Adapting Public Health Prevention Strategies to the Problem Gambling Field

Presenters:

Chuck Klevgaard

Tana Russell

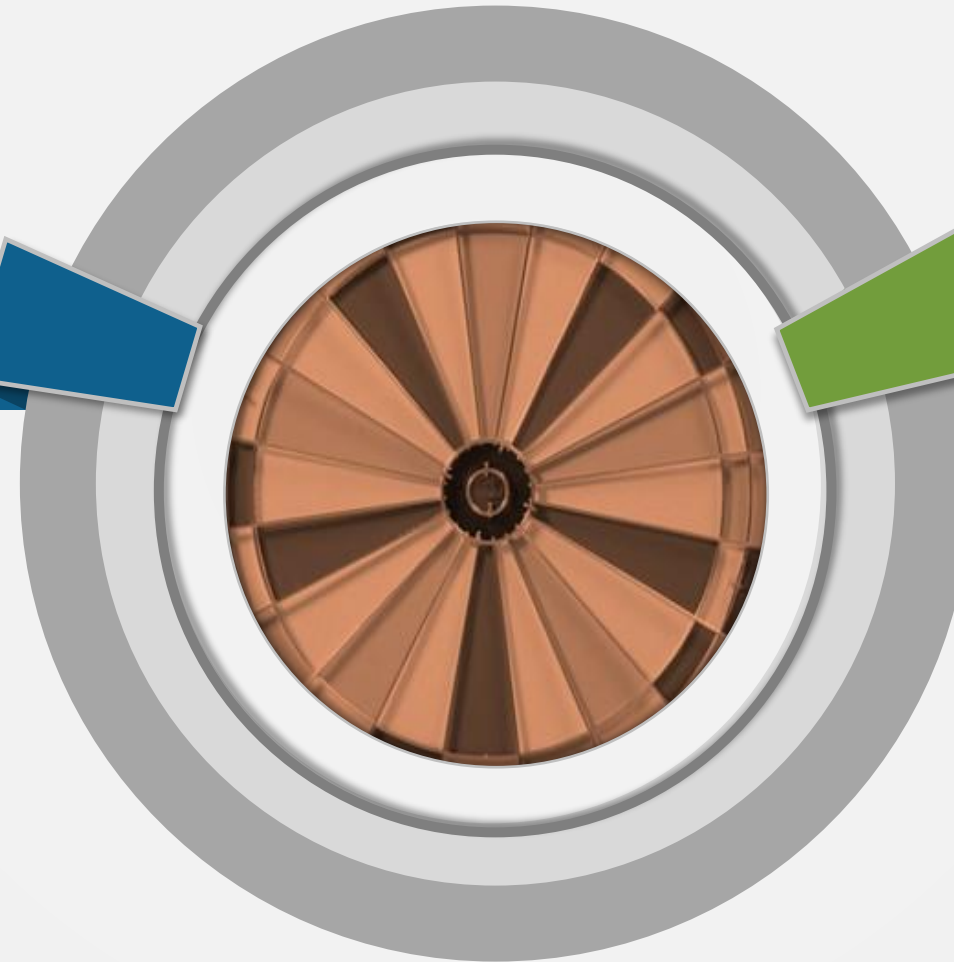Paulina Zyskowski

July 17, 2025

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council on problem gambling

Learning Objectives

Objective One

To be able to translate research-supported public health prevention measures into the problem gambling field

Objective Two

To compare past and present public health and problem gambling prevention practices globally

Who is in the Room Today?

What is your experience with PG work (of any kind)?

A. New

B. Moderate

C. Advanced

What is your experience with Prevention work (of any kind)?

A. New

B. Moderate

C. Advanced

SECTION 1
Public Health Approaches

Public Health Basics
Behavior and Harm
Ecological Framework
Continuum of Care
Individual and Environment

# Success of Public Health on Behaviors and Consequences

Excessive alcohol consumption and the associated negative consequences are a major public health concern in the United States and throughout the world.

Prevention initiatives have been successful in reducing both rates of consumption and the associated negative health outcomes.
(Source Kelly-Weeder, S., Phillips, K., & Rounseville, S. (2011)

Success of Public Health

Trends in 30 Day Prevalence of Alcohol Use in Grades 8,10, and 12

Legend: ■ 8th Grade ■ 10th Grade ■ 12th Grade

Data points: 54%, 42.8%, 25%, 24.3%, 13.7%, 5.9%
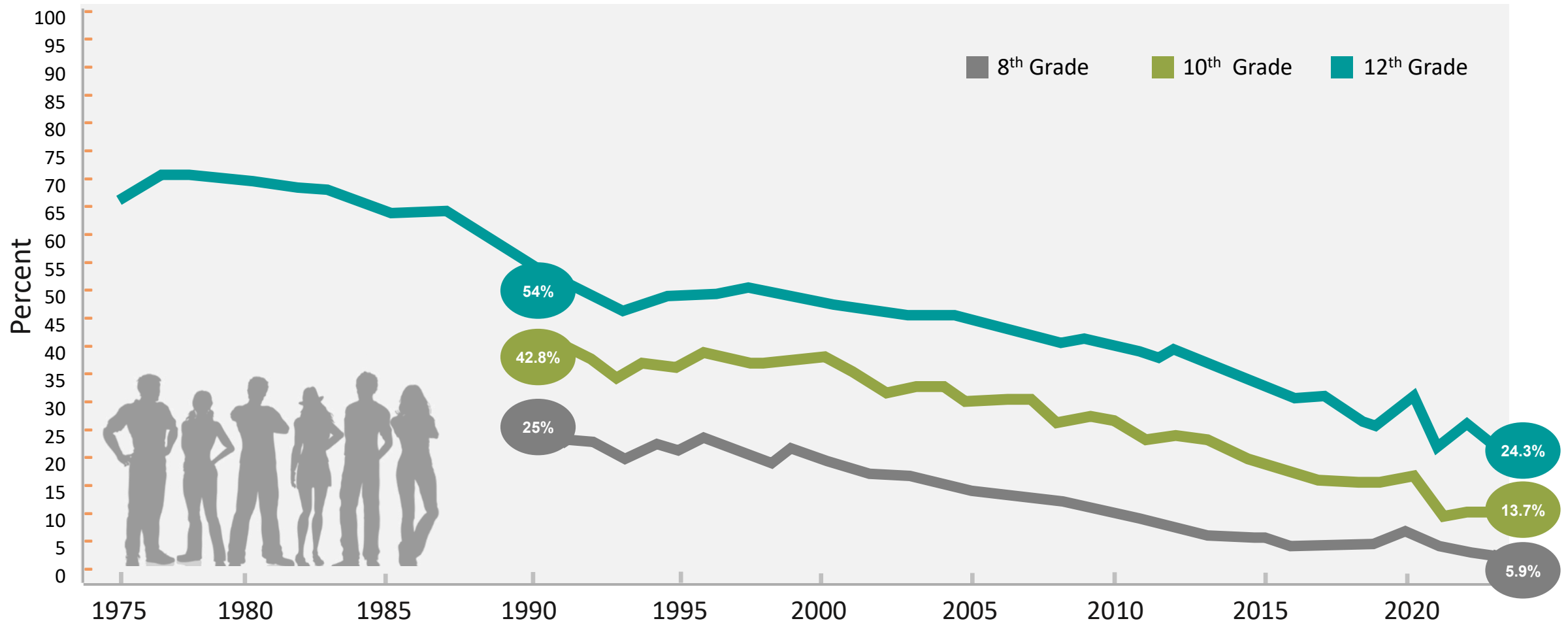
Miech, R. A., Johnston, L. D., Patrick, M. E., & O'Malley, P. M. (2024). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975–2023: Overview and detailed results for secondary school students. Monitoring the Future Monograph Series. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2024). Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking.
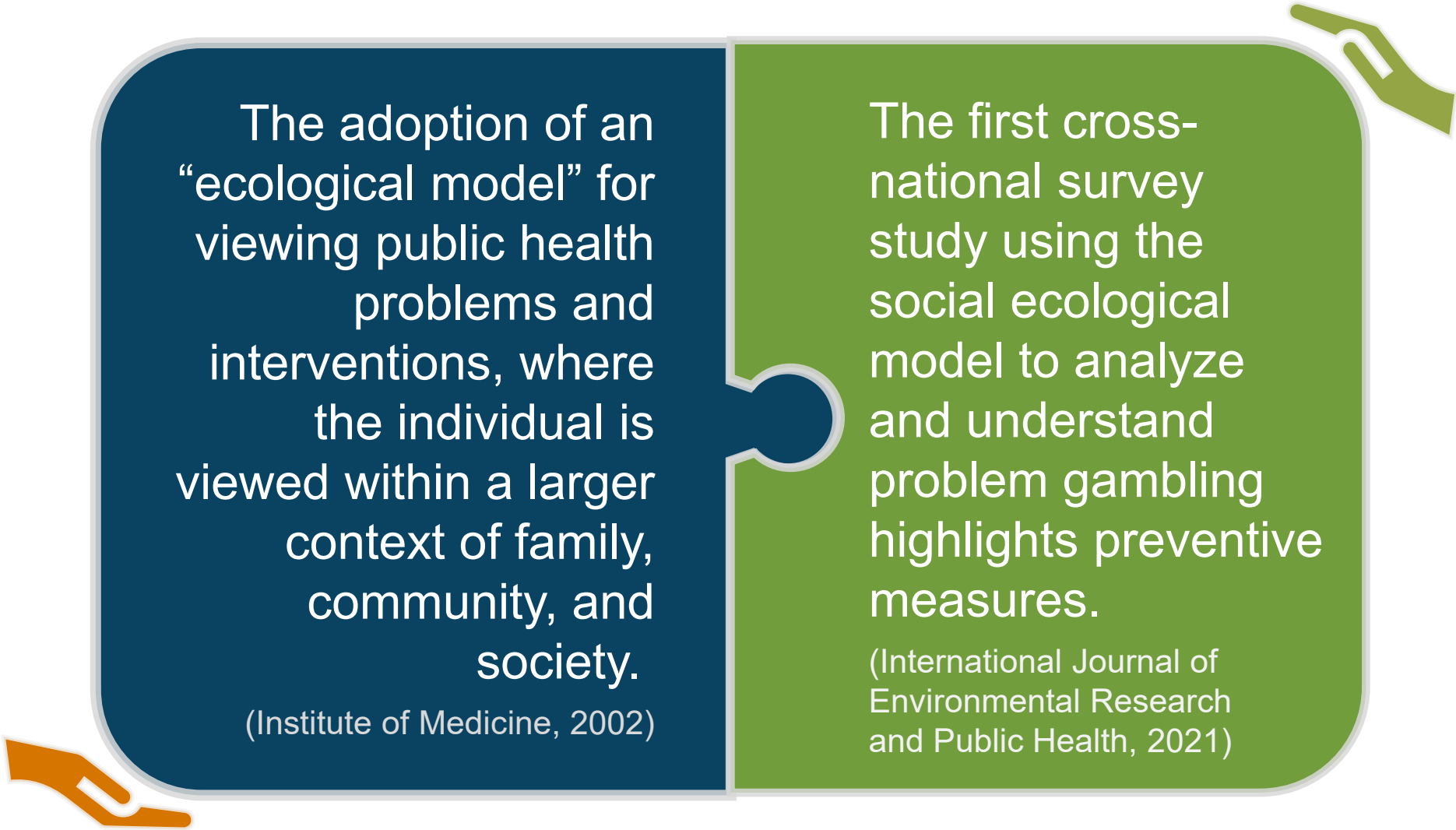
Success of Public Health

