



GEAR GROUP 2 PRODUCT:

The Value of Policy, System, and Environmental Change in Public Health

2017

BACKGROUND

Promoting lifelong health and preventing chronic disease can be accomplished through individual behavior, family practices, community norms, and structures and frameworks.

Promoting the health of a population depends on involving all of these factors. While individual/family behaviors and choices ultimately are at the forefront of health-related decisions, they are most often shaped by community and environmental structures that already exist. Choices between two foods (a healthy and a less healthy option) are greatly influenced by issues such as accessibility, how heavily promoted a food option is, and whether one food is less expensive than the other. Similarly, a choice between two routes to work or school, may be based in part on which one is faster and/or safer.

If there aren't options to choose from because of things like cost, time, resources, or accessibility, then the decisions often are pre-determined and may not support health at all. *The choices we make are based on the choices we have.*

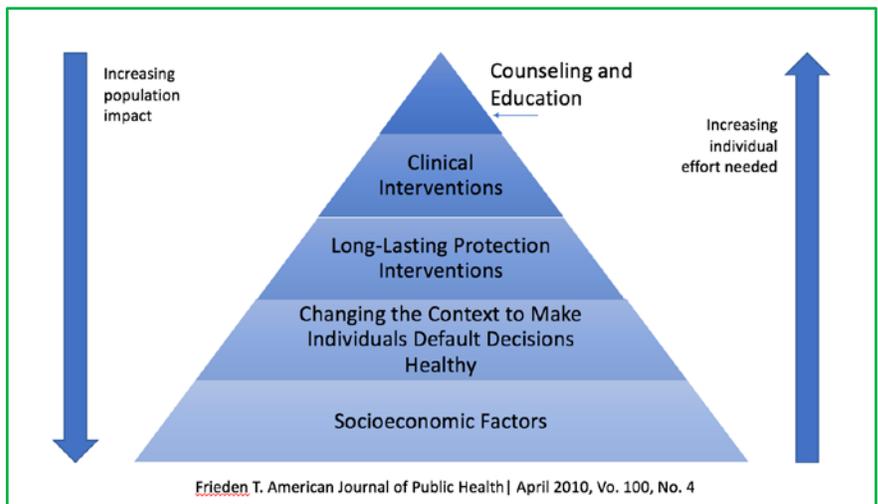
That's where policy, systems, and environmental changes (PSEs) come in to play and why PSEs are so important. PSEs can shape the community and community norms, helping to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Even more importantly, they can make the healthy choice available to many people - even an entire population at once - are cost efficient, and can have a lasting effect on population health.

ABOUT THE HEALTH IMPACT PYRAMID

Thomas Frieden's Health Impact Pyramid is a simple visual to describe the potential impact different public health interventions could have. As state and local health departments devise programming and seek funding to support their efforts, it is important to remember the importance of policy, system, and environmental (PSE) changes as a means to achieve efficiency. Working toward these sustainable changes can have far-reaching impacts and often take less individual-based effort to change.

HOW TO USE THIS FACT SHEET

This factsheet walks through the *Health Impact Pyramid*, emphasizing the importance of PSE change and encourages all public health professionals to invest resources into these



RESOURCE LIST

- <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/pse-101-building-healthier-communities>
- <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/CPW/PSE%20Change.pdf>
- http://healthtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2012-12-28-Policy_Systems_and_Environmental_Change.pdf
- https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2015/15_0281.htm
- http://archived.naccho.org/topics/HPDP/mcah/upload/issuebrief_pse_webfinal.pdf



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COUNSELING AND EDUCATION

At the top of the pyramid, Counseling and Education represents interventions that have the lowest population reach, but require the highest amount of individual effort to execute.

*Asthma Prevention and Control Example:
 Treatment of asthma by providing inhalers, breathing treatments and other medications.*

CLINICAL INTERVENTIONS

The next tier of the pyramid is Clinical Interventions. The impact of these interventions relies heavily on adherence to protocols and treatments as well as access to clinical care. The population impact increases from the counseling and education tier, but still requires a higher level of individual effort compared to the population reach.

