 Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	5 – Family Services
	Part No./Name	Appendix 5-B Ecomap and Genogram
	Section No./Name	Appendix 5-B Ecomap and Genogram
	Document No./Name	Appendix 5-B Ecomap and Genogram
	Effective Date	June 1, 2021

I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The ecomap model was developed by Ann Hartman of the University of Michigan in 1975 to help public welfare workers assess a family's needs. The ecomap is a dynamic family system focused assessment tool. It diagrams the connections between a family and the people and systems in their environment and provides a picture of the balance between the demands and resources of the family system.

The genogram is an assessment tool for learning about a family's history over time. It is based upon the concept of a family tree and usually includes three or more generations of the family. Therefore, it offers a longitudinal perspective. As a diagram of the family's relationship system, it provides a graphic picture of family genealogy, including significant life events (birth, marriage, separation, divorce, illness & death). Family patterns emerge, providing vital information that frequently relates to behavior contributing to the family's problems.

II. PROCEDURES


A. ECOMAP

The ecomap is usually developed with the family and it functions as an interviewing tool, especially with clients or families who may have difficulty with social history or assessment interviews. As the ecomap is developed with the involvement of the family members, it provides the worker and the family with an understanding in a simple visual diagram of the stresses on the family as well as support persons and systems.

The structure used to construct an ecomap includes circles. Some of the circles are labeled to identify typical systems in a family's environment. In the large circle in the center of the diagram, the family is pictured by using symbols that represent family members and their relationships. Squares are added to depict males and small circles added to depict females. They are then joined together forming a family tree to portray relationships. Connections are drawn onto the map to show relationships between the family and the systems in its environment, with significant people identified for the systems when possible. The unlabeled circles provide the opportunity for the participating family to suggest additional people or institutions with which it has relationships. In this way, the ecomap becomes individualized for the family in the interview.

The process of ecomapping encourages collaboration between the worker and the client in collecting information. Engaging in this joint activity provides an opportunity for the family and the worker to begin developing a relationship based upon mutual concerns and trust.

Participation in the process of ecomapping and studying the finished diagram enhances discussions that follow in terms of planning how a family can draw upon resources it requires for improved functioning. This approach often enables entry into a closed family system for

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establishing linkages to underused resources. It may also reveal a need for services that do not exist and that can become a focus for further planning.

Human service workers in a wide variety of settings find the ecomap to be an easy and effective means of learning about a family's connections with the systems in its environment. It is especially recommended for use with clients who have difficulty in sharing information either because they tend to be nonverbal or because they feel threatened by a request to reveal information about themselves. It is not unusual to find clients to be fearful of negative consequences if they tell about themselves. The process of ecomapping allows for initial questions to be phrased in broad, general terms that do not seem overly intrusive. Examples are: "Do you have much family?" "Do you work at a job?" "Are people helpful in your neighborhood?" Gradually, more specific questions may be asked such as: "Are you close to your family?" "How do you like your work?" "Are there neighbors you can call upon for help in this situation?"


Once the ecomap is completed the family has the opportunity to identify for themselves systems that they regard as strengths or supports. They may also be able to identify potential resources to assist them with their need and/or goals for change. This permits the family an opportunity to begin to develop their capacities for problem solving as they work with *** DCFS and **other** community services in the development of a service plan for their family.

B. GENOGRAM

The process of developing the genogram offers an opportunity for family members and the worker to see the family as a unit. It can be constructed by interviewing one family member or several family members. Generally, getting information from several family members increases the reliability and gives the worker an opportunity to compare perspectives and observe family interaction. It can also assist with family participation in understanding their family and its history in a way that may encourage participation with a service plan to enhance family functioning.

The genogram is a structure for the sharing of information; at the same time, it encourages the expression of feelings about the people and events that are discussed. Constructing a genogram typically begins with the initial interview using a prepared genogram outline showing the family that this is a usual procedure in this setting. Even reticent family members may be willing to share information and are often surprised to recognize that while they know much about some areas of family history, they know little about other areas. As information is discussed, it often becomes clear that spouses or children are unfamiliar with information that it was assumed they knew. It may be revised or updated later as new information becomes available.

As family patterns of interaction and functioning can be transmitted from one generation to the next, the worker can scan the genogram for patterns that have been repeated over several

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generations. Such repetitive patterns occur in functioning, relationships, and family structure. Recognizing such patterns often helps families to better understand their family and avoid repeating problematic patterns or transmitting them into the future. Tracking critical events and changes in family functioning allows the family to notice anniversary reactions, make systemic connections between seeming coincidences, assess the impact of traumatic changes on family functioning, its resources and vulnerability to future stresses, and then try to understand such events in the larger context. The family may then better understand themselves, their problems and their strengths/supports in a way that helps them to participate in the development of the service plan.

III. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

[CW Form 63](#) / [Instructions](#) ECO-MAP and Genogram Formats

IV. REFERENCES

There are no references associated with this policy.