Rate of Under 21 Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities (per 100,000 Population)
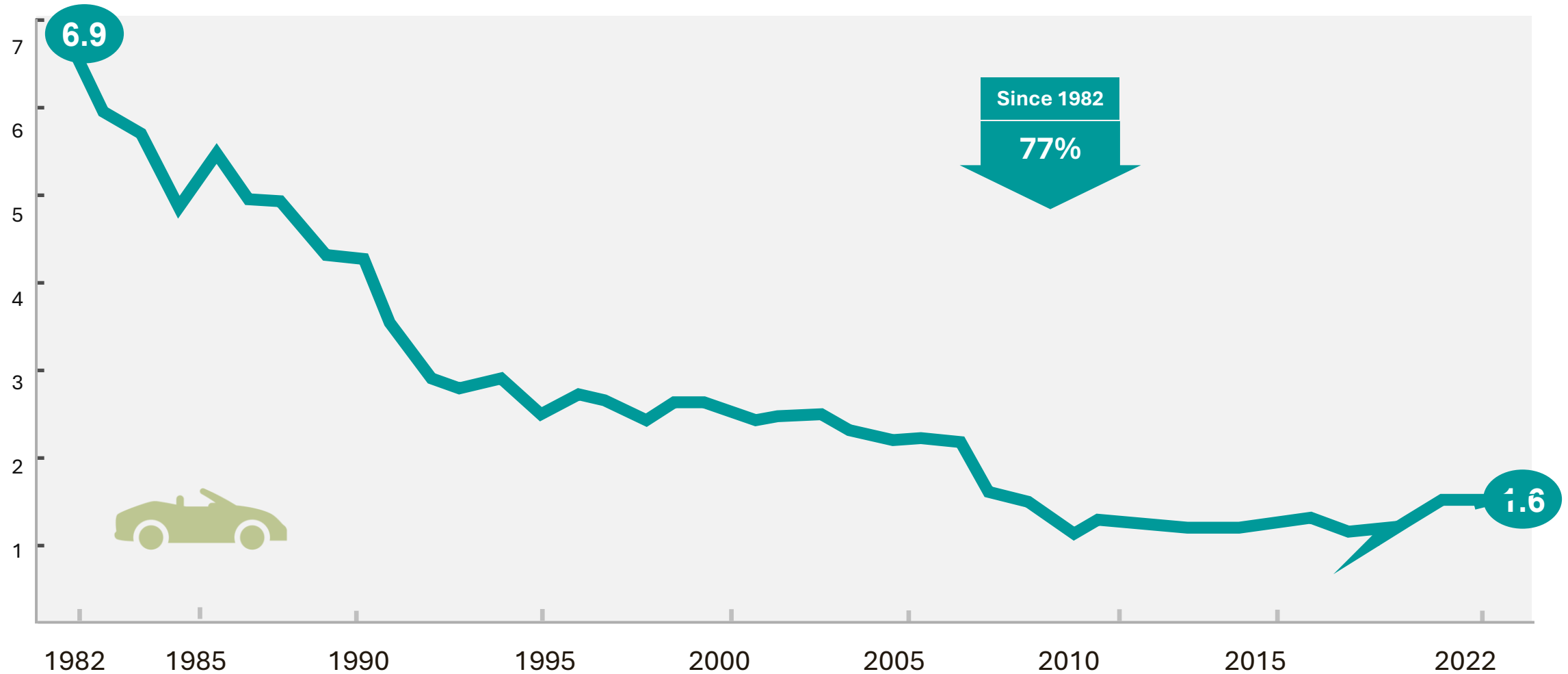
6.9

