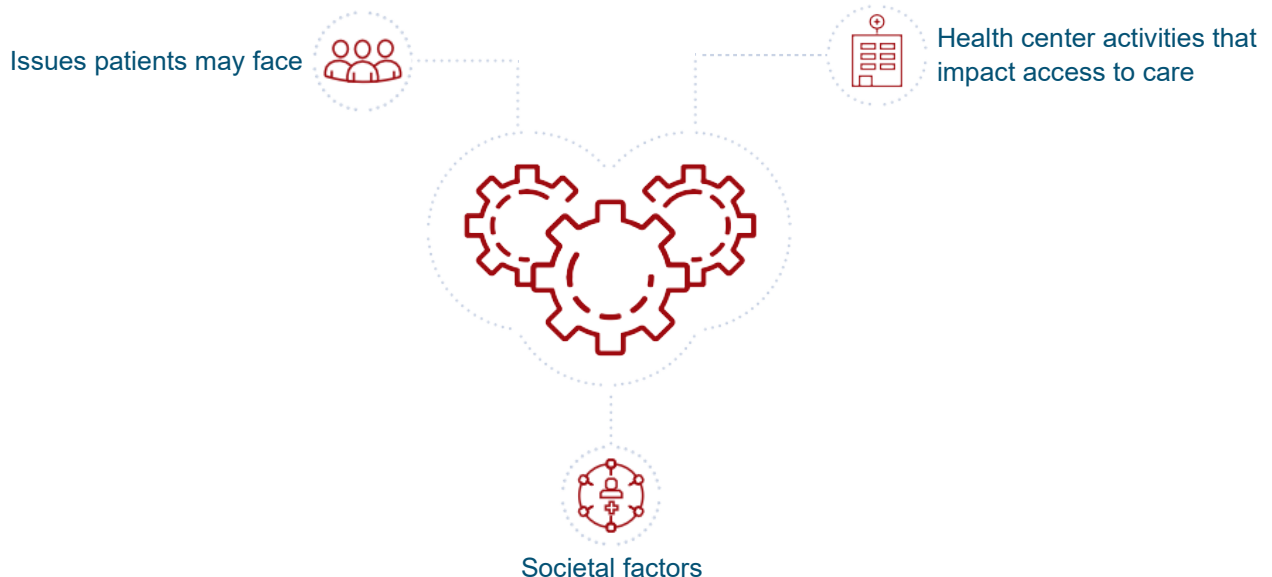


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# Build Your Own Virtual Care Journey Map Worksheet and Instructions

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Health Resources & Services Administration  
Bureau of Primary Health Care



**HRSA**  
Health Resources & Services Administration

# Overview

## Purpose of This Worksheet

This worksheet is for health center staff to develop a journey map, in collaboration with patients and other decision-makers. The purpose is to identify ways to support virtual care equity for a specific patient population. Worksheet activities will help you (i) identify circumstances that can impact patients' ability to access, use, and benefit from virtual care (Activities 1-4a); (ii) identify ways health centers can address those circumstances (Activity 4b); and (iii) create a summary of the patients' journey (Activity 5).

## How to Use This Worksheet

While it can be hard for health centers to directly address circumstances that impact virtual care inequities, health centers can use the insights gained from doing the worksheet activities to identify strategies and find ways to help patients access virtual care. The activities in this worksheet build on evidence from research and practice, like the **Stages of Change Theory**<sup>1</sup> and a **health care access framework**.<sup>2</sup> Activities are designed to help identify the social determinants of health (SDOH) which are the nonmedical factors that impact peoples' **"health, well-being, and quality of life."**<sup>3,4</sup> The SDOH are important to think about because they can impact patients' access to and use of virtual care.

## Guidance on Completing the Worksheet

Along with blank worksheet pages on pages 3-8, this guide includes step-by-step instructions for each activity in the Appendix (page 9). You can also review four different journey maps that show how health centers can support virtual care equity, at the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care](#) website. Below is an example of a situation where a health center could use the worksheet.

