Planning Tool:
Using the Socio-Ecological Model To Develop Complementary Substance Misuse Prevention and Harm Reduction Efforts

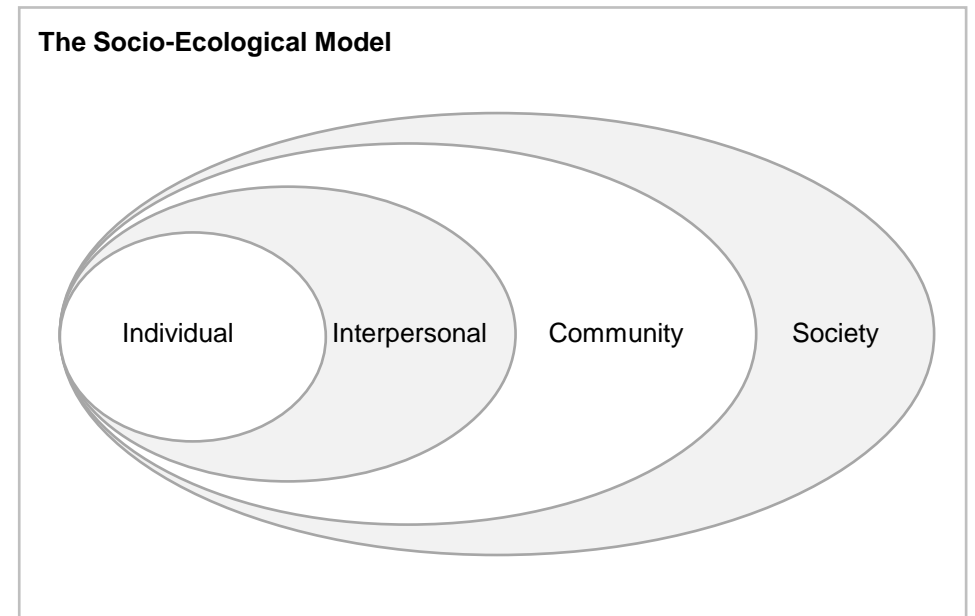### Creating a Complementary Approach Using the Socio-Ecological Model

The purpose of this tool is to assist substance misuse prevention practitioners and harm reductionists in creating a complementary approach to prevention and harm reduction to reach people with different levels and types of risk in multiple social contexts.

A complementary approach with the potential to impact multiple populations includes effective prevention efforts directed toward individuals or groups who are not yet engaging in risky behaviors in conjunction with a range of harm reduction strategies aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drugs use for those individuals actively using substances, including alcohol.

Background on the Socio-Ecological Model

Multiple levels of risk. To stop the progression of substance misuse, effective prevention efforts include those programs and practices that are directed toward individuals or groups who are not yet engaging in risky behaviors (e.g., Life Skills training for all 7th grade students). These efforts also include interventions for individuals or groups who have a higher likelihood of engaging in these risky behaviors or who have already begun doing so (e.g., programs for children whose parents have substance use disorders, or brief alcohol screening and intervention for college student who are binge drinking).

Multiple social contexts. The socio-ecological model shows how risk and protective factors operate across all social contexts, including individuals, friends and family, schools and other community settings as well as the broader societal context of laws and norms. A comprehensive prevention plan includes multiple programs and practices operating in multiple settings and across multiple domains.

The Socio-Ecological Model

Individual Interpersonal Community Society

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework. Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019.

Instructions

Getting Started: The first and most important step is to ensure that you have key stakeholders at the table. This includes harm reduction specialists and individuals with lived experience. Engaging any new partner requires careful research and planning, as well as strategic and intentional relationship building. Since many people who use drugs have experienced some degree of marginalization, engaging members of this group may take additional consideration and time. See page 5 for tips for successful engagement.

Once you have key stakeholders at the table, collaborate to complete the following steps using the worksheet on the page 3. Refer to the example on page 4 to better understand each step.

Step 1: Substance/Problem Behavior
Insert the substance or problem behavior your organization is addressing (from Step 1 of the Strategic Prevention Framework [SPF]). If addressing more than one substance or problem behavior, consider completing one worksheet for each.

Step 2: Focus population
Insert the focus population(s) for this substance. Consider age, race, culture, and other relevant demographics. Take steps to identify those sub-populations that are vulnerable to behavioral health disparities.

Step 3: Consequences
Insert the consequences associated with use and misuse of that substance. Consider immediate risk of acute harm, (e.g., blackouts or nonfatal overdose), circumstances where use of that substance increases risky behavior for other consequences (e.g., unsafe sexual behavior), and potentially deadly behavior (e.g., falls, burns, drowning, car crash, overdose death). Consider the consequences that exist in each segment of the model.