Since 1982

77%

1.6

1982   1985   1990   1995   2000   2005   2010   2015   2022

7

An Ecological Framework

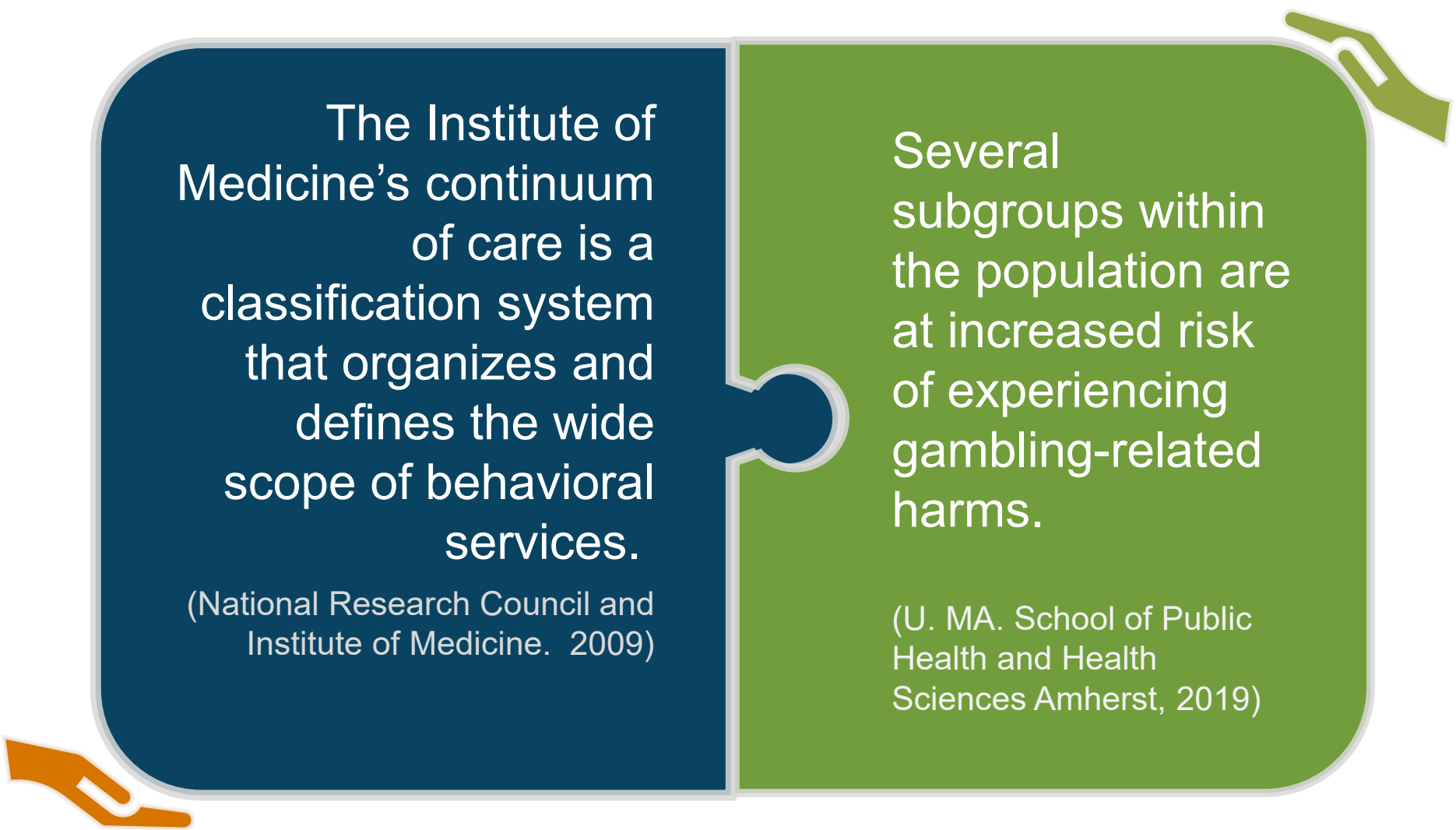The adoption of an "ecological model" for viewing public health problems and interventions, where the individual is viewed within a larger context of family, community, and society.

(Institute of Medicine, 2002)

The first cross-national survey study using the social ecological model to analyze and understand problem gambling highlights preventive measures.

(International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2021)

Continuum of Care

The Institute of Medicine's continuum of care is a classification system that organizes and defines the wide scope of behavioral services.

(National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 2009)

Several subgroups within the population are at increased risk of experiencing gambling-related harms.

(U. MA. School of Public Health and Health Sciences Amherst, 2019)

Continuum of Care

The Institute of Medicine's continuum of care is a classification system that organizes and defines the wide scope of behavioral services.

(National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 2009)
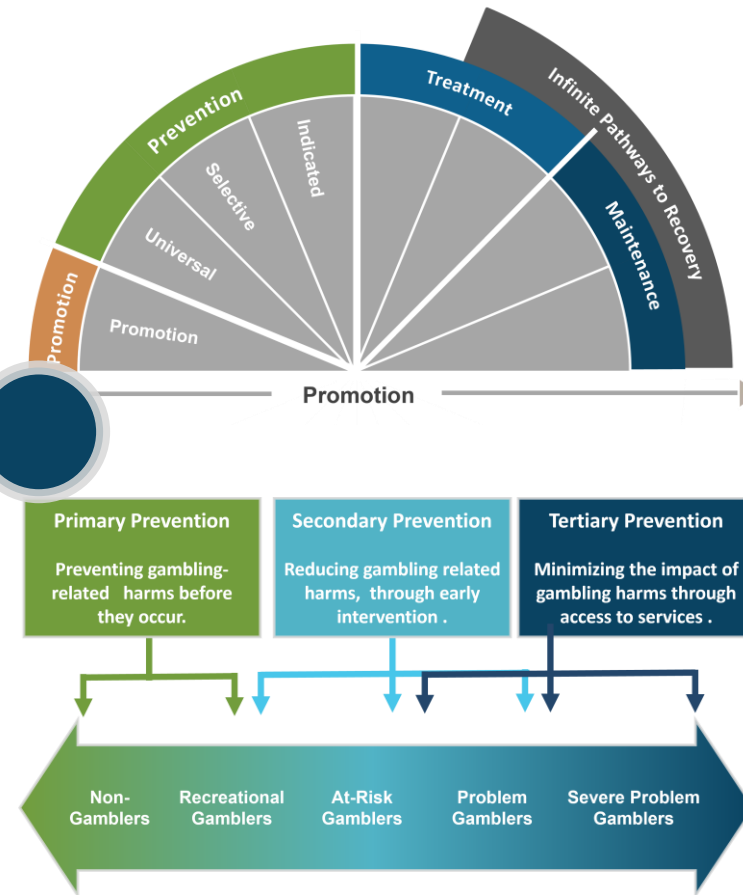
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Individual and the Environment

An Emphasis on Environment

Prevention efforts that aim to change or influence community standards, institutions, structures, attitudes that shape individuals' behavior.

The Emergence of Ethical Gambling

Creating the necessary environmental conditions that permit gambling as an economic activity, but with the primary objective of preventing potential health risks, primarily gambling disorder

(Chóliz, M. Ethical Gambling (2018).

Individual and the Environment

An Emphasis on Environment

Prevention efforts that aim to change or influence community standards, institutions, structures, attitudes that shape individuals' behavior.

Availability

Norms

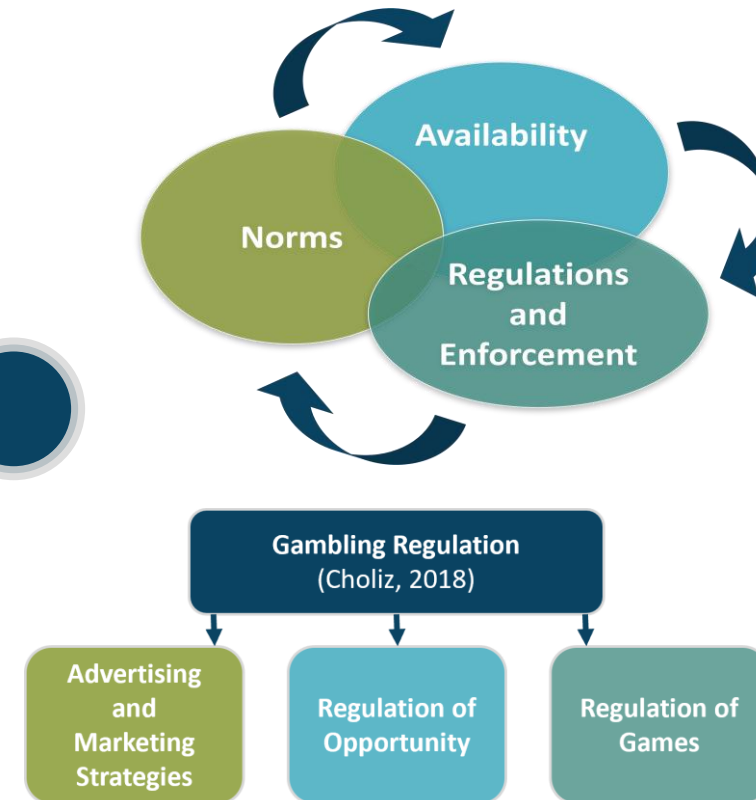Regulations and Enforcement

Gambling Regulation
(Choliz, 2018)

Advertising and Marketing Strategies

Regulation of Opportunity

Regulation of Games

Th E

Cr environm p e with the preve risk

(Chóliz, M

SECTION 2
Principles of Public Health

Principles of Public Health

1 Public health involves understanding what leads to the problem you are trying to prevent

2 Public health is about everyone, and all people deserve safety and dignity

3 Public health and responsible gambling are closely linked

4 Community engagement plays a critical role

5 Building a skilled workforce is critical for communities to be able to launch a public health response to problem gambling

Risk and **Protective** Factors

are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede, and are associated with, a higher or lower likelihood of negative outcomes.