### Example "Build Your Own Journey Map" Process for a Health Center

After offering a patient portal to all patients, a health center identifies racial disparities in portal use for African American patients, similar to other **health centers across the country**.<sup>5</sup> Health center leadership wants to find ways to ensure equitable access to the portal. However, they are unsure what to do because it is not clear what contributes to the inequities. They use this worksheet to identify the SDOH that impact patients' access to portals and actions the health center can take to support equitable portal access.

The health center explores how the SDOH contribute to disparities in portal use by African American patients and considers ways that **racial discrimination**<sup>6</sup> drives health inequities. Using the worksheet, the health center holds focus groups with patients and front-line staff to understand the patients' portal access journey, barriers they face using the portal, and ways the health center can support the journey. The health center learns that a factor contributing to lower portal use is internet access, or **digital redlining**,<sup>7</sup> which could make it hard for patients to use a portal because they need internet to access it.

The health center uses the worksheet to reflect on information they gathered about internet access and to identify strategies to support internet access. They know they have limited staff and funding capacity to do this themselves and they cannot directly address digital redlining at its root cause (e.g., engaging with internet providers to expand services). Instead, the health center finds trusted community partners (e.g., **public libraries**<sup>8,9,10,11,12</sup>) and **applies for grants**<sup>13,14,15,16,17,18</sup> to help distribute hotspots to patients.

# Activity 1: Select Journey Map Focus

## Activity 1: Identify the Focus of Your Journey Map.

The first step in making a journey map is figuring out the patient population and virtual care technology or program that will be its focus. Table 1 will help you get started -- the bullets under each item give initial ways to narrow down your focus, but these are not exhaustive as there may be additional considerations for your patients and health center.

*Table 1: Identify the focus of your journey map.*






Items to Help Identify the Journey Map's Focus	Responses to items
Select one virtual care program or technology that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Currently integrated into care, or</li><li>• Going to be deployed in the future.</li></ul>	
Select one patient population that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is experiencing access or impact inequities in an existing virtual care program, or</li><li>• Is at risk of experiencing access or impact inequities in a future program.</li></ul>	
Indicate whether patients are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current users of a virtual care technology already integrated into care at the health center,</li><li>• New users of a virtual care technology already integrated into care at the health center, or</li><li>• New users of a virtual care technology that will be deployed in the future.</li></ul>	
Write down potential collaborators and partners within and outside the health center who can help your health center understand the patients' journey.	

## Activity 2: Identify SDOH

### Activity 2: Identify Circumstances Impacting the Patients' Ability to Access or Benefit from Virtual Care.

Using what you did in Activity 1, think about the SDOH<sup>19,20</sup> that can impact the population's access to virtual care. The table below provides space to describe patient challenges and assets in the five key areas of SDOH identified by Health People 2030. Click the links in the table for more SDOH information and resources.

Table 2: Identifying circumstances and assets that can impact patients engaging in virtual care.

SDOH	Challenges and Assets <i>Think about how these circumstances can be assets and challenges for the patient population.</i>
<a href="#">Economic Stability</a> 	
<a href="#">Education Access and Quality</a> 	
<a href="#">Health Care Access and Quality</a> 	
<a href="#">Neighborhood and Built Environment</a> 	
<a href="#">Social and Community Context</a> 	

## Activity 3: Draft Journey Steps

### Activity 3: Draft the Patients' Virtual Care Journey.

Using the work you did in Activity 1 and Activity 2, think about the steps that patients would take in seeking or using virtual care. In the first row for steps 1-5, write a short title that describes how the patient population engages with the virtual care technology or program. In the second row, describe the actions that the patients would take to engage in virtual care at each step. You can always come back to update and refine the steps and actions based on what you learn in later Activities. If you need help getting started, see the additional instructions in the [Appendix](#) and journey maps at the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care](#) website.

*Table 3: Drafting the steps of the virtual care journey.*

<b>Virtual Care Journey for the Patient Population</b>	<b>Step 1</b> (start of the journey):	<b>Step 2:</b>	<b>Step 3:</b>	<b>Step 4:</b>	<b>Step 5</b> (end of the journey):
<b>The actions that patients do at each step when engaging with virtual care.</b>					




*You can add or delete columns depending on the number of steps in the patients' journey.*

# Activity 4a: Identify Underlying Circumstances in Each Step

## Activity 4a: Identify the Patient Population, Health Center, and Societal Circumstances and Assets that Impact Each Step.