Step 4: Prevalence
Color in the population actively using the substance who are currently at risk for consequences (e.g., if one-quarter of population is using, shade in 25 of the "people"). If you don't have access to local data, national data can be used.

Step 5: Prevention Strategies
List in the socio-ecological model ABOVE the line prevention strategies being implemented in each of the four levels to prevent the misuse of the substance listed in Step 1 with the population listed in Step 2.

Step 6: Harm Reduction Strategies
List in the socio-ecological model BELOW the line harm reduction services and strategies aimed at reducing the negative consequences listed in Step 3 with the population listed in Step 2.

Next Steps
Once your worksheet is complete, use this information to create an action plan including information such as what stakeholders should be engaged when addressing this substance/problem behavior and how to move forward with the strategies detailed on the worksheet.

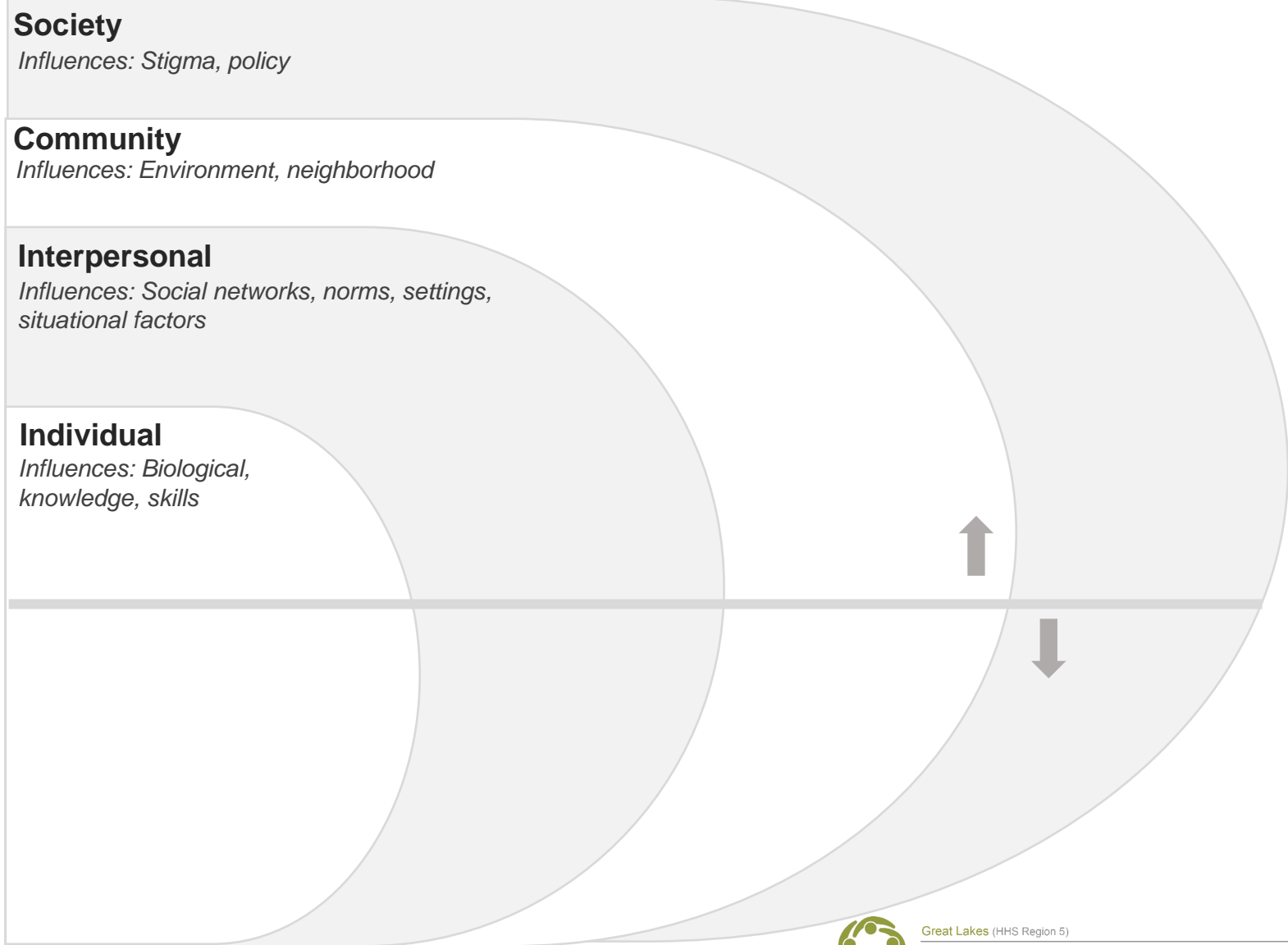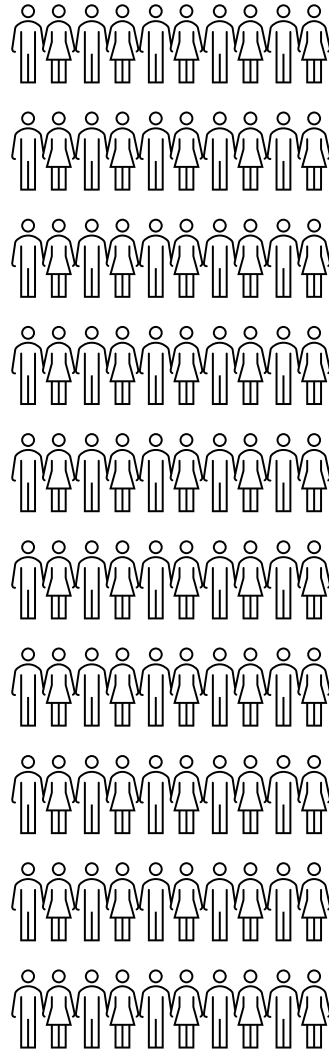# Socio-Ecological Worksheet for Prevention and Harm Reduction Strategies