In prevention work, the overall goal is to understand an individual's or community's risk and protective factors and to shape the environment to produce the healthiest conditions for growth and development.

but...
Realistically, is this possible? Could we truly eliminate
all risk factors from someone's life?

Risk and Protective Factors for Problem Gambling

Risk Factors

Biological

- SUD/MHD/GD runs in families
- Personality traits
- Gender/demographic barriers to resources or exposure to gambling at an early age

Environmental

- Life stressors
- Relationship issues
- Health/mental health issues
- Cultural norm of gambling

Protective Factors

Biological

- No family history of SUD/MHD/GD
- Adaptive personality traits
- Gender/demographics restrict exposure gambling or enhance access to resources

Environmental

- Healthy coping skills
- Supportive relationships
- Spirituality/Cultural connectedness
- Help services accessible

Credit: Slide content is adapted from various sources including CAMH, Julie Hynes, Lori Rugle, and Tana Russell. General concept based on various studies.

Understanding the Problem, You are Trying to Prevent
Gambling Disorder Pathways – How can it be prevented

1. Behavioral	2. Emot. Vulnerable	3. Impulsive/Risk-Taking
• Info./Edu. about gambling risks, odds, randomness, and control • Gaming Industry RG Policies & Procedures	• Prevention of trauma • Emotional support groups • Support and education for parents • Coping and problem-solving skills dev.	• Clear social rules and guidelines • Impulse-control coping skills • Mindfulness • Pro-social extracurricular activities and hobbies

Nower, L., & Blaszczynski, A. (2017). Development and validation of the Gambling Pathways Questionnaire (GPQ). *Psychology of addictive behaviors: Journal of the Society of Psychologists in Addictive Behaviors*, *31*(1), 95–109. https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000234

2 **Public Health is About Everyone- People Deserve Dignity and Respect**
Harm Reduction Strategies

- Harm reduction and brief intervention efforts are shown to be effective with problem gambling. (Velasco et al., 2021)

- Harm reduction strategies need to be culturally-attuned and person-centered

- Find a simple individual HR plan on ECPG's "Resources and Downloads" page here: https://www.evergreencpg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/16-Harm-Reduction-Goals3-1.pdf

My Plan for Gambling

The biggest problems I have had because of my gambling are:
1.
2.
3.
The reason I MUST limit or reduce my gambling is:

My gambling goals:
1. I will spend no more than _____% of my budget, which is $_____ per month.
2. I will spend no more than $_____ per time that I gamble.
3. I will gamble expecting to lose, as that is the nature of the game. If I *do* win anything at all, this is what I will do with those winnings:

4. I will spend no more than _____ hours playing, per time I gamble.
5. I will only gamble at the following low-risk activities or games:

6. I will only gamble in the following low risk situations:

7. I will be sure to be accountable to the following people about my gambling:

8. I will not gamble when I am feeling:
   ☐ Angry   ☐ Stressed
   ☐ Lonely   ☐ Other: _____
   ☐ Depressed
9. I will not gamble and use substances simultaneously.

If I am unable to stick to any goal above, I will:

Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling
This tool is intended for clinical use by healthcare professionals.   [June 2020]

# Public Health and Responsible Gambling are Closely Linked
Responsible Gambling Strategies – Who is responsible?

**Responsible Gaming (RG)
IS Prevention**

Everyone has something they can do

Where can you influence change?
Policies, procedures, laws, regulations, behaviors, education

4 Community Engagement Plays a Critical Role in Public Health

Principles of Community Engagement
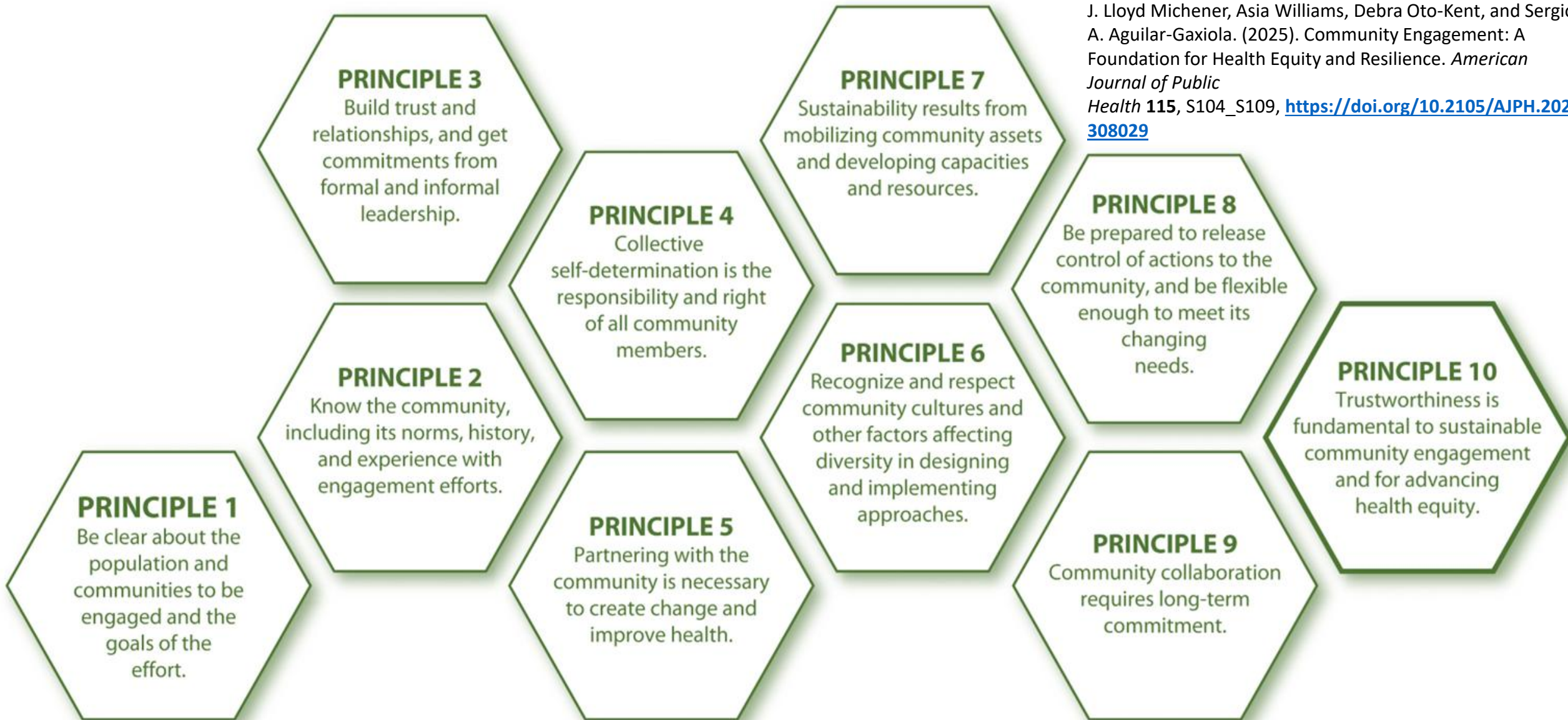
Building a Skilled Workforce
Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA)

Domain I: Knowledge

Domain II: Assessment

Domain III: Capacity Building

Domain IV: Planning

Domain V: Implementation

Domain VI: Evaluation

Domain VII: Sociocultural Attuned Prevention

Domain VIII: Communication and Information
                 Dissemination

Domain IX: Ethics and Professional Development

A Guide to Core Competencies for Problem Gambling Prevention Professionals

The development of this guide was supported by funding from Oregon Health Authority **Problem Gambling Services.**

By Teresa McDowell and Iva Košutić

January 2022

Oregon Health Authority

McDowell, T, Kosutic, I. (2022). *A Guide to Core Competencies for Problem Gambling Prevention Professionals.* Oregon Health Authority.
https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/Documents/Problem%20Gambling%20Prevention%20Core%20Competencies%20Guide.pdf

Building a Skilled Workforce
Prevention Credentials

The **Prevention Specialist (PS) credential** is awarded by the International Credentialing and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC)