Using the SDOH you identified in Activity 2 and steps you listed in Activity 3, describe the circumstances that impact the patients at each step. These circumstances can help identify assets or facilitators at each step and the challenges that block moving on to the next step (i.e., barriers).

Table 4a: Identify patient population, health center, and societal circumstances and assets that impact each step.




Circumstances Impacting Patients	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:	Step 4:	Step 5:
<b>A: What individual factors make it easier or harder for patients to access care?</b>   Think about individual circumstances (beliefs, skills, digital literacy, etc.) and relationship circumstances (social support, etc.).					
<b>B: What health center factors make it easier or harder for patients to access care?</b>   Think about relationships (patient-provider, leadership-staff, etc.), organizational circumstances (processes, staffing, procedures, spaces, workflows, etc.) within your health center.					
<b>C: What societal factors make it easier or harder for patients to access care?</b>   Think about policies, social norms, stigma and biases, and economic circumstances and their impact on the community (the built and natural environment, safety net availability, etc.).					

## Activity 4b: Identify Actions and Partners for Each Step

### Activity 4b: Identify What Your Health Center Can Do to Support the Patients' Virtual Care Journey at Each Step.

Use what you wrote in Activity 4a to identify strategies your health center can use to support patients at each step. For each strategy, think about if your health center can act on the strategies by itself or needs help from outside partners to implement them. Take note of any resources you find that could be helpful to your health center to implement any strategies. (If you print the worksheet pages, the table columns for this activity line up with the table for Activity 4a.)

Table 4b: Identify what your health center can do to support the patients' journey at each step.

Strategies that the Health Center Can Take	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:	Step 4:	Step 5:
<p><b>D: What ways can my health center help the patients throughout their journey?</b></p> <p> Think about the circumstances your health center could support patients' strengths and address patients' challenges.</p> <p> Think how the health center can improve its services and operations to support patients.</p> <p> Think about ways the health center can help the patient overcome societal circumstances.</p>					
<p><b>E: What external community partners and other resources do you need to make your ideas a reality?</b></p>					

You can add or delete columns depending on the number of steps in the patients' journey.

## Activity 5: Summarize Your Journey Map

### Activity 5: Summarize Patients' Virtual Care Journey.

With as few words as possible, summarize the virtual care journey so that you can share it with others. Use Activity 4a to complete the first four rows and Activity 4b to complete the last row. The information you include in this summary will depend on your audience, so choose who you want to share this information with (e.g., health center leadership, community-based organizations you want to partner with, and patients) before completing this activity.

**AUDIENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Table 5: Journey map summary*

<b>Step in the Patients' Journey</b>	<b>Step 1:</b>	<b>Step 2:</b>	<b>Step 3:</b>	<b>Step 4:</b>	<b>Step 5:</b>
<b>Individual Factors</b>					
<b>Health Center Factors</b>					
<b>Societal Factors</b>					
<b>What the Health Center Can Do to Support Patients</b>					



# APPENDIX: Step-By-Step Guidance and Examples for Each Activity

## Activity 1: Identify the Focus of Your Journey Map.

To create a journey map, you will need to come up with a specific scenario (or situation) and understand the context in which the scenario happens.

### JOURNEY MAP WORKSHEET

#### Activity 1: Select Journey Map Focus

##### Activity 1: Identify the Focus of Your Journey Map.

The first step in making a journey map is figuring out the patient population and virtual care technology or program that will be its focus. Table 1 will help you get started -- the bullets under each item give initial ways to narrow down your focus, but these are not exhaustive as there may be additional considerations for your patients and health center.

Table 1: Identify the focus of your journey map.

	Items to Help Identify the Journey Map's Focus	Responses to Items
1	Select one virtual care program or technology that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently integrated into care, or</li> <li>Going to be deployed in the future.</li> </ul>	
2	Select one patient population that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is experiencing access or impact inequities in an existing virtual care program, or</li> <li>Is at risk of experiencing access or impact inequities in a future program.</li> </ul>	
3	Indicate whether patients are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current users of a virtual care technology already integrated into care at the health center,</li> <li>New users of a virtual care technology already integrated into care at the health center, or</li> <li>New users of a virtual care technology that will be deployed in the future.</li> </ul>	
4	Write down potential collaborators and partners within and outside the health center who can help your health center understand the patients' journey.	

