Conceptualizing Juvenile Justice Reform:
Integrating Public Health, Social-Ecological, and Restorative Justice Models

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Goals

- To achieve a clear understanding of what the terms **public health**, **social-ecological model,** and **restorative justice** mean to aid in developing a combined theory of change for RED and greater JJPOC efforts
  - Aim: to better understand what these practices mean for each of the constituent groups that are a part of the process
- To discuss how to **integrate** these three theoretical models
  - Aim: to determine how the integration of these theoretical models can and do impact practices and can lead to a more comprehensive and effective approach to JJ reform in Connecticut

Goal 1:
Coming to Consensus

Public Health

- Conceptualizes youth entry into JJ system as culmination of risks, failure of prevention, and lack of community-based alternatives

- Youth offending has implications for individual, community, and society health

- Goal of prevention is to reduce new occurrences of targeted problem (i.e., offending) to promote greater community health

  - Youth at risk for JJ involvement often exposed to multiple ACEs and further progression into JJ system can perpetuate trauma

Public Health Model

- Prevention & intervention through lens of three-tier model:
  - Universal – reducing occurrence of new "cases" of offending
  - Selective—targets identified youth at-risk for justice involvement
  - Indicated—targets youth requiring individualized and often intensive intervention

Indicated

High-risk individuals
- Youth in contact with the JJ system:
  - Detained
  - Arrested
  - Diverted
  - Probation
  - Incarceration
  - Post-Release

Selective

Subgroups with risk factors
- Behavioral/emotional disorders
  - School problems
    - Family disruption
      - Poverty

Universal

The entire population
- Community-based prevention programs
  - School-based mental health enhancement programs
   - PSA campaigns

Public Health – Strengths & Weaknesses

Public health conceptualization views current approaches to JJ as lacking because they often only provide *indicated* interventions (i.e., targets youth who have already offended)

Views intervention as necessary at each level—universal, selective, and indicated—recognizing that contact with the JJ system can be traumatic

Prioritizes society level interventions that work to target risk factors associated with justice-involvement

Apply a health model avoids pathologizing youth
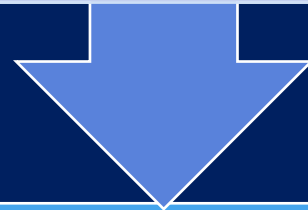
Criticisms of public health approach
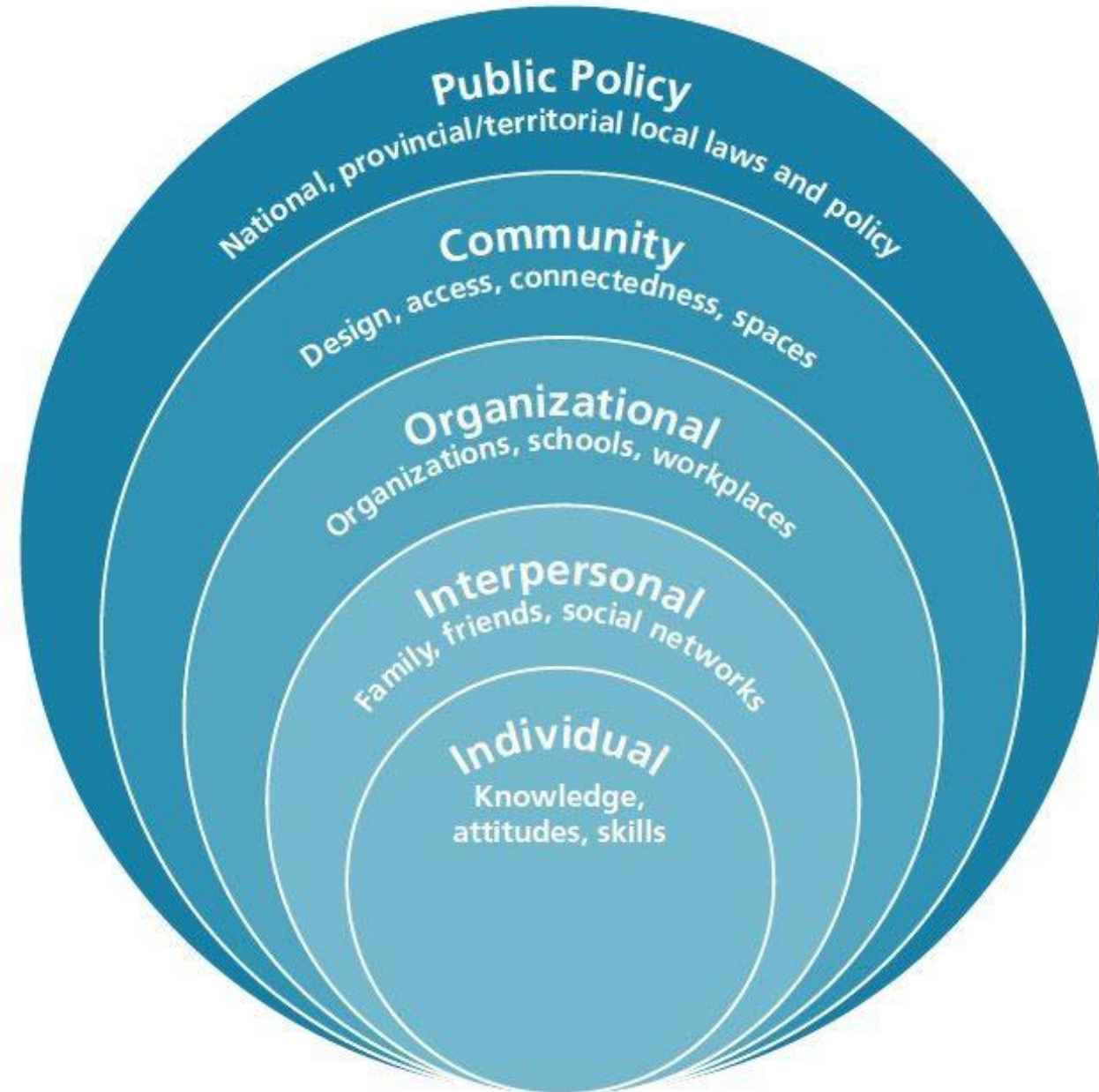
How is public safety addressed?