Many states have their own state-specific credential. In Ohio, it is the Ohio Certified Prevention Specialist Certificate (OCPS) prevention certification

Why Get Credentials

- Enhancing skill sets and knowledge
- Boosting credibility
- Opening doors to better job opportunities and career growth
- Providing proof of expertise and qualifications
- Helping organizations maintain high standards
- Providing a competitive edge in their industries
- Helping students find well-paying jobs that require specific skills
- Providing longevity in employment by keeping workers up-to-date with technology changes

Another option is the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) certification

SECTION 3
Applying Evidence and Best Practices

Types of Evidence
Understanding and Incorporating Change Theory
Selecting Programs
Examples of Programs, Practices and Policy

Applying Evidence and Best Practices

1. **Best Practices**
   Locating and Selecting Interventions
2. **Using Change Theory**
3. **Evidence-based Programs, Practices, and Policy**
   Emotional Regulation
   Policy and Regulations
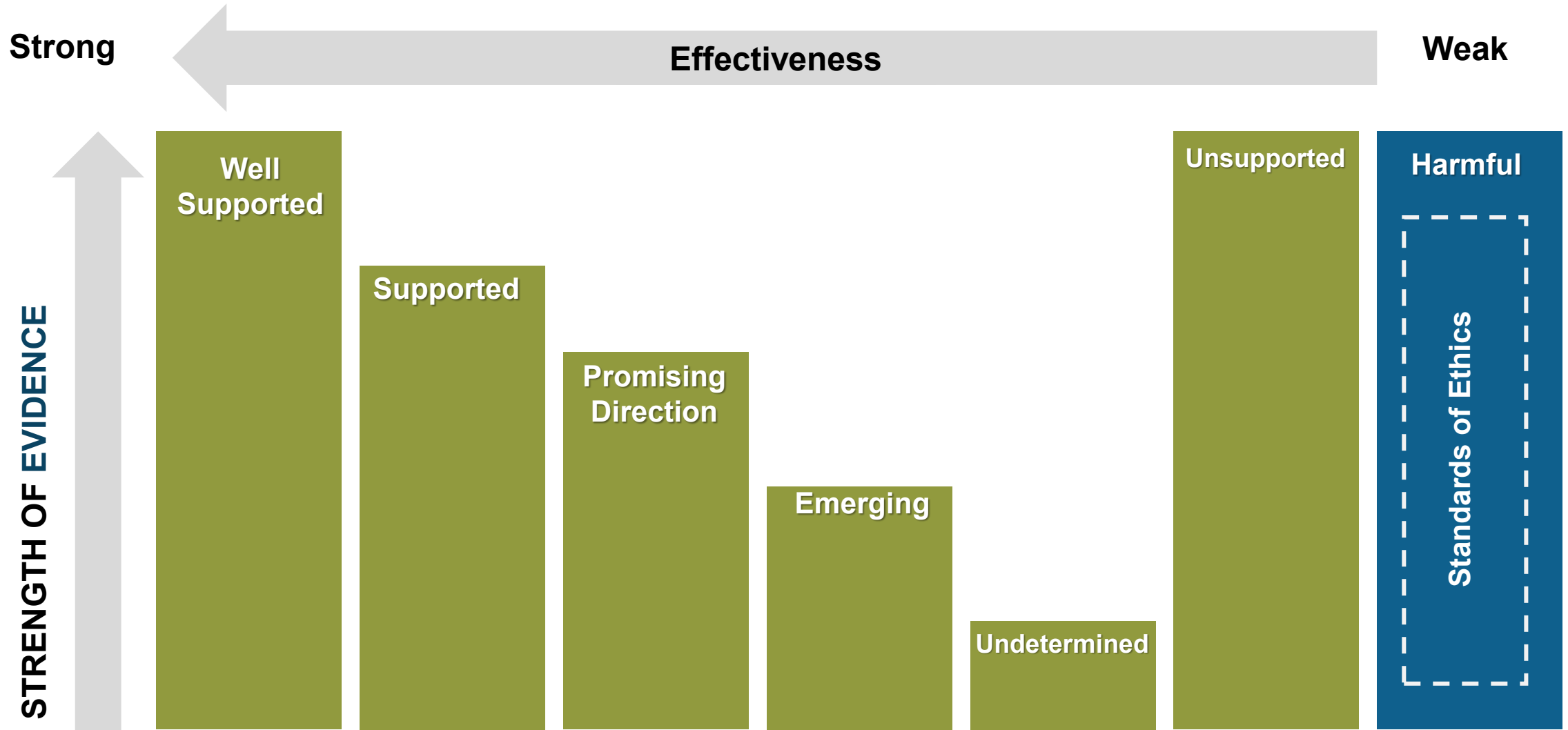
The Health Belief Model
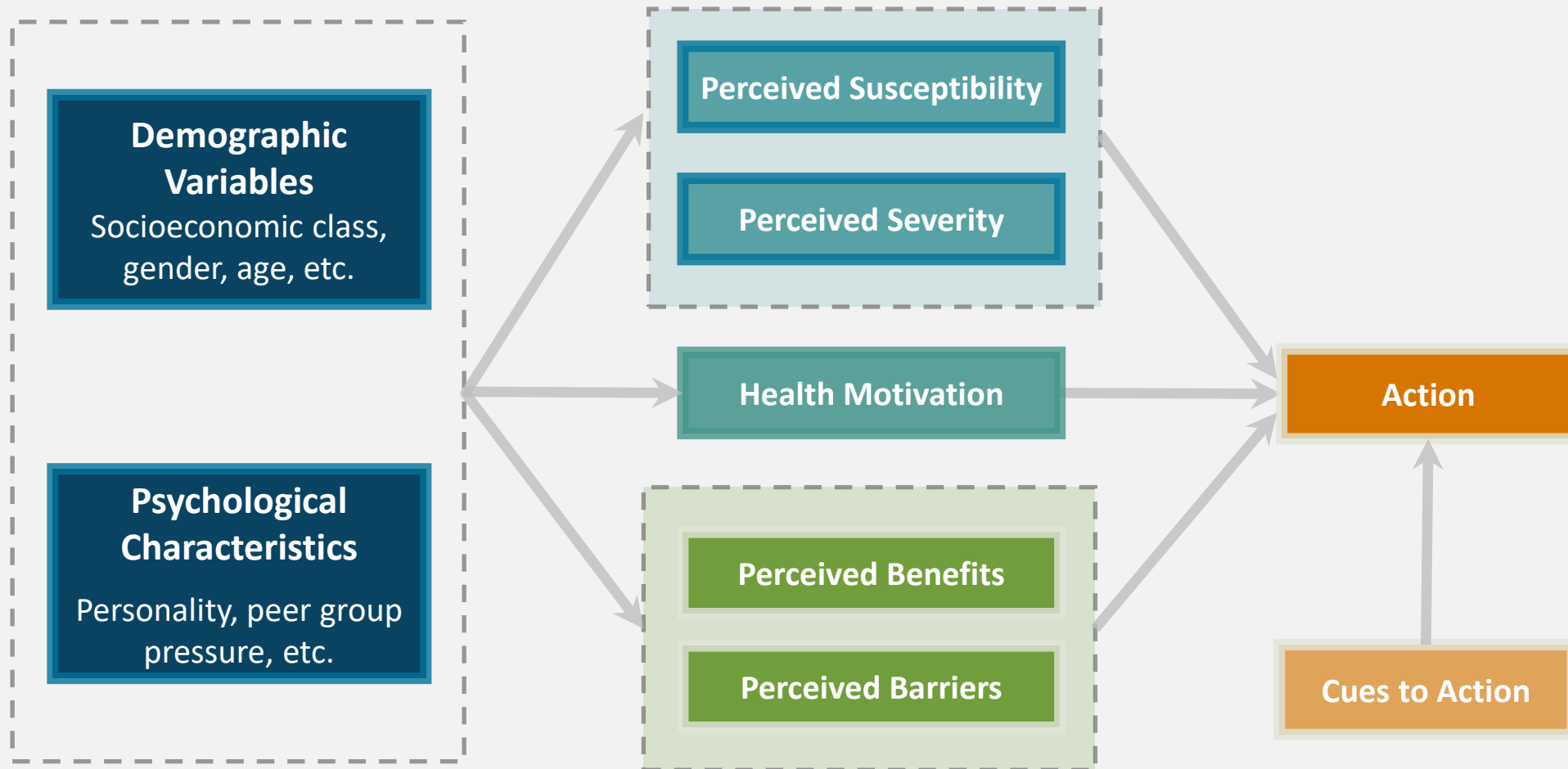
Bourne, Paul & Sashane, Smith & Jhanelle, Peterson & Geraldine, Wynter & Danielle, Foster & James, Fallah & Campbell, Calvin & Foster, Clifton & McLean, Caroline & Russell, Parkes & Muchee, Tabitha. (2022). Fear and its Influence on the Healthcare Seeking Behaviour of Jamaicans during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. *Insights of Anthropology*. 6. 10.36959/763/523.