- Identify the virtual care technology or program of focus for the journey map. This can be a technology or program that you are planning to implement or one that is already used in your health center.
- Pick a patient population that might or is experiencing inequities in accessing or using virtual care (e.g., older adults with multiple chronic conditions).
  - To help identify a patient population, you can use existing data from your health center (e.g., virtual care utilization rates among certain groups) or collect new data from patients, patient-facing staff, and staff involved in providing virtual care (e.g., hold focus groups).<sup>21</sup>
- Indicate if the patients are new or existing users of virtual care.
  - You may have new users* if you are starting a new virtual care program or are enrolling new patients to an existing program and your center is interested in understanding how to onboard and engage new users.
  - You may have existing users* if you already have a virtual care program in place and are working to support patients already using the technologies.
- Identify internal and external partners who can provide information you will need to complete this worksheet.
  - Internal partners examples: Patient-facing staff and providers, the information technology (IT) department, the members of the virtual care program team.
  - External partner examples: Community based organizations serving the patients your health center also serves (e.g., food banks, cultural centers, senior services), public institutions (e.g., libraries, schools), local government organizations that are involved with supporting technology access in the community (e.g., a city government department involved with expanding internet in the community).<sup>22</sup>

## Activity 2: Identify Circumstances Impacting the Patients' Ability to Access or Benefit from Virtual Care.






JOURNEY  
MAP  
WORKSHEET

Activity 2: Identify SDOH

Activity 2: Identify Circumstances Impacting the Patients' Ability to Access or Benefit from Virtual Care.

Using what you did in Activity 1, think about the **social determinants of health** (SDOH)<sup>23</sup> that can impact the population's access to virtual care. Links in the table provide information from the CDC that can help you complete the table.

Table 2: Identifying circumstances and assets that can impact patients engaging in virtual care.

1	SDOH	Challenges and Assets Think about how these circumstances can be assets and challenges for the patient population.
	 Economic Stability	2
	 Education Access and Quality	
	 Health Care Access and Quality	
	 Neighborhood and Built Environment	
	 Social and Community Context	

- Think about factors that impact the patient population when seeking or using virtual care.
  - You do not need to compile an exhaustive list of factors.
  - Factors are organized by categories of **social determinants of health** (SDOH)<sup>23</sup> described by the Health People 2030 – this will make your search more efficient and will help you focus on system-level issues that impact virtual care equity.
    - Use the links in the left column to learn about the 5 SDOH categories and see examples of SDOH within that category.
- Search for SDOH related factors that impact the patient population in your scenario – you can find this information through:
  - Discussions (e.g., focus groups) with the partners you identified in Activity 1.
  - Existing data or information, such as: Administrative health center data, peer reviewed publications, reports from community-based organizations or local news stations.
    - When doing a search online, using SDOH terms in your search can be helpful.
  - New data collected about the community, like a windshield survey.<sup>24,25</sup>
    - Note: You should look at existing data before you collect new data because they can help inform what new data you need.

### Activity 3: Draft the Patients' Virtual Care Journey.

JOURNEY  
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WORKSHEET

**Activity 3: Draft Journey Steps**

**Activity 3: Draft the Patients' Virtual Care Journey.**

Using the work you did in Activity 1 and Activity 2, think about the steps that patients would take in seeking or using virtual care. In the first row for steps 1-5, write a short title that describes how the patient population engages with the virtual care technology or program. In the second row, describe the actions that the patients would take to engage in virtual care at each step. You can always come back to update and refine the steps and actions based on what you learn in later Activities. If you need help getting started, see the additional instructions in the [Appendix](#), and journey maps at the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care website](#).

Table 3: Drafting the steps of the virtual care journey.

	Virtual Care Journey for the Patient Population	Step 1 (start of the journey):	Step 2:	Step 3:	Step 4:	Step 5 (end of the journey):
1	The actions that patients do at each step when engaging with virtual care.					
2						

You can add or delete columns depending on the number of steps in the patients' journey.


