

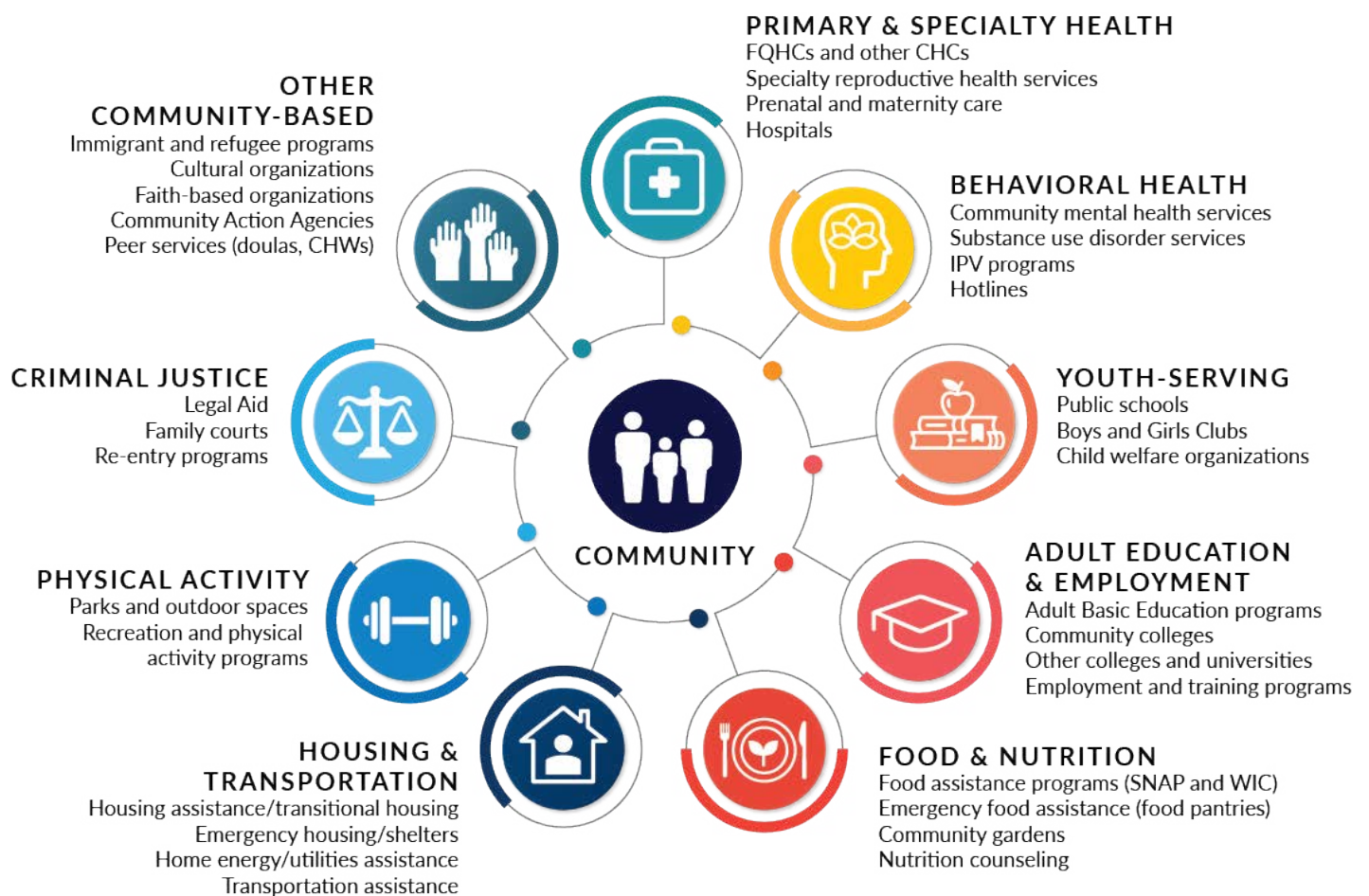
Engaging Community Partners

This job aid offers guidance on developing partnerships with community groups, programs, and organizations that represent various sectors and stakeholders, including those that address social and economic factors that affect sexual and reproductive health.