How are youth held accountable or punished for actions?

How are those who have been harmed by youth offending (i.e., victim, community) made whole?

Does focus on prevention divert resources away from those with highest needs?

Social Ecological Model

- Youth are shaped by multiple levels of influence, operating concurrently, and youth simultaneously influence his/her environment
  - Bidirectional process
- Views youth offending through lens of interactions and relationship in which offending takes place
- Identity development plays key role in shaping youth's actions/behaviors. Relationships/social processes can support or impede positive identity development

Public Policy
National, provincial/territorial local laws and policy

Community
Design, access, connectedness, spaces

Organizational
Organizations, schools, workplaces

Interpersonal
Family, friends, social networks

Individual
Knowledge, attitudes, skills

Social-Ecological Model

- Prevention viewed as multi-system effort to provide alternative interventions focused on strengthening and supporting families, schools, and communities in which youth exist

- Interventions focus on positive development of youth, building relationships and strengthening youths' competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring

Socio-Ecological Model – Strengths & Weaknesses

SEM conceptualization views current JJ practices as overly focused on youth's problems, deficits and disorders and often ignores social, situational and systemic factors in youth's life

SEM conceptualizes youth offending through lens of youth's interactions and relationships and focuses on youth's strengths to promote positive youth development

Prevention focuses on multisystem efforts to provide interventions focused on strengthening families, schools, and communities in which youth exists
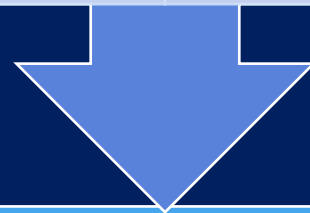
Criticisms of SEM Approach

How do we measure success?

Are there challenges for intersystem collaboration?

How does this model conceptualize youth accountability?

Restorative Justice

Community-based approaches focusing on accountability, public safety, and community healing (i.e., restoration of damaged relationships)

