Substance Use Prevention Policy: What is Policy and How Can it Help Achieve Prevention Outcomes?

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Learning Objectives

1. Recognize why policy change can be an important goal in prevention
2. Describe the types and objectives of substance use prevention policies
3. Identify the strengths and drawbacks of using policies as a type of prevention intervention
4. Explain how policy change can be part of a comprehensive approach to prevention

What is Policy Change and Why is it Important?

Discussion Question

How can policy change help us achieve our substance use prevention goals?

Policy Change…

- Focuses on societal and community level influences
- Can address non-medical determinants of health and their impacts
- Can be more targeted to specific needs
- Can build support for the concept of prevention itself

Allows us to better address some of the root causes of substance use as part of a comprehensive approach to prevention!

Societal and Community Influences

- Societal Factors: Social norms; government policies
- Community Factors: Settings where individuals are and relationships occur; the attitudes and behaviors among the wider community

Non-medical Determinants of Health

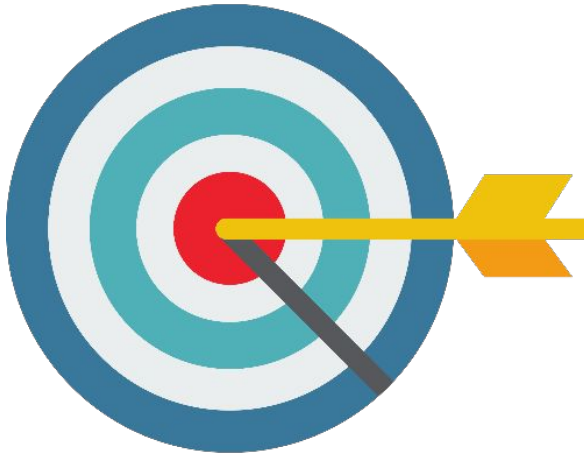
"[Non-Medical] determinants of health [(NMDOH)] are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks" (HHS)

Understanding the NMDOH

- Often the “big picture” aspects of life; community and society level influences
- Growing research showing linkages to substance risk factors and outcomes
- Differences in the NMDOH strongly linked with differences in health outcomes
- Large-scale policy change is often required to address the underlying issues

More Targeted Policies

- Mandating or restricting activities
- Obtaining approval for activities
- Creating new funding streams
- Expanding harm reduction opportunities
- Others!!



“A Culture of Prevention”

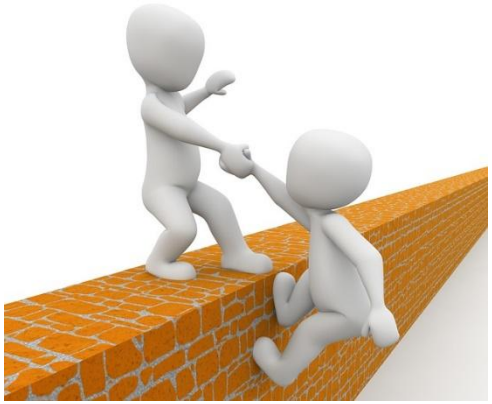
- Conceptual idea, rather than a standardized definition. Encompasses:
  - Acceptance of the importance and value of prevention
  - Demand for prevention
  - Infrastructure for supporting prevention
  - Using data and evidence
  - Health promotion as well as protection
- By having this support for prevention, we can ensure greater resources to devote to building the public health approach

What Does This Entail?