1. Substance/Problem Behavior:

2. Population:

3. Consequences:

4. Prevalence

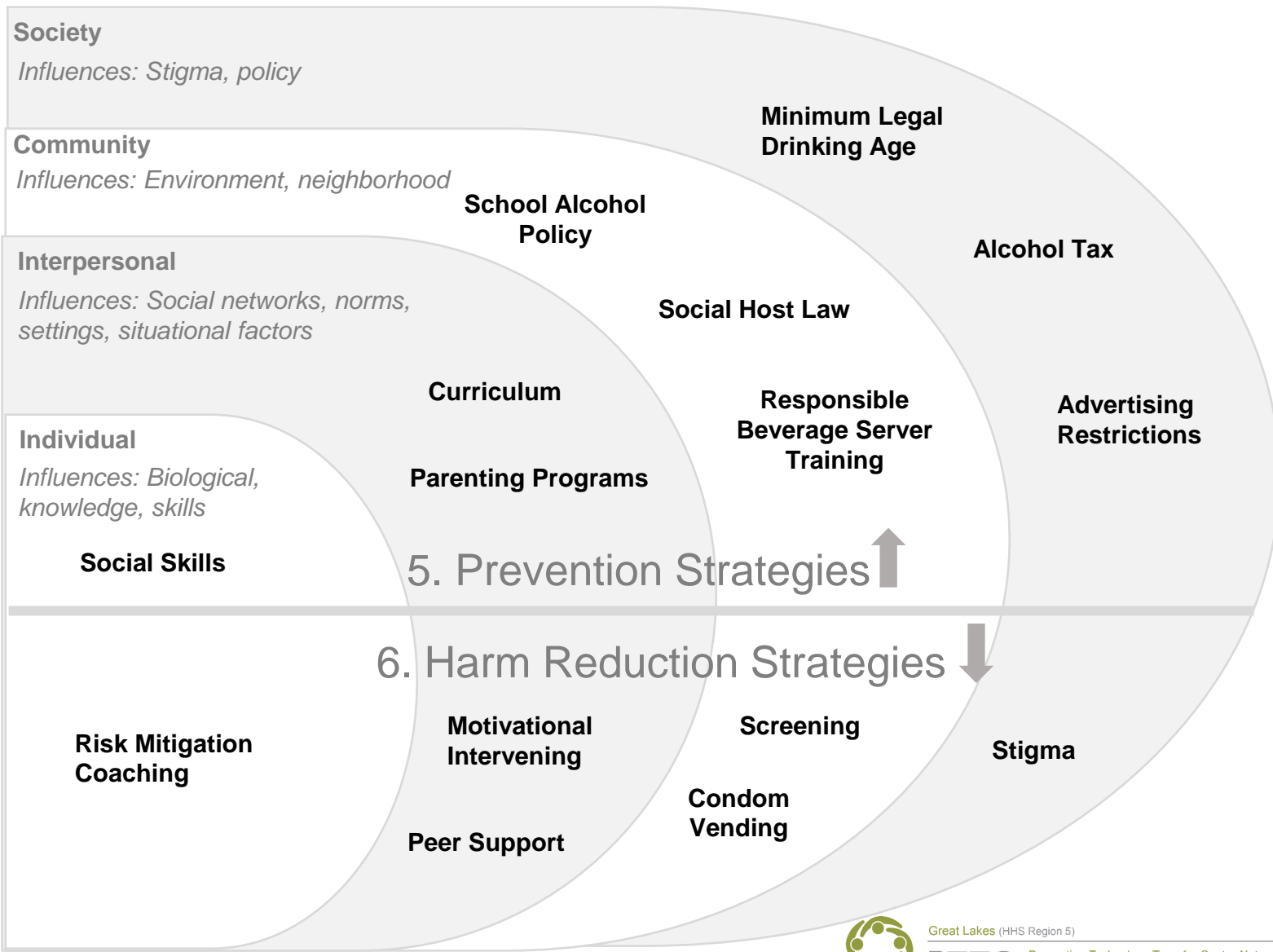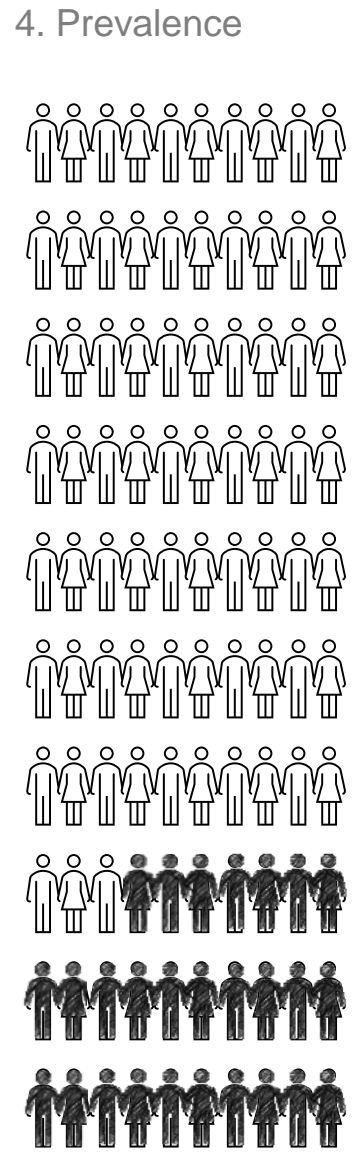**Society**
Influences: Stigma, policy