Prioritizes bringing together victims, offenders, and community stakeholders to discuss how offense has affected all parties and collaboratively develop modes of redress
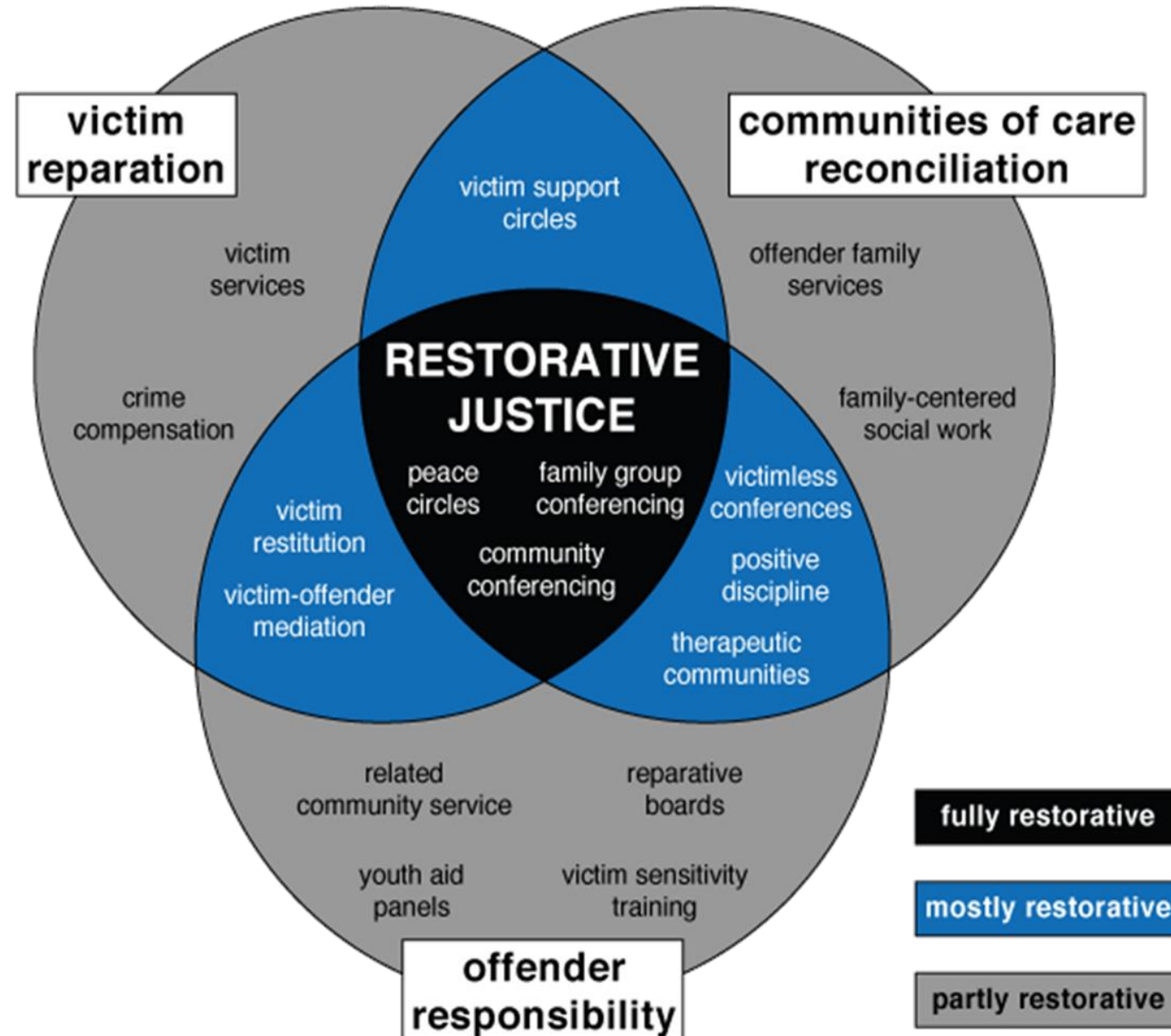
Community plays an important role in building capacities within youth and developing community resources, reducing delinquency and promoting public safety

Restorative Justice Model

- Restorative Practices
  - Focus on youth repairing relationship with the community and restoring (i.e., making whole) those who have been harmed by youth's action
    - Accomplished via community service, restitution, reparative sentencing
- Balanced Practices
  - Focus on building youth's social competencies as method to reduce delinquency and promote community safety
- Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ)
  - Focus on promotion of public safety through addressing needs of victims/community, while holding youth accountable and helps to build competencies to help youth develop as productive citizen (OJJDP model)

Types and Degrees of Restorative Justice Practice

victim reparation

communities of care reconciliation

offender responsibility

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- victim support circles
- victim services
- offender family services
- crime compensation
- family-centered social work
- peace circles
- family group conferencing
- victim restitution
- victimless conferences
- community conferencing
- victim-offender mediation
- positive discipline
- therapeutic communities
- related community service
- reparative boards
- youth aid panels
- victim sensitivity training

fully restorative
mostly restorative
partly restorative

Restorative Justice – Strengths & Weaknesses

RJ views current approaches to justice as focused on identifying harm as transgressions against state and focus on punishment. Victims and stakeholders are not often given opportunities to understand offense nor are included in determining outcomes

RJ model conceptualizes youth offending as a breach or breakdown in relationships between youth and youth's community that must be restored for healing to take effect

RJ operates in varied ways across the US, but focus on accountability promotes social competencies among youth and greater satisfaction for victims and stakeholders

Criticisms of RJ Approach

Which types and degrees of RJ should be applied?

