be converted into step-by-step procedure, which can then be used to craft agency policy. Written procedures become the basis of training materials and desk aids for staff. BPMs also clarify when and how information is documented to support the development of continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts.

Appendix Business Symbols and Types of Maps

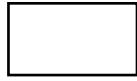
Symbols

During business process mapping, it is critical to use the appropriate symbols, which are recognized as standard practice: circles for the start/end of processes, rectangles for tasks or process steps, diamonds for decision points, and arrows to mark the process direction flow. Only one arrow should come out of each process or task box – if there are two or more arrows coming out of a single box, one or more decisions are implicitly being made. Adding decision points will clarify and make explicit the decision-making process. Making an implicit decision explicit is particularly important for IT system development, when back-end logic needs to be coded into the system. If the process being mapped is cyclical, the criteria for restarting the process should be explicitly shown. For processes that repeat within designated timeframes, it is useful to include a decision point that asks whether a specified period has passed. For example, has the child been in a QRTP for 12 consecutive months?

Start/End



Process/Task

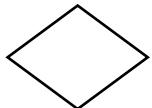


Predefined Process



*may include one or more
processes/steps/operations*

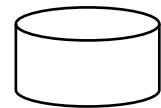
Decision Point



Document



Database

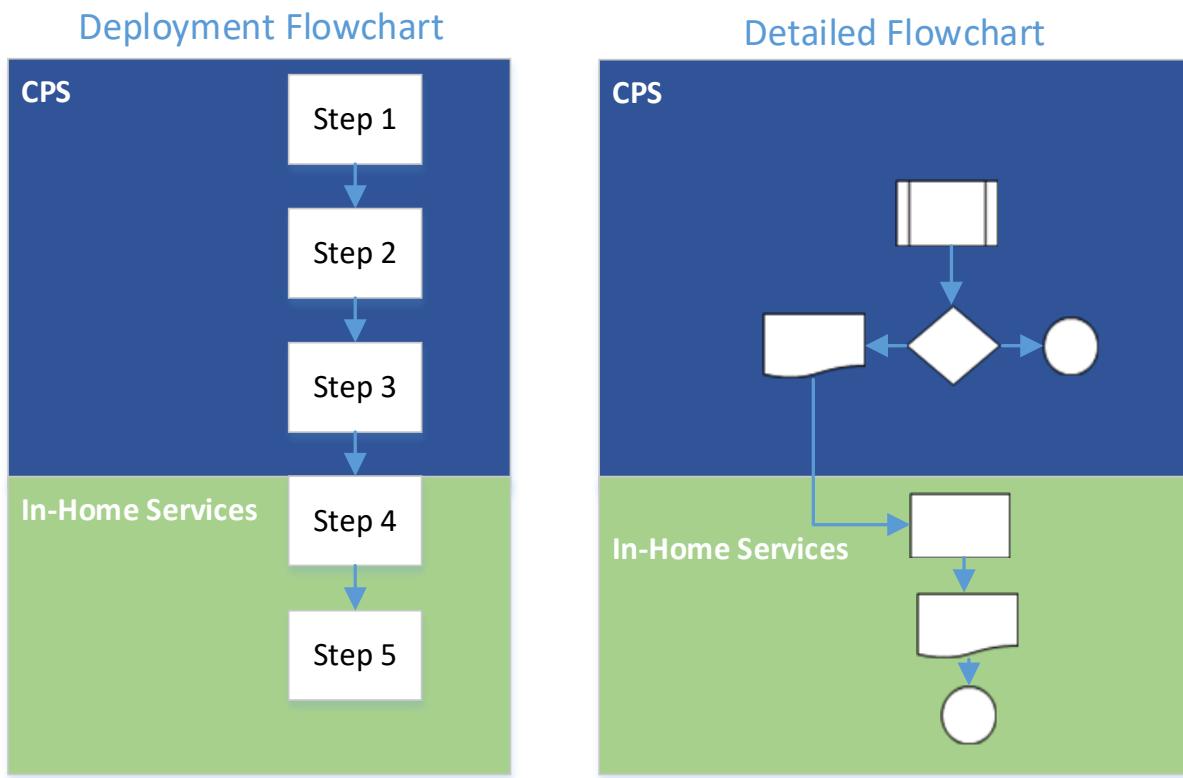


For a comprehensive list of symbols and guidelines review the [American National Standard: flowchart symbols and their usage in information processing](#).

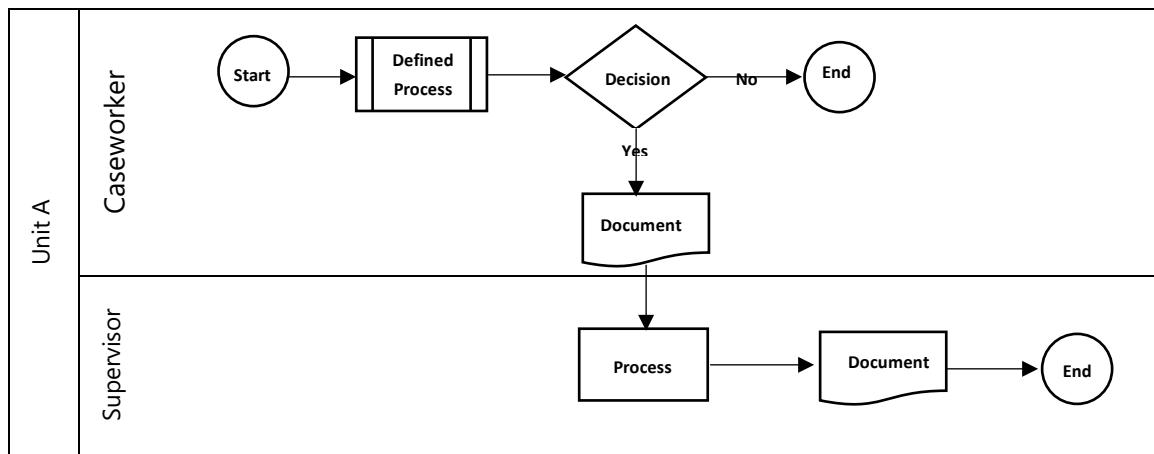
Types of Business Process Maps

Many different types of business process maps exist, depicting procedures and processes of all kinds, as well as the activities, documents, products, roles, locations and interactions that comprise them. Maps can depict various levels of detail, depending on their intended use. The following are some examples of map types for business processes.

Flowcharts: These are graphic illustrations of a process that often flow from top to bottom. Flowcharts are useful for desk guides and as training resources.



Swimlane Diagrams: These diagrams, also known as cross-functional maps, detail the sub-process responsibilities within a process. In the Family First context, swimlanes can be used to depict the distinct roles of the caseworker, supervisor, family, provider, etc., as illustrated below.



Detailed Example: Making Implicit Decisions Explicit

In this example, the original map on the left has multiple arrows leaving a single task box. Since a staff person can only complete one activity at a time, this indicates that decisions are being obscured within a single task. The map on the right has been refined to make these decisions explicit, clarifying the order of preference within the decision-making process.

