



PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

The Intersections

Substance Misuse and Problem Gambling Prevention

October 8, 2025 | 10:00 – 12:00 pm

Shannon Cassidy | Technical Assistance Provider

Ben Spooner | Assistant Director, MA Center of Excellence
on Problem Gambling Prevention



EDC.ORG

Introducing Today's Presenters



Shannon Cassidy
Technical Assistance Provider



Ben Spooner
Assistant Project Director



Introduce Yourself

Hello
my name is

1

**Say your
Name, organization**

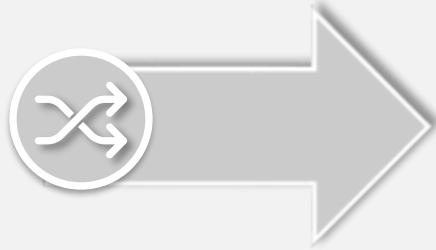
2

Add your response to these questions

1. How have you seen gambling or substance use represented in movies or other media ?
2. In what decade?
3. Have you seen them depicted together?

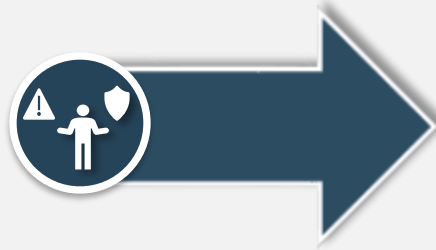
Key Objectives

Substance Misuse and Problem Gambling Prevention



Understand the complex relationship between problem gambling and substance misuse.

01



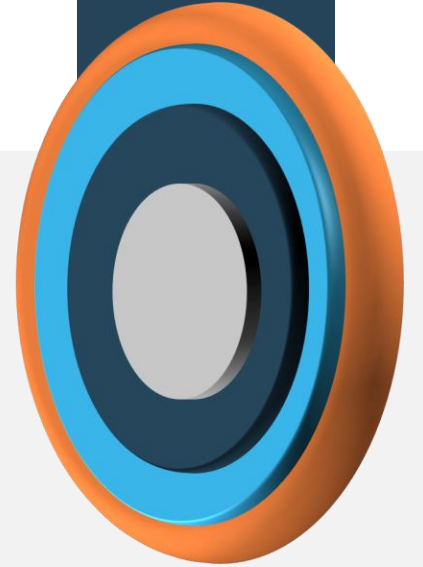
Understand shared risk and protective factors between problem gambling and substance misuse

02

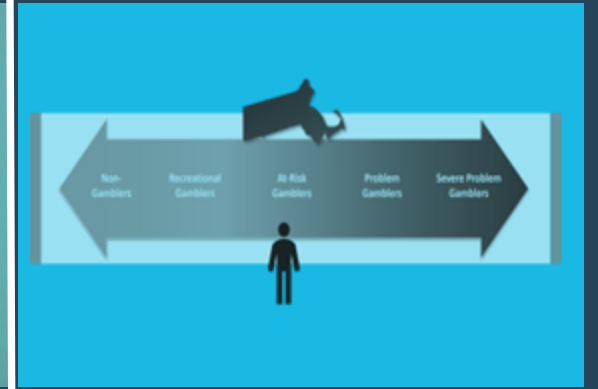
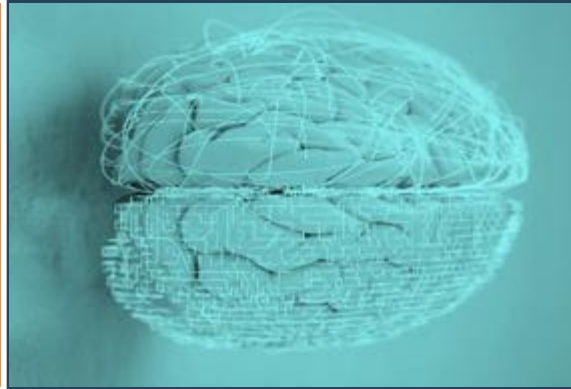


Describe collaboration strategies for substance misuse prevention and problem gambling prevention fields to improve public health and community conditions.