With variation across jurisdictions, are RJ policies applied equitably?

Is restorative justice "enough" to hold youth accountable, if youth can avoid formal legal process via this practice?

Stakeholder Perspective - Public Health

How are diverted youth viewed in this model?

- Indicated or selective level?

Lack of data about where selective interventions are happening

- These are often discretionary; how do we track this?

Lack of consistent practices across the state

- What do we mean by pre-arrest? What about referrals made through schools?
- Patterns of behavior (selective) may be characterized negatively by school and lead to disparate arrests

PH model encompasses many subfactors of health

- How does this model address all aspects of health?

Systems do not share data with each other

- What information/access do we need for this to be successful?

Stakeholder Perspective – Social Ecological

May fit well with current existing interventions	• Aligns with MST, MFST MDT treatment modalities
Ability to implement effectively may be resource-dependent	• Success could be measured by increase in access to opportunities and resource
Lack of communication in systems and territorial nature (silos)	• Current focus targets system specific issues but doesn't target infrastructure
CT's municipality structure ("urban Jim Crow system") may present challenge	• How can we promote greater equity within this system?
Adults have influences on youths' lives	• What does model do to support adults in youths' lives?

Stakeholder Perspectives – Restorative Justice

When applied correctly, RJ practices can be preventative	• Money is allocated differently when focus is on prevention vs. incapacitation
Difficult to get buy-in and fidelity of application across practice settings and jurisdictions	• Requires extensive training, organizational shift, change in culture
How can we monitor how RJ is being implemented?	• QA, fidelity, training, leadership
Difficulty in implementation because of expectation for "immediate" results	• Some believe RJ results may take years to achieve; others believe RJ has immediate impact on those who participate in it

Stakeholder Perspectives – RJ Continued

Focus should not be on RJ elements as "levels," but as a continuum

- When 3 sides (victim, offender, community) don't communicate, this is a barrier
- Adults should be held accountable in these exchanges
- Focus should be on **listening** more and asking young people questions, instead of "telling" them

How can we work a relationship model into a system where relationships are not prioritized?