Community
Influences: Environment, neighborhood

Interpersonal
Influences: Social networks, norms, settings, situational factors

Individual
Influences: Biological, knowledge, skills

Example: Socio-Ecological Worksheet for Prevention and Harm Reduction Strategies

1. Substance/Problem Behavior:

Binge Drinking

2. Population:

Young adults (ages 18-22)

27% of this age group report binge drinking in the last month

3. Consequences:

Acute harm, such as blackouts and overdoses.

Binge drinking also increases the likelihood of unsafe sexual behavior and the risk of sexually transmitted infections and unintentional pregnancy.

Potentially deadly consequences include falls, burns, drownings, and car crashes.

4. Prevalence

Society
Influences: Stigma, policy

Community
Influences: Environment, neighborhood

Interpersonal
Influences: Social networks, norms, settings, situational factors

Individual
Influences: Biological, knowledge, skills

Minimum Legal Drinking Age

School Alcohol Policy

Alcohol Tax

Social Host Law

Curriculum

Responsible Beverage Server Training

Advertising Restrictions

Parenting Programs

Social Skills

5. Prevention Strategies ⬆

6. Harm Reduction Strategies ⬇

Risk Mitigation Coaching

Motivational Intervening

Screening

Stigma

Condom Vending

Peer Support

Additional Resources

- **To identify additional substance misuse prevention strategies:**
  - A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework
    https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190620-samhsa-strategic-prevention-framework-guide.pdf
  - Online Registries Guide to Substance Misuse Prevention Programs and Practices
    https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/pacific-southwest-pttc/product/guide-online-registries-substance-misuse-prevention-evidence

- **To identify additional harm reduction strategies:**
  - SAMHSA's Harm Reduction Activities and Intended Outcomes website
    https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/harm-reduction

- **Tips for Successful Engagement of Harm Reduction Stakeholders**
  - Clarify your collaboration goals. Consider what you would like to learn or achieve through collaboration, and how engaging members of the drug-using community will help you achieve these goals. Use this information to tailor your outreach strategy.
  - Talk with people who already work with the drug using community to find out which engagement strategies are most likely to be effective. Ask these individuals:
    - What is the best way to connect?
    - Would it help to bring a cultural broker with you?
    - How should you frame your request?
    - Which messages are most likely to resonate?

- **Additional Tools and Resources on Prevention's Role in Harm Reduction**
  https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/great-lakes-pttc/product/role-prevention-harm-reduction-efforts

Great Lakes (HHS Region 5)

PTTC | Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration