

Community GIS and the Missouri Autism Projects

Thursday, October 23, 2025 5:40 PM (20 minutes)

Community geography is an area of research focusing on bringing together researchers, community members, and stakeholders to support societal action towards addressing community issues. (Guhlincozzi, 2022). The Missouri Autism Projects is an initiative of the Missouri Department of Mental Health that aims to provide services such as behavior management training, language therapy, caregiver training, and advocacy training, to autistic individuals and their families (Missouri Department of Mental Health, n.d.). As such, the initiative serves as an example of a statewide effort to increase regionalized access to resources that can enhance an autistic individual's daily life and provide additional support to their caregivers. To request any of these services, it is necessary to contact one of the five regional offices based on county of residence. To this end, the Missouri Department of Mental Health directs viewers to a series of regional maps to help them identify the appropriate office to contact, reflecting a reliance on accurate, accessible spatial information to connect individuals to the resources they need. From a community geography standpoint, all Missouri residents would benefit from the collaboration between professionals in state departments, GIS professionals, and affected community members. Such an integration would ensure accuracy and assistance in accessing services while increasing awareness of issues impacting residents throughout the state. This presentation shares two simple mapping examples taken up by the Critical and Community Geographies Lab at the University of Missouri and how they will support more integrated efforts to improve access to care with accurate geographic mapping efforts.

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Organized Session Details

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