1. Write the steps that the patient population takes.
  - Figure 1 below shows the general steps that were adapted for the OVC journey maps. You can use these steps to help you start thinking about the journey you are interested in.
    - In general, the Step 1 describes the start of the journey and Step 5 is the end of the journey (e.g., “graduating out” of virtual care) or a transition point that would involve the health center helping patients continue to use the device.
  - The steps should be general rather than a detailed list of actions (that comes next). Check with patients from the population to see if the steps you develop make sense to them – or co-create them with patients.
  - What you write for each step will depend on whether the virtual care program is new or existing and whether patients are new to or existing users of virtual care. For examples, visit the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care website](#) to view 4 completed journey maps.
2. Write out the actions, decisions, and other things that patients need to do at each step to move on to the next step.
  - Think about what they need to do to access or engage in virtual care (e.g., know how to use the virtual care device), and also the other “life” things that impact engagement in virtual care (e.g., take time off work or arrange childcare for a virtual appointment).
  - To get this information, consider talking to patients and patient-facing staff.

Figure 1: Journey Steps Integrating Stages of Change and Health Care Access Frameworks That Were Used in the OVC Journey Maps.



## Activity 4a: Identify the Patient Population, Health Center, and Societal Circumstances and Assets that Impact Each Step.

To help your health center develop strategies to support digital equity, you will need to understand factors at your health center and societal factors that can contribute to virtual care inequities for the population and impact their ability to engage in the journey.






JOURNEY  
MAP  
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### Activity 4a: Identify Underlying Circumstances in Each Step

**Activity 4a: Identify the Patient Population, Health Center, and Societal Circumstances and Assets that Impact Each Step.**

Using the SDOH you identified in Activity 2 and steps you listed in Activity 3, describe the circumstances that impact the patients at each step. These circumstances can help identify assets or facilitators at each step and the challenges that block moving on to the next step (i.e., barriers).

*Table 4a: Identify patient population, health center, and societal circumstances and assets that impact each step.*

	Circumstances Impacting Patients	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:	Step 4:	Step 5:
1	A: What individual factors make it easier or harder for patients to access care?					
2	 Think about individual circumstances (beliefs, skills, digital literacy, etc.) and relationship circumstances (social support, etc.).					
3	 Think about relationships (patient-provider, leadership-staff, etc.), organizational circumstances (processes, staffing, procedures, spaces, workflows, etc.) within your health center.					
4	 Think about policies, social norms, stigma and biases, and economic circumstances and their impact on the community (the built and natural environment, safety net availability, etc.).					

You can add or delete columns depending on the number of steps in the patients' journey.

1. Write down the steps that you wrote out in Activity 3.
2. Thinking about what you wrote about in Activity 3, write down individual factors could make it easier or hard for patients to access virtual care at each step.
  - You can do an internet search for peer-reviewed articles, talk to patients, or use information your health center already has to identify these factors.
  - Factors that can impact virtual care use may include technology related factors like digital literacy and digital health literacy,<sup>26,27,28</sup> or non-technology factors like meeting basic needs or competing priorities (e.g., employment).<sup>29</sup>
3. Insert factors at your health center that could impact a patients' journey.
  - Reflect on how the health center is currently involved or impacts what you wrote in Activity 3.
  - Talk with your staff, providers, and others impacted by the virtual care program that you wrote in Activity 1 about processes, staffing, procedures, spaces, workflows, and other factors within your health center that could support the population's assets or contribute to challenges they face in completing the step.
  - For more information on the health center factors, see the completed journey maps at the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care website](#).

4. Reflect on societal factors that could help or impede the population and your health center at each step based on what you wrote in #2 and #3.
  - Societal factors can include: Policies (e.g., government policies<sup>30,31,32,33</sup> from local to federal, health center policies), social norms<sup>34</sup> (e.g., widely-held biases or stereotypes about a population), the built or natural environment (e.g., highways that cut through low-income and minority neighborhoods and cut off access to resources<sup>35</sup>), discriminatory practices (e.g., redlining in housing<sup>36</sup> and internet<sup>37</sup> access, technology design that excludes certain populations<sup>38</sup>).
  - To help identify societal factors, you can:
    - Look online for existing information from trusted organizations (e.g., peer-reviewed publications).
    - Talk to patients from the journey's population, community-based organizations who support the population, and patient facing staff (e.g., community health workers, social workers).
    - Review the completed journey maps at the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care website](#).