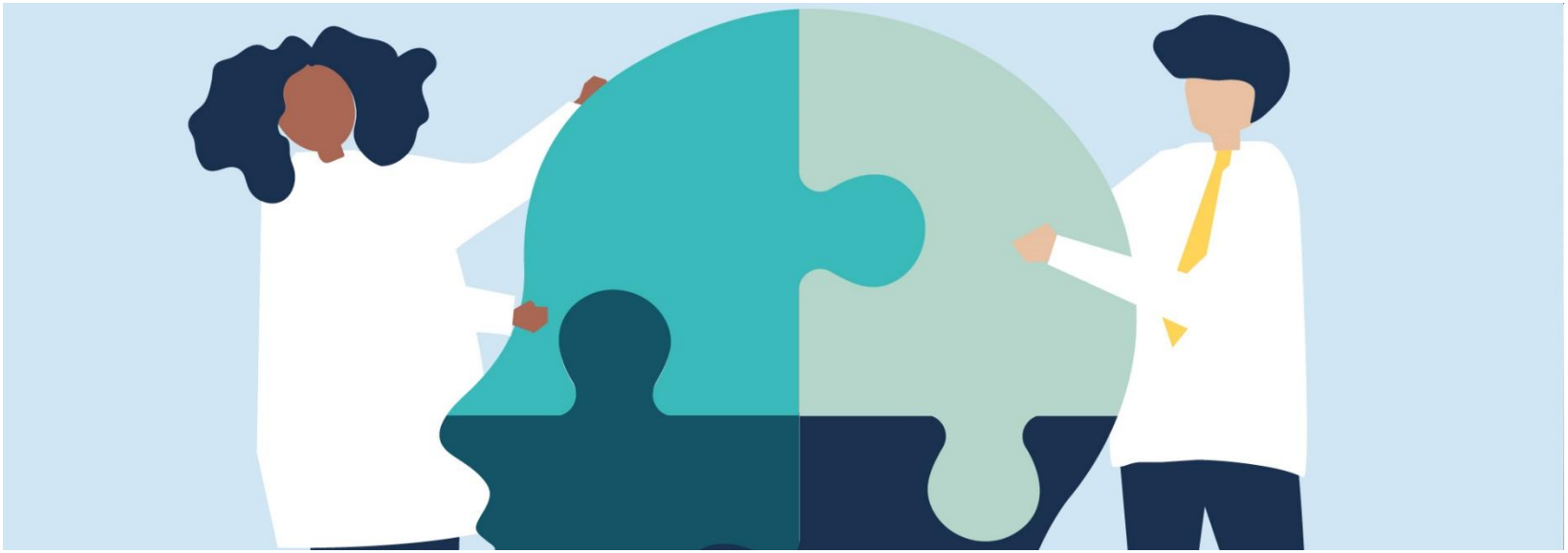
- Systems to facilitate knowledge dissemination of effective programs and practices
- Processes to strategically plan and implement relevant interventions
- Dedicated funding streams to support action
- Evaluation to assess outcomes (of interventions and of efforts to effect organizational change)

Why is This Important?

- Policy change is another tool for prevention professionals
- Not a replacement for other services, but a complementary approach to pursue
- Addresses underlying issues and supports existing work



The Types and Objectives of Substance Use Prevention Policies



Supply Reduction

- Supply reduction works by
  1. Preventing or disrupting the production and distribution of illegal substances
  2. Regulating the availability and access to legal substances
- Seeks to make substances more scarce, more expensive, and less socially tolerated
- These types of policies usually address more of the environmental factors around substance use

Supply Reduction Policy Examples, I

- Minimum Legal Drinking Age
- Vaping and smoking legal age increase
- Expanding vaping restrictions
  - Flavored products

Supply Reduction Policy Examples, II

- Retail access restrictions
  - Financial restrictions
  - Licensing and zoning
  - Mandating IDs
- Law enforcement
  - International and domestic
  - Data sharing

Demand Reduction

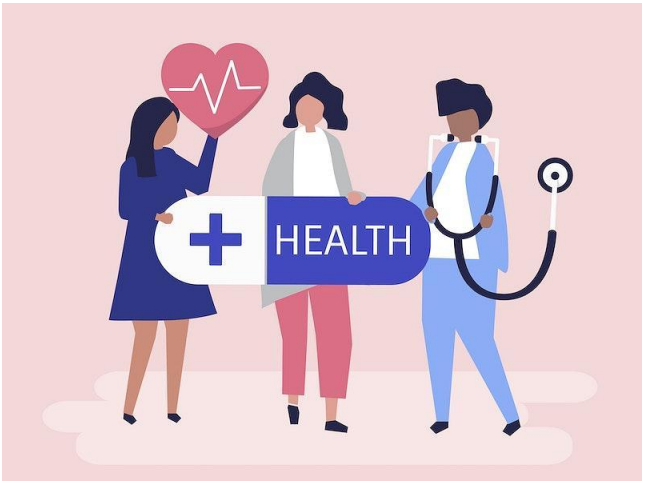
- Demand reduction efforts use **Prevention**, **Treatment**, and **Research** to reduce substance use
- Addresses individual and interpersonal risk and protective factors
- Provides information and skills to enhance positive behavioral change and increase resiliency

Demand Reduction Policy Examples, I

- Ensuring access to stable and affordable housing
  - Reduces many risk factors such as mental health, violence, impacts of poverty
- Investing in strengthening communities
  - Addresses factors related to environmental stressors (e.g., lack of transportation access to services) that can impact substance use risk factors

Demand Reduction Policy Examples, II

- Funding schools and quality education opportunities
  - Environment and attainment
  - Builds protective factors
- Access to health care coverage
  - Builds protective factors, addresses risk factors, supports treatment