*Asthma Prevention and Control Example:
 Treatment of asthma by providing inhalers, breathing treatments, and other medications.*

CHANGING THE CONTEXT TO MAKE INDIVIDUALS' DEFAULT DECISIONS HEALTHY

Policy, systems, and environmental change are ways of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. By changing laws and rules, and by shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with limited time and resources. By changing policies, systems and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

Where you live affects *how* you live – it is very difficult to make healthy decisions if healthy options aren't available to you. Policy, systems, and environmental changes make healthier choices real, feasible options for every community member.

*Asthma Prevention and Control Example:
 Smoke-free policies in workplaces, homes, vehicles, and other outdoor public spaces.*

<u>Setting</u>	<u>Programs/Events</u>	<u>Policy, Systems and Environmental Change</u>
School	Celebrate National Nutrition Month	Add fruits and vegetables to the à la carte options in schools
Community	Host a community bike ride and parade	Implement a Complete Streets policy to ensure community roads are constructed for safe biking, walking, and driving
Worksite	Hold health screenings for staff	Implement a healthy vending machine policy that offers healthy snacks at an affordable price
Hospital	Hold free breastfeeding courses for new moms	Implement the WHO 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and become a baby friendly hospital

<http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/PPW/PSE%20Change.pdf>



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LONG-LASTING PROTECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

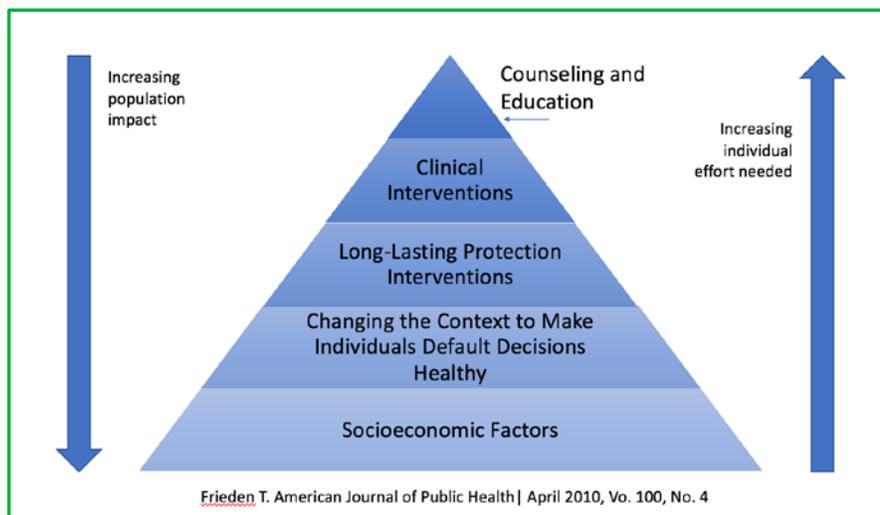
The middle tier of the pyramid is Long-Lasting Protective Interventions. These interventions do not require ongoing clinical care, but still have to be done through individual outreach. The historic example of a long-lasting protective intervention is immunization.

*Asthma Prevention and Control Example:
Treatment of tobacco addiction.*

SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

The bottom tier of the pyramid represents the broad social determinants of health, including poverty, education, and housing. Public health could add much value to these social factors, but often is limited in its involvement due to lack of funding. All policy is health policy and this tier represents the largest reach.

*Asthma Prevention and Control Example:
Public health involvement in poverty reduction efforts since socioeconomic status is strongly linked to asthma and other chronic disease health outcomes.*



GEAR GROUP 2 Members

- Shalonda Freeman, Georgia
- Mary Jo Pattison, New York
- Katherine Pfisterer, New York
- Robin Rhodes, Louisiana
- Keith Cooper, Colorado
- Nichole Shepard, Utah
- Maria Fontenelle, Georgia
- Monica Jensen, Connecticut
- Amanda Knitter, Wisconsin
- Sarah Phelps, New York
- Katie Hill, South Dakota