

**Community Mapping**  
**Amanda V. Cowan, Training and Development Consultant**  
**Deborah Lassiter, Education Specialist**  
**Alma Gamboa, Education Specialist**

**Session Description:**

Community Mapping – What is it?

**Key concept:** Community mapping for people with disabilities and autism is a collaborative process that identifies, organizes, and visualizes local resources—such as accessible transport, inclusive businesses, sensory-friendly spaces, and support services. It enhances independence, reduces anxiety, and fosters social inclusion by mapping safe routes, housing, and social opportunities.

**Purpose:** To connect individuals with autism and disabilities to necessary services, employment opportunities, and social activities. Promotes independent living, reduces anxiety about new environments, and builds community connections.

**Learning Objectives:**

Our session will look at:

1. A way of thinking about resources in your community that make life meaningful
2. Person-centered planning and inclusion as the foundation
3. Using close social ties and distant social ties to identify potential connections
4. A good community map will:
  - *create a visual chart of what exists in the community*
  - *expand expectations*
  - *lead to relationship building*

**Amanda Cowan** works at the UNM Center for Development and Disability, where she draws on her experience in learning center settings to build accessible, engaging training for adults in the employment services field. Her work is grounded in the belief that meaningful employment starts with meaningful community connections.

**Alma Gamboa** is an Education Specialist with Partners for Employment and is part of the College of Employment Services team. Alma has also worked as a Mi Via Waiver Services Consultant and was a Special Education teacher for 14 years. She has a BS in Education and an MA in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. Alma is committed to lifelong learning and empowering others through education, advocacy, and personalized support.

**Deborah Lassiter** is an Education Specialist with Partners for Employment. In her role, she works alongside PFE's College of Employment Services team to provide trainings and resources in best practices in Customized Employment