## Activity 4b: Identify What Your Health Center Can Do to Support the Patients' Virtual Care Journey at Each Step.

After identifying the factors impacting the population's virtual care journey, you can develop strategies to address those factors and support the population's equitable access to, use of, and benefits from virtual care.

**JOURNEY  
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**Activity 4b: Identify Actions and Partners for Each Step**

1

**Activity 4b: Identify What Your Health Center Can Do to Support the Patients' Virtual Care Journey at Each Step.**

Use what you wrote in Activity 4a to identify strategies your health center can use to support patients at each step. For each strategy, think about if your health center can act on the strategies by itself or needs help from outside partners to implement them. Take note of any resources you find that could be helpful to your health center to implement any strategies. (If you print the worksheet pages, the table columns for this activity line up with the table for Activity 4a.)

Table 4b: Identify what your health center can do to support the patients' journey at each step.

	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:	Step 4:	Step 5:
<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">2</div> <div>Strategies that the Health Center Can Take</div> <div>D: What ways can my health center help the patients throughout their journey?</div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;">  Think about the circumstances your health center could support patients' strengths and address patients' challenges.         </div>					
<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">3</div> <div>  Think how the health center can improve its services and operations to support patients.           <div style="margin-top: 10px;">  Think about ways the health center can help the patient overcome societal circumstances.         </div> </div>					
<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">4</div> <div>E: What external community partners and other resources do you need to make your ideas a reality?</div>					

You can add or delete columns depending on the number of steps in the patients' journey.

1. Using your computer or printing out the worksheet pages, you can align the bottom of the Activity 4a table to the top of the Activity 4b table—the steps for each column can be lined up across the two pages so information in Activity 4a is easily accessible to help you complete Activity 4b.
2. Add the steps and columns that you added to Activity 4a.
3. Based on the information you added to Activity 4a, think of ways that your health center can support the population's assets and address barriers they face, including addressing societal factors.
  - Some factors your health center cannot address directly, so find ways to mitigate those factors.
  - For actionable solutions and resources you can use to come up with ideas, see the completed journey maps and references at the [HRSA Optimizing Virtual Care website](#).
4. Thinking about the internal capabilities of your health center, identify community partners and resources you would need to enact the ideas you put down in #3.
  - Your health center cannot do it all, so leverage existing opportunities outside your clinic to support the population.
  - Go back to Activity 1 to get ideas on who you can reach out to in the community.

## Activity 5: Summarize Patients' Virtual Care Journey.

JOURNEY  
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Activity 5: Summarize Your Journey Map

**Activity 5: Summarize Patients' Virtual Care Journey.**

With as few words as possible, summarize the virtual care journey so that you can share it with others. Use Activity 4a to complete the first four rows and Activity 4b to complete the last row. The information you include in this summary will depend on your audience, so choose who you want to share this information with (e.g., health center leadership, community-based organizations you want to partner with, and patients) before completing this activity.

**1** AUDIENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

**2**

**3**

**4**

Table 5: Journey map summary

Step in the Patients' Journey	Step 1:	Step 2:	Step 3:	Step 4:	Step 5:
Individual Factors					
Health Center Factors					
Societal Factors					
What the Health Center Can Do to Support Patients					

*You can add or delete columns depending on the number of steps in the patients' journey.*

- Identify the audience you want to share the journey map with. This will help you figure out what information to summarize in the table.
  - Audiences can be internal (e.g., health center leadership who could help support updating ways that virtual care is provided at the center) or external (e.g., community partners who you want to collaborate with to support virtual care equity).
- In row 1, write out the journey steps.
- In rows 2-4, summarize key information that you wrote in Activity 4a that would be key information your audience needs to know.
- In row 5, summarize key information you wrote in Activity 4b that is relevant to the actions you want the audience to know about (and potentially help address) to support virtual care equity.



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- <sup>15</sup> US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Community Connect Grants. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/community-connect-grants>
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