A strong network of partners strengthens the system of care and facilitates the provision of patient-centered sexual and reproductive health services across the life course. By cultivating such a network, Title X programs are better able to support the community and populations they serve.

This resource describes the benefits of community partnerships, strategies for identifying and building relationships with new community partners, and tips for partnering effectively.

EXPAND YOUR COMMUNITY NETWORK



BENEFITS OF EXPANDED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A network of community partners can help your program meet the [Community Participation, Education and Project Promotion \(CPEP\)](#) requirement to “achieve community understanding of the objectives of the project, inform the community of the availability of services, and promote continued participation in the project by persons to whom family planning services may be beneficial.”¹

Through these partnerships, you can:

- Learn more about the community your program serves.
- Ensure that community members are aware of your program and the services and resources you offer.
- Enhance community support for your program.
- Increase the number of clients in your program through referrals from a wider variety of partners.
- Improve your program’s ability to connect clients to needed social and economic support and services.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL NEW PARTNERS

To strategically broaden your network of community partners, consider approaching organizations that meet some or all of the following criteria:

- Demonstrate a commitment to the health and well-being of people of reproductive age, women, youth, and families.
- Have a deep knowledge of and feel comfortable working in the community.
- Represent the community culturally, and linguistically.
- Have earned influence and respect within communities.
- Display a tradition of community service.
- Overlap with your program’s interests and clientele.

CONFIDENTIAL AND NON-COERCIVE CARE

When introducing your program to new community partners, be sure to emphasize the confidential, non-coercive nature of Title X services, and that client use of these services cannot be made a condition for receiving any other social services or supports (e.g., WIC, TANF, housing).

For more information on providing services in a non-coercive manner, see [42 CFR 59.5\(a\)\(2\)](#). For more information on confidentiality requirements, see [42 CFR 59.11](#).

¹ Office of the Federal Register and the Government Publishing Office. (2000, July 3). [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations: Subpart A—Project Grants for Family Planning Services. \(42 CFR 59.5\(b\)\(3\)\)](#).

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEW & EXISTING PARTNERS

Relationship-building is the cornerstone of successful partnerships. To build trust and strengthen relationships with new and existing partners, you can:

- Conduct background research on the organization and identify how their services, clients, and mission overlap with yours.
- Send a [letter of invitation](#) and set up an informal in-person meeting.
- When you meet, be prepared to discuss which attributes of their organization caught your attention, their specific initiatives, and their thoughts about a potential partnership. Demonstrate that you have “done your homework” on them and also that you have interest in learning more.
- Arrange for a joint staff meeting in which each organization presents information on the services they provide.
- Coordinate a community listening session and invite them to be part of it. A community listening session can help all organizations serving the community provide better, more responsive services.

Keep in mind: A successful partnership relies on mutual support and advances the objectives of both organizations.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Here are specific ways in which you and your community partners can support each other’s ability to better serve the community:

- Notify partner organizations and programs of each other’s services, program hours, and special events.
- Provide each other with meeting space, materials, or other tangible resources for community programs.
- Publicize each other’s services to the community at large.
- Support each other’s research activities by serving as key informants and participating in community needs and assets assessments.
- Participate in formal [reciprocal referral relationships](#).
- Offer opportunities for joint learning sessions and for staff to volunteer at each other’s programs.
- Respond jointly to funding opportunities.
- Serve on community advisory boards.
- Work together on specific community projects and initiatives, such as creating summer internship programs or participating in the local Perinatal Quality Collaborative.
- Participate in action-oriented coalitions and initiatives to promote reproductive health.

OTHER RHNTC RESOURCES

- [Community Participation, Education, and Project Promotion Plan Template \(CPEP\) Template](#)
- [Establishing and Providing Effective Referrals for Clients: A Toolkit for Family Planning Providers](#)