The Theory of Planned Behavior
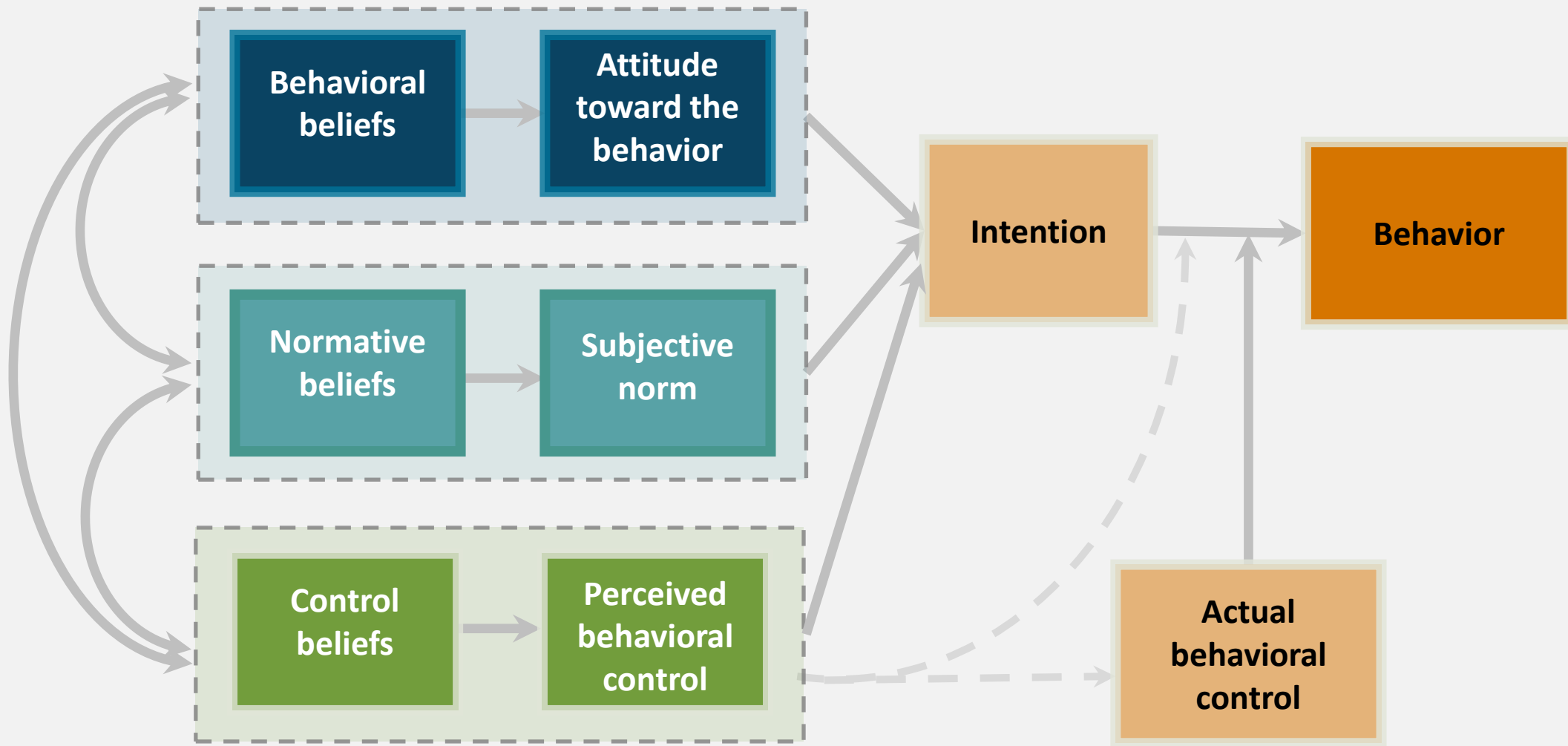
Martin, R. J., Usdan, S., Nelson, S., Umstattd, M. R., LaPlante, D., Perko, M., & Shaffer, H. (2010). Using the theory of planned behavior to predict gambling behavior. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, *24*(1), 89.

Using Theory to Plan Multilevel Interventions

Change Strategies	Examples of Strategies	Ecological level	Useful Theories
Change People's Behavior	▪ Educational sessions ▪ Interactive kiosks ▪ Print brochures ▪ Social marketing campaigns	**Individual**	Stages of Change Health Belief Model Theory of Planned Behavior
	▪ Mentoring programs ▪ Health advising	**Interpersonal**	Social Cognitive Theory
Change the Environment	▪ Media advocacy campaigns ▪ Advocating changes to policy	**Community**	Communication Theory Diffusion of Innovations Community Organizing

Glanz, K. (1997). Theory at a glance: A guide for health promotion practice (No. 97). US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute.

Change Theory as Applied to Problem Gambling

Stages of Change (Transtheoretical) Model describes individuals' motivation and readiness to change a behavior.

← *The model has been applied when trying to change all sorts of behaviors, including changing one's relationship with gambling.* [1, 2]

The Health Belief Model (HBM) addresses the individual's perceptions of the threat posed by a health problem, the benefits of avoiding the threat, and factors influencing the decision to act.

← *The HBM has been successfully applied to different health behaviors in many contexts, including clinical settings for problem gambling.* [3]

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines the relations between an individual's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, behavior, and perceived control over that behavior.

← *Studies on TPB find that subjective norms can have a negative impact on gambling intention and that gambling intention directly affects problem gambling severity.* [4]

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) describes a dynamic, ongoing process in which personal factors, environmental factors, and human behavior exert influence upon each other.

← *SGT can shed light on how gambling exposure in various forms of media can affect attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.* [4]

Change Theory as Applied to Problem Gambling

Communication Theory describes how different types of communication affect health behavior. It investigates how messages are created, transmitted, received, and assimilated. How communication processes contribute to, or discourage, behavior change.

← *Gambling messaging is one potential component towards reducing gambling-related harm. Communication strategies used to inform and influence individual behaviors have applied health communication to gambling.* [5, 6]

Diffusion of Innovations Theory addresses how new ideas, products, and social practices spread within an organization, community, or society, or from one society to another.

← *DOI can help us in developing evidence to support the widespread adoption of behavioral health innovations and in promoting the diffusion and implementation of evidence-based innovations* [7]