- Systems are boundaried
- Difficult to step outside of defined roles

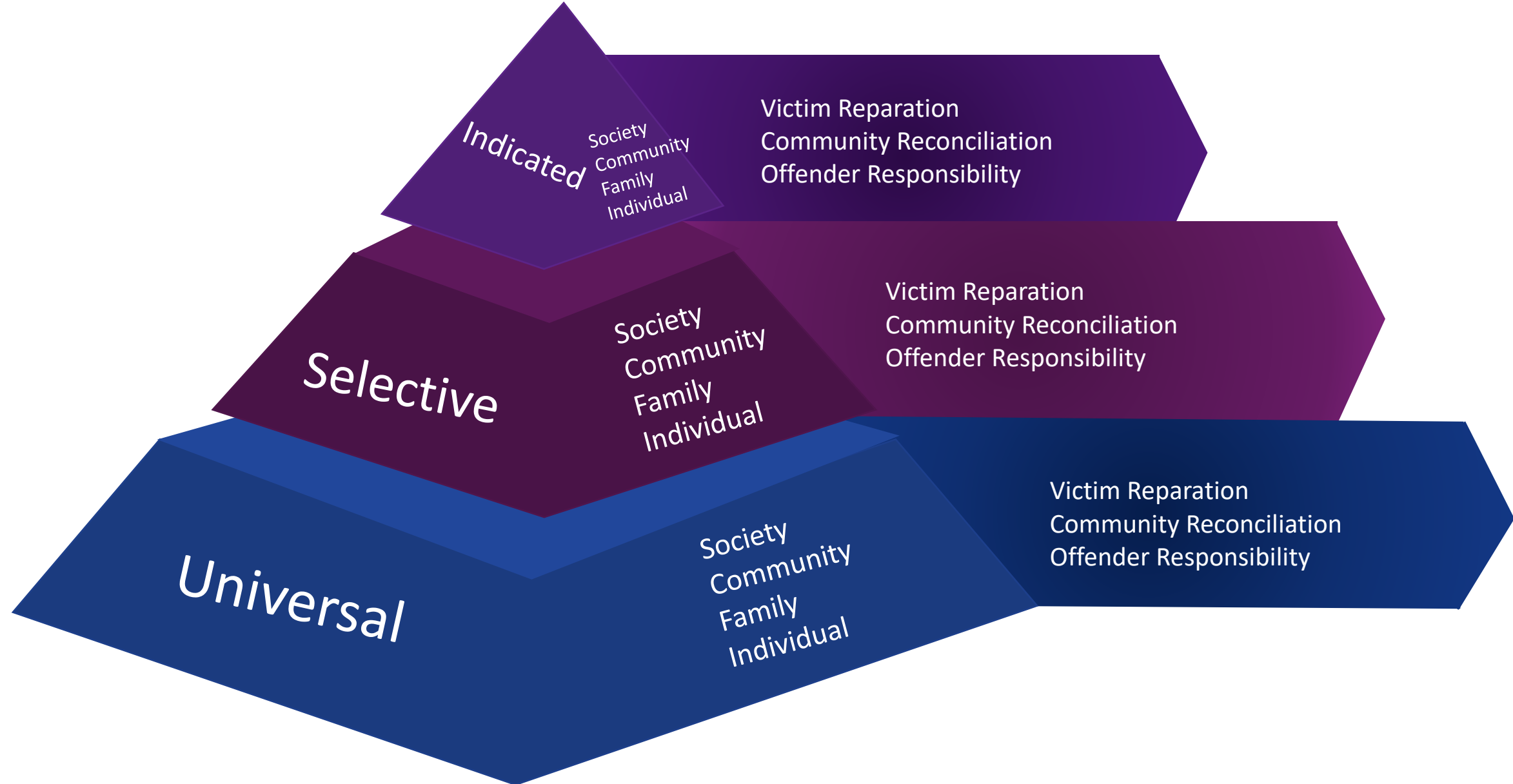**When talking about RJ, focus does not always have to be in response to negative event**

- Can focus on building pro-social relationships and building community
- Many young people have unmet basic needs

Goal 2:
Integrating the Models

Integrated Model

- The prior overview of the three conceptualizations support the need for an integrated model

- We propose a model that encompasses public health, social ecological and restorative justice practices
  - Young people come into the justice system with varied levels of public health risks that reflect disorder within their socioecological systems, which can be addressed through restorative justice practices
  - At each level of public health intervention (universal, selected, indicated) there are ecological impacts (individual, family, community, society) that play a role in determining the types of restorative justice approaches that should be used (victim reparation, community reconciliation, offender responsibility)

Universal Level

Universal

Society
Community
Family
Individual

Victim Reparation
Community Reconciliation
Offender Responsibility
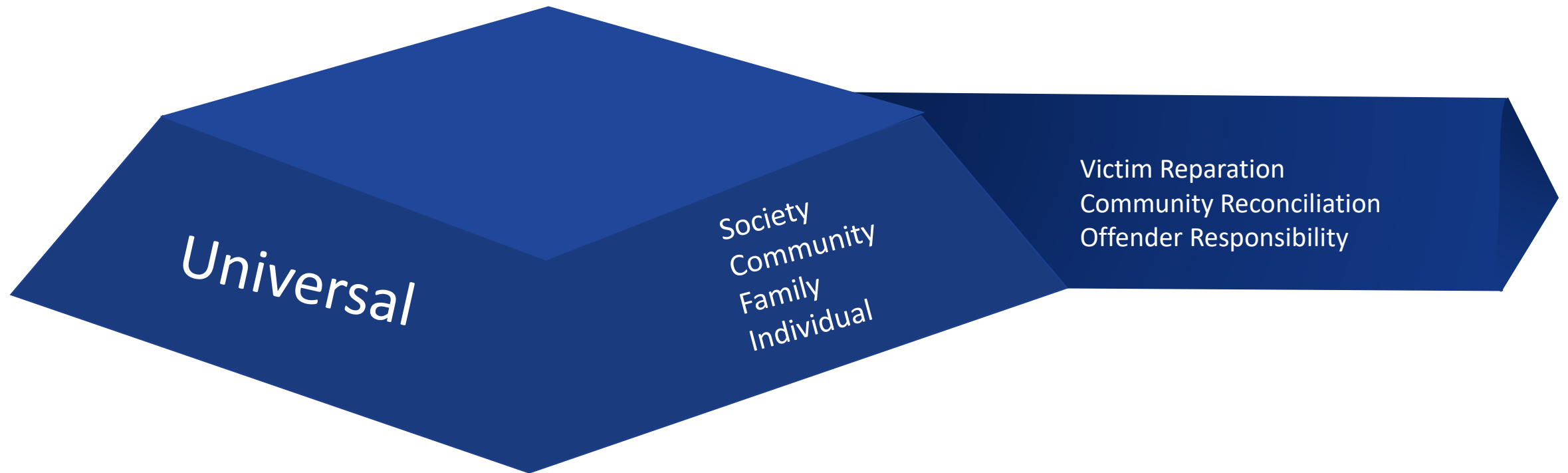
Universal Socio-Ecological Restorative Justice

