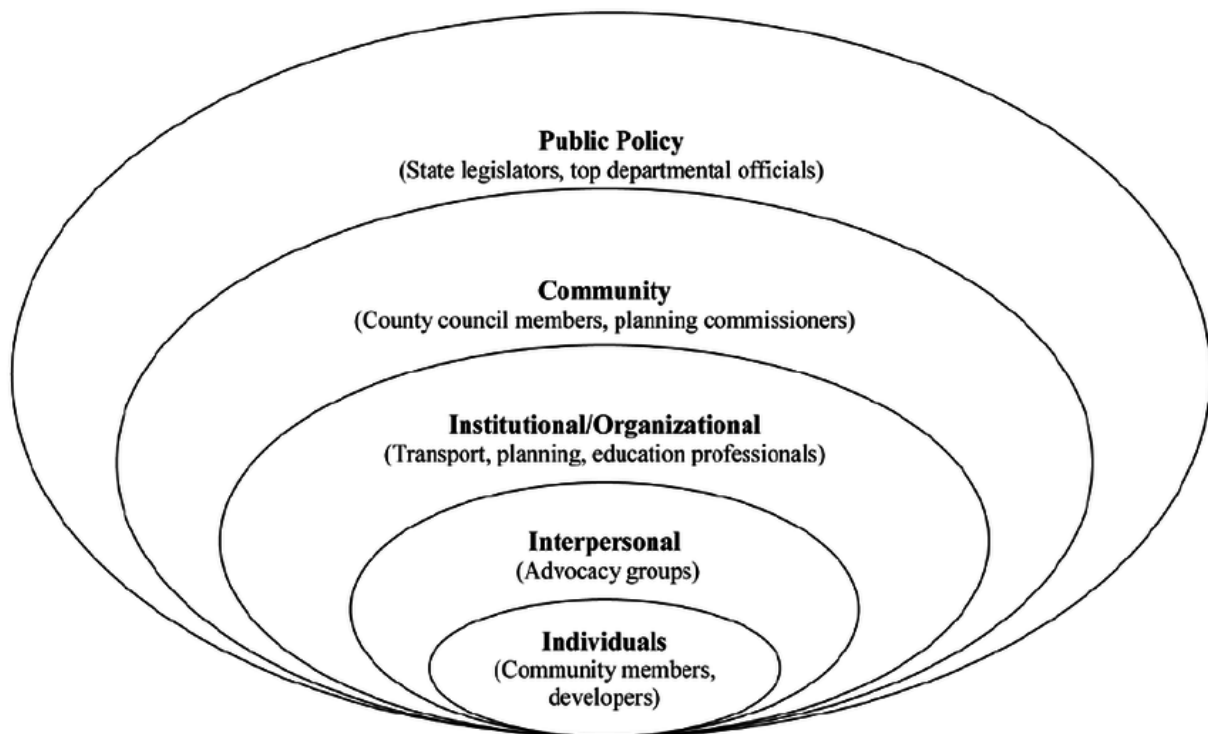


The Social Ecological Model



The Social Ecological Model is a framework that helps us understand the various factors influencing behavior and offers guidance for creating effective programs within social environments. This model highlights several levels of influence, including **individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy**. It also emphasizes that behaviors both influence and are influenced by the social environment.

The principles of the Social Ecological Model align with concepts from Social Cognitive Theory, which suggest that fostering an environment that supports change is crucial for encouraging the adoption of healthy behaviors.

The Social Ecological Model (SEM) for changing health behaviors, as articulated by Daniel Stokols, emphasizes the interplay between individual behaviors and the broader social systems that shape those behaviors. Here's an elaboration based on its four foundational assumptions:

1. Influence of Multiple Factors: Health behavior is not solely determined by individual choices but is significantly influenced by various factors, including physical environments (like access to recreational spaces), social environments (like community support and family dynamics), and personal attributes (such as knowledge, beliefs, and skills). This holistic view recognizes that health interventions must consider these multiple levels of influence to be effective.

2. Multidimensional Nature of Environments: Environments are complex and can be understood in various dimensions. For instance, the physical environment involves

tangible elements such as parks, hospitals, or grocery stores, while the social environment encompasses community norms, relationships, and support systems. Additionally, these dimensions can be perceived differently based on individual experiences and cultural backgrounds. This perspective highlights the necessity for tailored interventions that acknowledge these variances in perceptions and realities.

3. Levels of Aggregation: Human-environment interactions are not static; they occur on different levels, including individual, family, cultural groups, and broader populations. For example, an individual's health behavior might be influenced by family dynamics at home, community resources, or even societal policies. Thus, effective health interventions need to engage multiple levels, recognizing that changes in one level can impact others.

4. Dynamic Interaction Between People and Environments: This assumption underscores that individuals are not just passive recipients of their environment but actively shape their contexts. For instance, community members advocating for healthier food options in local stores can lead to changes in the physical and social environment that promote better health behaviors. This cyclical relationship means that health promotion strategies should empower individuals to make changes in their environments, which, in turn, modify health behaviors.

Overall, the SEM advocates for a comprehensive approach to health behavior change that considers not only individual factors but also the broader context and environment in which individuals operate. This approach encourages collaborations across different sectors, including public health, urban planning, education, and community development, to create supportive environments conducive to healthier behaviors.

Reference:

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