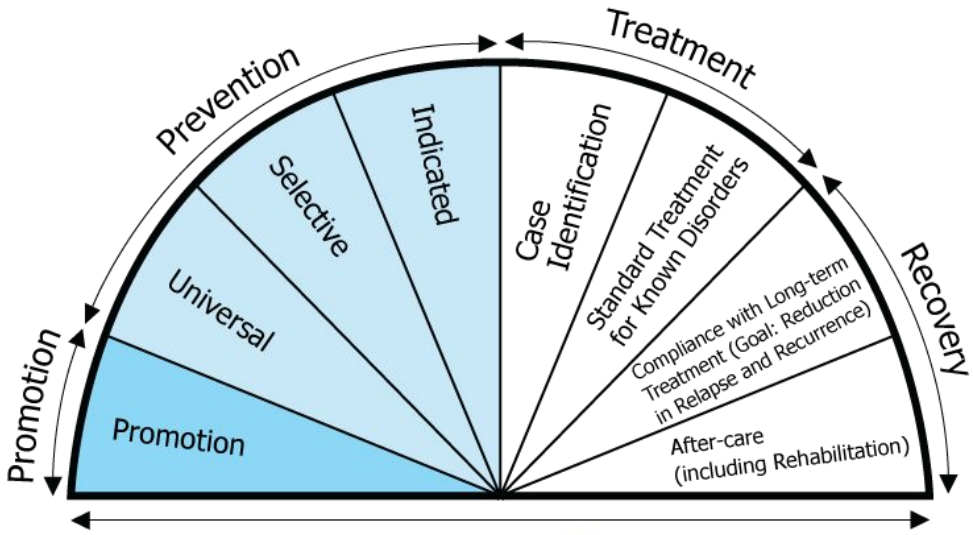


Harm Reduction

- Designed to reduce harms caused by substance use and to stay connected with individuals who may not be ready yet to receive SUD treatment
- Offers a set of practical strategies and ideas
- Proven to prevent death, injury, disease, overdose, and substance use

Where Harm Reduction Fits

- Harm reduction is part of the continuum of care
  - Connects individuals to overdose education, counseling, and referral to treatment
  - Distributes opioid overdose reversal medications
  - Lessens harms associated with drug use and related behaviors that increase the risk of infectious diseases
  - Reduces stigma
  - Promotes a philosophy of hope and healing



Harm Reduction Policy Examples

- Fentanyl Test Strips
- Naloxone Distribution
- Safe Injection Sites
- Safer Supply

Strengths and Challenges

Discussion Questions

What do you see as the strengths of using policy change to address substance use prevention needs?

What do you see as the challenges of using policy change to address substance use prevention needs?

Advantages of Policy Changes

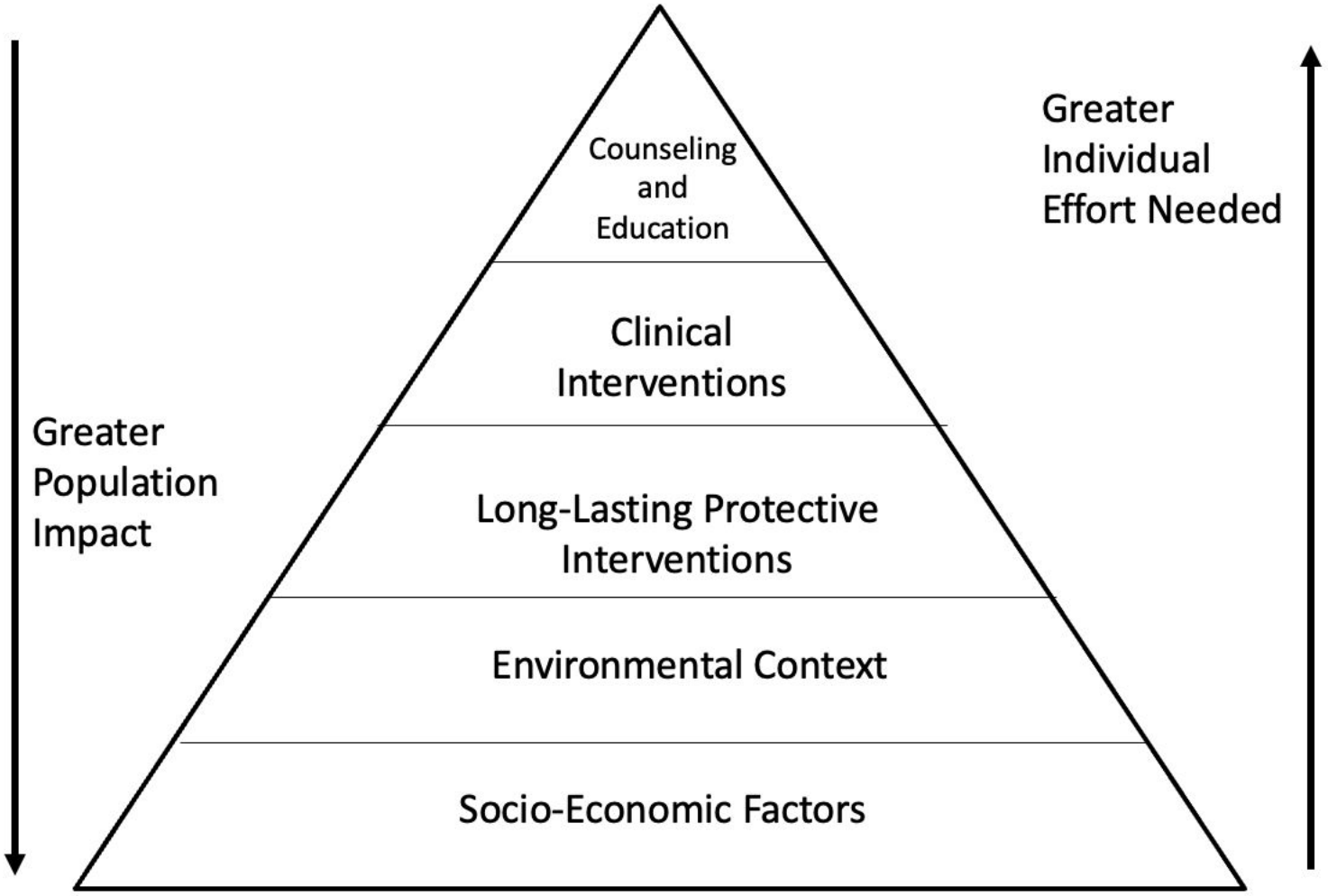
- Broad reach
  - Easier to impact entire populations
- Cost efficient
  - Significantly lower costs in many cases
- Sustainable
  - Many do not require continued funding once in place
- Enduring effects
  - Changes in underlying conditions means that future populations are also served