- Prevention efforts designed to target all individuals, regardless of risk factors, through the use of restorative justice practices with a lens toward the social contexts in which one lives
    - Prioritizes increasing one's sense of belonging in their community
    - Builds relationships by promoting trust and stability in one's environment
    - Fosters investment in the well-being of one's community, neighbors, and resources

Selective Level

Selective

Society
Community
Family
Individual

Victim Reparation
Community Reconciliation
Offender Responsibility

Selective Socio-Ecological Restorative Justice

- Restorative justice prevention/intervention strategies targeted toward youth identified as at risk
  - Provides resources and support within community to promote prosocial activities & relationships
  - Helps bolster family unit through provision of environment-specific and targeted services
  - Equips systems/providers within community with training and capacity to best support at-risk youth
  - Tasks community with providing youth with skills to promote positive youth development

Indicated Level

Indicated

Society
Community
Family
Individual

Victim Reparation
Community Reconciliation
Offender Responsibility

Indicated Socio-Ecological Restorative Justice

- Ecologically informed interventions targeted at individuals who have engaged in risky behaviors leading to justice system contact
    - Prioritizes helping youth establish or rebuild relationships with community through accountability and capacity building
    - Tasks community stakeholders to determine youths' needs and provide responsive services
    - Allows youth opportunities to make their needs know and learn how their actions impact their communities, families, neighbors, and themselves

Applied Example: Car Thefts in Connecticut

Integrated Approach to JJ Intervention

Universal

- Society – PSAs re: methods to reduce theft
- Community –individual responsibility to reduce opportunities
- Interpersonal – national conversations with kids; parents asking Q's and listening to kids' views
- Individual – "we are our community's keeper"

Selective

- Society – Campaigns targeted to specific communities
- Community – provision of alternatives to engage youth in prosocial activities
- Interpersonal – Familial responsibility to monitor activities & promote understanding of community relationship
- Individual – youth understand how these offenses impact all in their community

Indicated

- Society – providing resources to offset youth's needs
- Community – JJ stakeholders asking what youth need
- Interpersonal – parents communicating impact to youth
- Individual – youth engage in RJ process with victims, family, and JJ stakeholders

Integrated Model Feedback

How do we *measure* whether these initiatives are effective?	• Implementation science?
Is JJ system the best to provide mental health services?	• What are viable alternatives?
How can we move toward more system integration and less "that is not what our agency does"	• Do agencies need to shift how they conceptualize the work they are doing? • RJ can help with the policy piece→ agencies currently feel misunderstood and unsupported

Integrated Model Feedback Cont.

Committee currently has specific tools:

- Legislative change,
- Change within agency practices
- "Public shaming"

Must make sure that our language is clear and consistent

- What do we mean by risk, prevention, intervention?

Consensus that the needs of these youth are urgent

- But, where should we target first and how do we approach this?

Feedback

Practical Application?

Integrated model should incorporate:

- Safety
- How to measure effectiveness of this model
- Sharing of information within systems

Focus on making agencies/systems more complementary

- Agencies should reconceptualize their roles as health providers
- Can begin by starting with practices in the "gray" areas of RJ:
  - Victim reparation (victim services, crime compensation)
  - Community Reconciliation (offender family services, family-centered social work)
  - Youth Responsibility (community service, reparative boards, youth aid panels, victim sensitivity training)

Questions to Consider

- How might this approach inform our RED work and recommendations?

- Can this approach be utilized across JJPOC strategies?

- Are there other areas to consider in developing an integrated model of JJ prevention work?

Stakeholder Perspectives

- Challenges to implementing or utilizing this?

- Concerns from stakeholders?

- Other questions we should ask?

Next Steps

- What should we focus our next steps on?

Thank You!

- Questions?
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