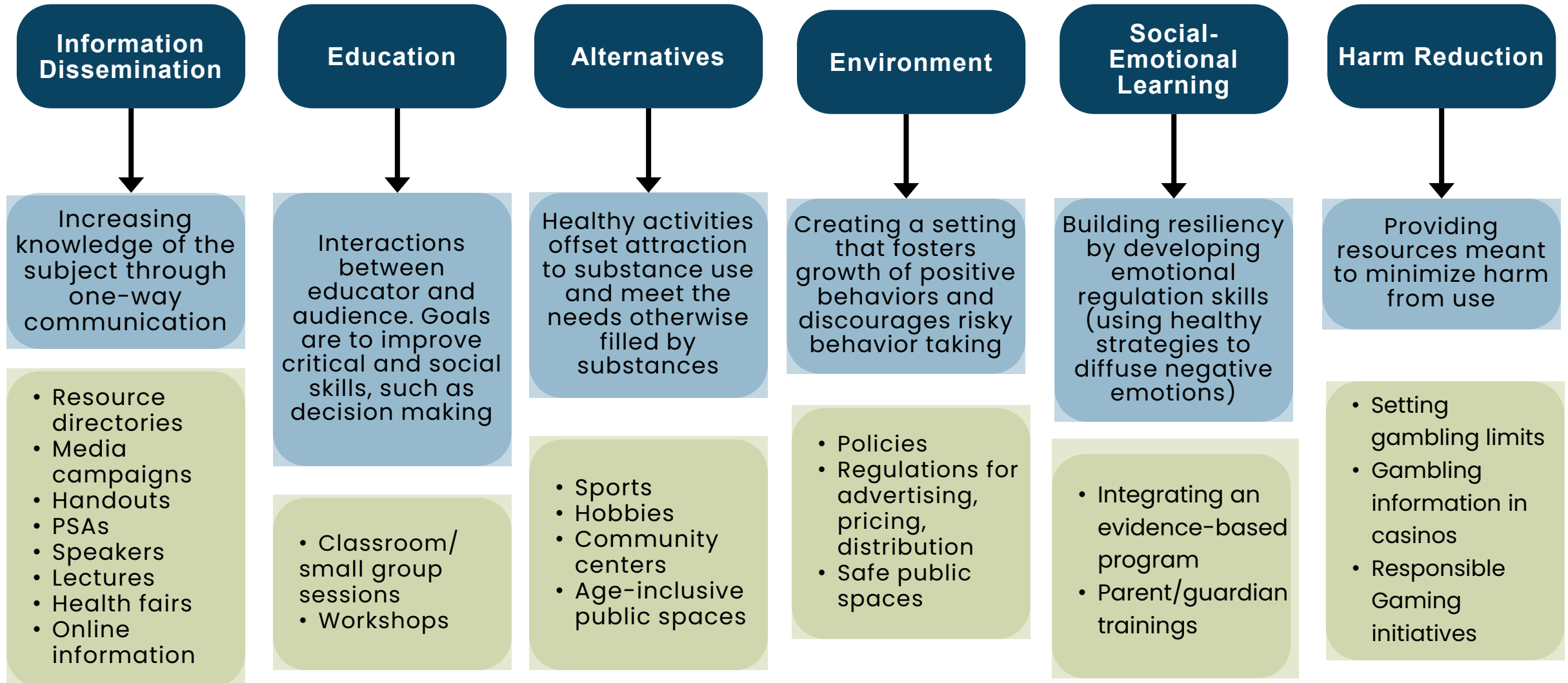**Community Organization (CO) and Other Participatory Models (PM)** emphasize community-driven approaches to assessing and solving health and social problems

← *CO approaches that involve mobilizing the entire community tend to be more effective for gambling than outside-imposed approaches. PM focuses on the context and environment where gambling is taking place through a broad range of strategies.* [8, 9, 10]

Modalities of Prevention

Information Dissemination	Education	Alternatives	Environment	Social-Emotional Learning	Harm Reduction
Increasing knowledge of the subject through one-way communication	Interactions between educator and audience. Goals are to improve critical and social skills, such as decision making	Healthy activities offset attraction to substance use and meet the needs otherwise filled by substances	Creating a setting that fosters growth of positive behaviors and discourages risky behavior taking	Building resiliency by developing emotional regulation skills (using healthy strategies to diffuse negative emotions)	Providing resources meant to minimize harm from use
• Resource directories • Media campaigns • Handouts • PSAs • Speakers • Lectures • Health fairs • Online information	• Classroom/ small group sessions • Workshops	• Sports • Hobbies • Community centers • Age-inclusive public spaces	• Policies • Regulations for advertising, pricing, distribution • Safe public spaces	• Integrating an evidence-based program • Parent/guardian trainings	• Setting gambling limits • Gambling information in casinos • Responsible Gaming initiatives

Emotional Regulation is Prevention

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has shown to ...

- Reduce problem behaviors
- Reduce emotional distress
- Improve test scores and school success
- Lower alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use
- Strengthen caregiver/child relations
- Improve social skills
- Reduce aggression and bullying
- **Produce long-term impacts**

Durlak, Joseph & Mahoney, Joseph & Boyle, Alaina. (2022). What We Know, and What We Need to Find Out About Universal, School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs for Children and Adolescents: A Review of Meta-Analyses and Directions for Future Research. *Psychological Bulletin*. 148. 765–782. 10.1037/bul0000383.

Examples of Policy

Restrictions on **general availability** can look like limitations on…

- ✓ *Locations of gambling venues*
- ✓ *Numbers of gambling venues*
- ✓ *Types of gambling*
- ✓ *Where gambling can take place*

Restrictions on **who can gamble** can look like …

- ✓ *Voluntary self-exclusion*
- ✓ *Age limits*
- ✓ *Serving alcohol responsibly*

Williams, R., West, B., Simpson, R. (2012). Prevention of Problem Gambling: A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence and Identified Best Practices. *University of Lethbridge Research Repository.* https://opus.uleth.ca/bitstream/handle/10133/414/2007-Prevention-OPGRC.pdf

Examples of Policy

Restrictions on gameplay itself can look like changes to…	✓ **Game play speed** ✓ **Payment accepted** ✓ **Lights and sound** ✓ **On screen clocks** ✓ **Availability of complementary drinks, foods, and perks**
Accessibility of **help and resources** can look like…	✓ **Helpline posted conspicuously** ✓ **Information and resources accessible** ✓ **Staff trained to respond**

Williams, R., West, B., Simpson, R. (2012). Prevention of Problem Gambling: A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence and Identified Best Practices. *University of Lethbridge Research Repository.* https://opus.uleth.ca/bitstream/handle/10133/414/2007-Prevention-OPGRC.pdf

In Summary

Bringing It All Together

Which Elements Are Missing in Your Community Approach?

Mounting a Full Public Health Response
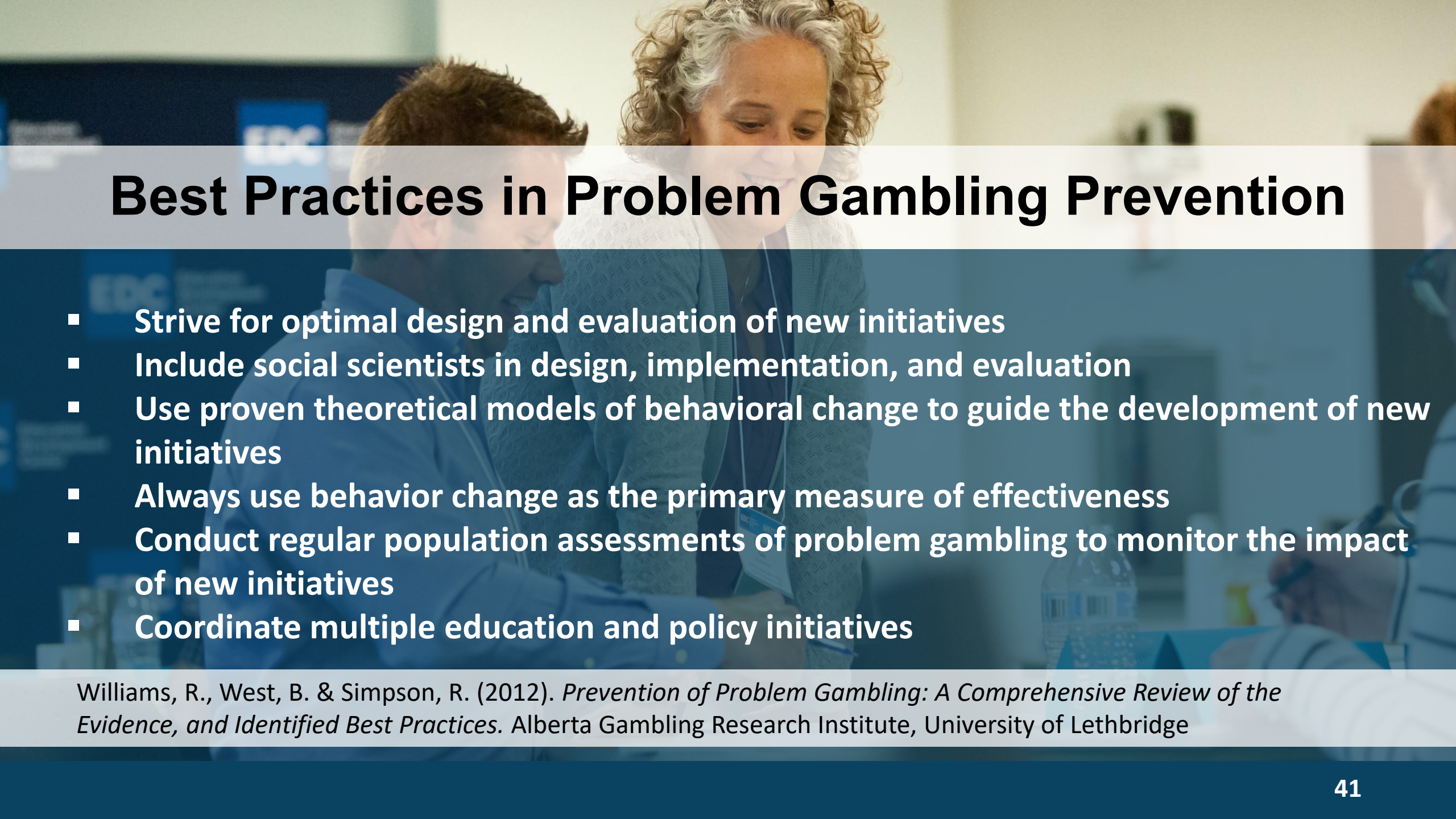
Which Principles, Approaches, or EBPs Are Missing in Your Community Approach?