Challenges of Policy Change

- Have trouble addressing individual needs
- Specific evidence of effectiveness not always available
- Face myriad implementation obstacles
- Difficult/impossible to implement on your own
- Require significant upfront time and investment before seeing any impact

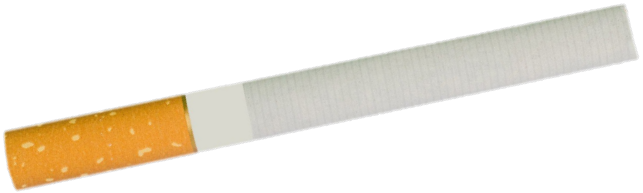
A Comprehensive Approach

Modeling An Approach (Frieden, 2010)



Case Study: Tobacco Prevention (Frieden, 2010)

- Socio-Economic Factors
  - High poverty rates associated with higher smoking rates
- Environmental Context
  - Excise taxes; smoke-free workplaces
- Long-Lasting Protective Interventions
  - Graphic anti-smoking ad campaigns created a “social immunization” against the idea of smoking
- Clinical Interventions
  - Smoking cessation medications; encourage healthy diet and exercise to reduce stress
- Counseling and Education
  - Education about the risks of smoking



Case Study: The Drinking Age

- Raising the minimum legal drinking age (MLDA) in the United States from 18 to 21
  - Primarily addressed one risk factor for youth drinking- Access to alcohol
  - Found to be significantly associated with reduced rates of youth alcohol use and connected outcomes
  - Other risk factors remain and rates of youth alcohol use are not at 0%
  - Other strategies can cause additional success

Small Group: Policy Scenario

Community X Example

- Economically prosperous suburban community in Mid-Atlantic United States
- Lack of free, public event spaces
- Above-average degree of educational attainment
- Multiple colleges within and near the community
- Tourism and military spending help drive the economy
- Robust health care system that encompasses most providers in the community.

Recently, the county has faced skyrocketing fentanyl overdose rates and lacks an established prevention infrastructure to address the issue. The county historically faced limited impacts from the opioid epidemic. Rates of prescription opioid misuse and heroin use were significantly below national averages. Stakeholders only took preliminary steps to address the epidemic such as ensuring health care providers participated in the state's prescription drug monitoring program. However, community awareness and understanding of the epidemic remained low. Most residents consider opioids a problem "in other counties."

Discussion Questions

- How might prevention stakeholders in Community X learn more about the substance use occurring in the community?
- What are some types of policy changes that prevention stakeholders in Community X could pursue to reduce fentanyl overdoses?
- What could be the first steps to accomplishing those policy changes?
  - E.g., Who are examples of policy makers you would want to reach out to?

10 Minute Discussion

Discussion Debrief

Conclusion

- Policy change is an important component of a comprehensive prevention approach
- It can address many different environmental needs
- Important to understand the strengths and challenges of policy change as a prevention strategy
- Join us for part 2 as we talk about what prevention can do to achieve policy change!

Thank you for your time and participation!

Questions?

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