

A Framework for Mental Health Promotion

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

A comprehensive set of protective factors in which communities can invest to promote mental health fall into three categories:

- 1) **People**-the social-cultural environment,
- 2) **Place**-healthy environment, including the built environment and
- 3) **Equity**- the economic/educational environment.

All of these operate in the context of community: community capacity, awareness, and opportunities to act are the foundation or drivers for these efforts. This framework is based on the MDH mental health narrative and the *Prevention Institute* model pictured here¹.



Framework for Community Action

The arenas of opportunity for communities and a practical examples include:

PEOPLE	
Supportive relationships and social connectedness	Mentoring, Parent supports, community engagement
Social, emotional and life skills	Social emotional learning, self-care skills, Job Training
Community, culture, and faith	Cultural identity and learning, social clubs
Healthy lifestyle	Exercise, sleep, and nutrition
Trauma and healing	Healing practices, historical trauma dialogue, Trauma-informed systems
PLACE	
Healthy environment	Quality housing, Access to nature, Community appearance and safety
EQUITY	
Economic opportunities and supports	Living wage, food support, paid family leave
Equitable social policies	Preventing discrimination and supporting inclusion, reducing incarceration and school suspension, zoning for culture/religious practices

Community Capacity

The key aspect of a public health approach to mental health is community leadership.

According to the WHO, community is the most important setting and community empowerment, ownership and control of their destiny is the most important strategy for mental health promotion. ⁱⁱ Community capacity is the ability in a given community to solve collective problems and improve community well-being; and it is linked to decreased rates of mental illness, antisocial behavior, neighborhood violence, homicide, and suicide. ⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv} Youth in communities with greater social capital, develop trust and reciprocity earlier, a developmental process that is important for building relationship and resilience. Community capacity mitigates health consequences of social isolation; isolated individuals do better in communities with greater capacity. ^v ^{vi} The Minnesota Department of Health foundational health equity practices describe capacity building work, and includes expanding:

- **Community understanding** about what shapes mental health;
- **Community capacity to create change** (e.g. leadership development); and
- **Focus on policy** as key drivers. ^{vii}

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ⁱ Prevention Institute. *Back to Our Roots: Catalyzing Community Action for Mental Health and Wellbeing*. Prevention Institute. 2017. [Prevention Institute link \(https://www.preventioninstitute.org/\)](https://www.preventioninstitute.org/)

ⁱⁱ Herman, H, Saxena, S, Moodie, R (2005). Promoting Mental Health-Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice. World Health Organization http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

ⁱⁱⁱ Chaskin, Robert J. (1999). Defining community capacity: A framework and implications from a comprehensive community initiative. Paper presented at the Urban Affairs Association Annual Meeting, Forth Worth. LISC Institute Website http://www.instituteccd.org/uploads/iccd/documents/chaskin-defining_community_capacity.pdf Accessed on June 4, 2018.

^{iv} Herman, H, Saxena, S, Moodie, R (2005). Promoting Mental Health-Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice. World Health Organization http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

^v Ibid

^{vi} Klinenberg, E. (2013). Adaptation- How can cities be “climate-proofed”? The New Yorker. January 7, 2013.

^{vi} Minnesota Department of Health (2014). Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota: A Report to the Legislature. Accessed on August 21, 2018 Minnesota Department of Health http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/ahe_leg_report_020414.pdf

^{vii} *ibid*