Risk Factors

Community Engaged

Protective Factors

Harm Reduction

Credentials

Continuum of Care

Ecological Framework

Environment

Behavior and Harm

Individual

EBPs

SEL

Change Theory

Policy

Regulations

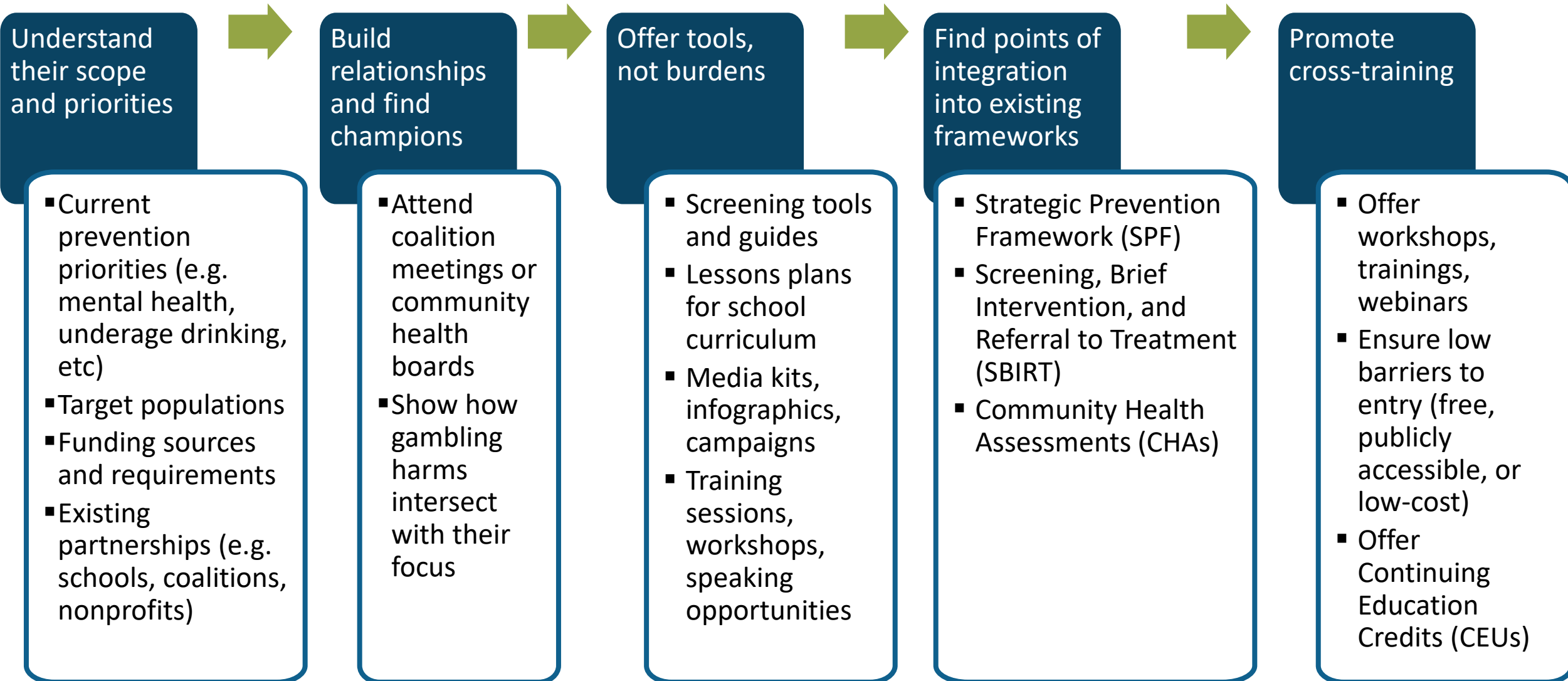Principles   Approaches   Evidence-based Practice

Best Practices in Problem Gambling Prevention

- Strive for optimal design and evaluation of new initiatives
- Include social scientists in design, implementation, and evaluation
- Use proven theoretical models of behavioral change to guide the development of new initiatives
- Always use behavior change as the primary measure of effectiveness
- Conduct regular population assessments of problem gambling to monitor the impact of new initiatives
- Coordinate multiple education and policy initiatives

Williams, R., West, B. & Simpson, R. (2012). *Prevention of Problem Gambling: A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence, and Identified Best Practices.* Alberta Gambling Research Institute, University of Lethbridge

I'm not a preventionist - How do I work with prevention workers to integrate problem gambling efforts?

Understand their scope and priorities →

- Current prevention priorities (e.g. mental health, underage drinking, etc)
- Target populations
- Funding sources and requirements
- Existing partnerships (e.g. schools, coalitions, nonprofits)

Build relationships and find champions →

- Attend coalition meetings or community health boards
- Show how gambling harms intersect with their focus

Offer tools, not burdens →

- Screening tools and guides
- Lessons plans for school curriculum
- Media kits, infographics, campaigns
- Training sessions, workshops, speaking opportunities

Find points of integration into existing frameworks →

- Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)
- Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)
- Community Health Assessments (CHAs)

Promote cross-training

- Offer workshops, trainings, webinars
- Ensure low barriers to entry (free, publicly accessible, or low-cost)
- Offer Continuing Education Credits (CEUs)

I'm not a preventionist - How do I work with prevention workers to integrate problem gambling efforts?

Help them see problem gambling as a **risk multiplier**—not a separate issue

Coming Soon!

WA State Problem Gambling Prevention Workgroup

Problem Gambling Prevention Toolkit

WA State's Problem Gambling Prevention Strategic Plan

EVERGREEN
council on problem gambling

Questions

Download Materials

PowerPoint Slides

An Introduction to the Essential Elements for an Effective Problem Gambling Framework *DRAFT*

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Using Change Theory to Address Problem Gambling

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council on problem gambling

SCAN TO DOWNLOADMATERIALS

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McDowell, T, Kosutic, I. (2022). A Guide to Core Competencies for Problem Gambling Prevention Professionals. *Oregon Health Authority*. https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/Documents/Problem%20Gambling%20Prevention%20Core%20Competencies%20Guide.pdf

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Puddy, R.W. & Wilkins, N. (2011). Understanding Evidence Part 1: Best Available Research Evidence. A guide to the continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness. Atlanta, GA: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. file:///C:/Users/TanaRussell/Downloads/cdc_137401_DS1%20(1).pdf

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Williams, R., West, B., Simpson, R. (2012). Prevention of Problem Gambling: A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence and Identified Best Practices. *University of Lethbridge Research Repository.* https://opus.uleth.ca/bitstream/handle/10133/414/2007-Prevention-OPGRC.pdf

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10. Levett, M. E. V., Lafreniere, G., & Gordon, J. (2016). Betting On Community-Based Interventions: Facilitating Knowledge Translation of Problem Gambling in a Vulnerable Community.

Resources

Theory at a Glance: Application to Health Promotion and Health Behavior (Second Edition), describes influential theories of health-related behaviors, processes of shaping behavior, and the effects of community and environmental factors on behavior. Health promotion is broadly defined as the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. Thus, the focus goes beyond traditional primary and secondary prevention programs.

Theory at A Glance: A Guide for Health Promotion, available at 11-0218 NCI Theory Book.1c