03



SECTION 1: SETTING THE STAGE



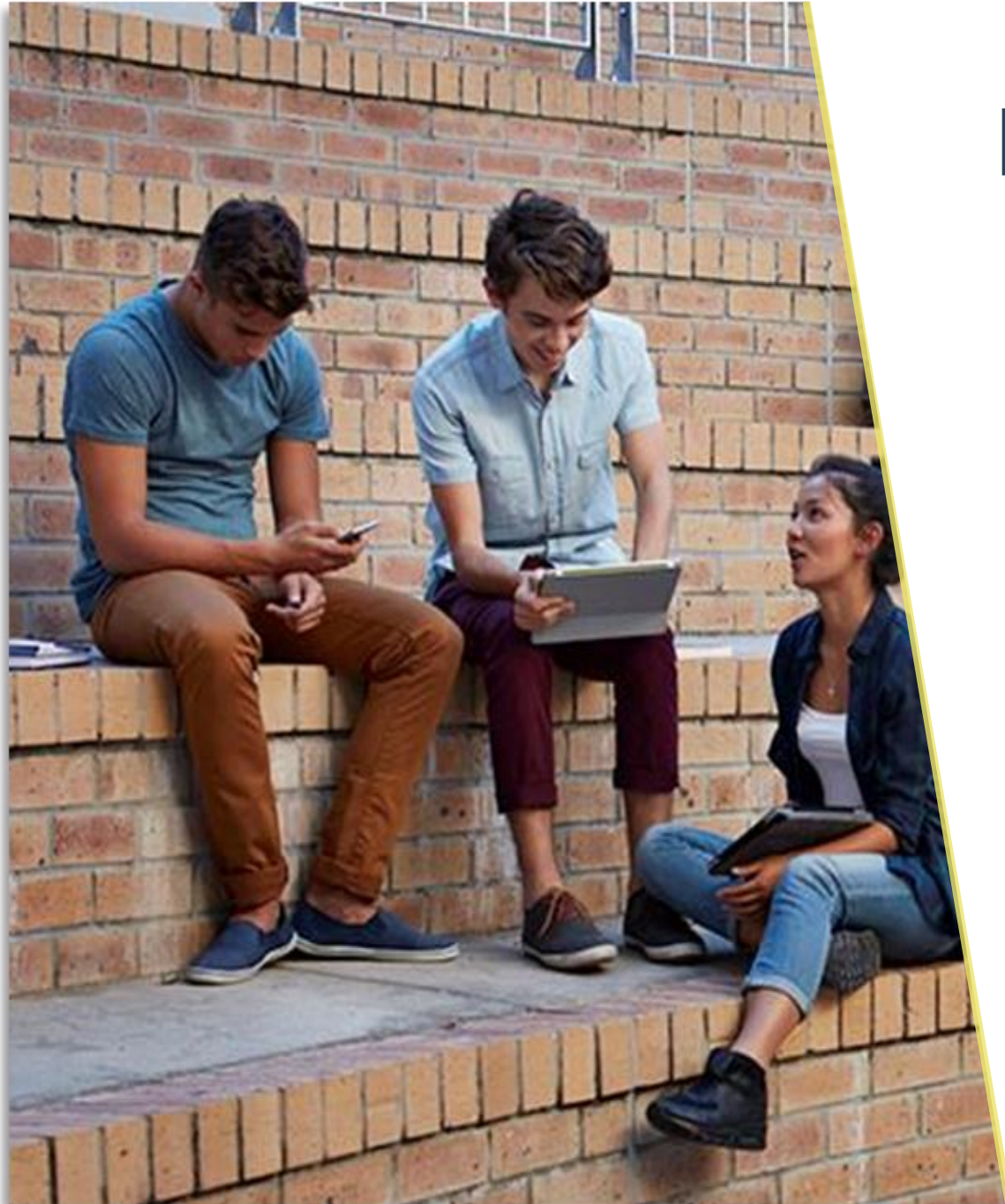
Substance Use and SUD (U.S.)

- Approximately 58.3% of the population used tobacco, alcohol, or an illicit drug in the past month
- Nearly 1 in 6 people aged 12 or older have a SUD
- Over 1 in 4 young adults (18-25) has a substance use disorder



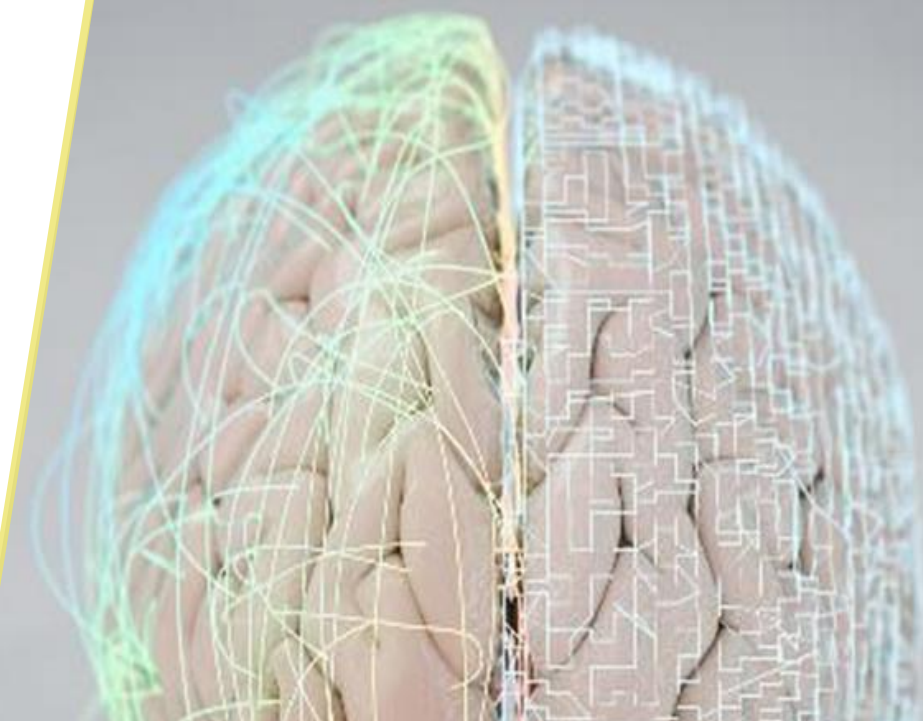
Problem Gambling (U.S.)

- 1% of U.S. adults are estimated to meet the criteria for a severe gambling problem in a given year. Another 2-3% would be considered to have mild or moderate gambling problems.
- 1 in 10 young people and young adults (6-9%) experience problems related to gambling



Brain Development: Problem Gambling and Substance Misuse

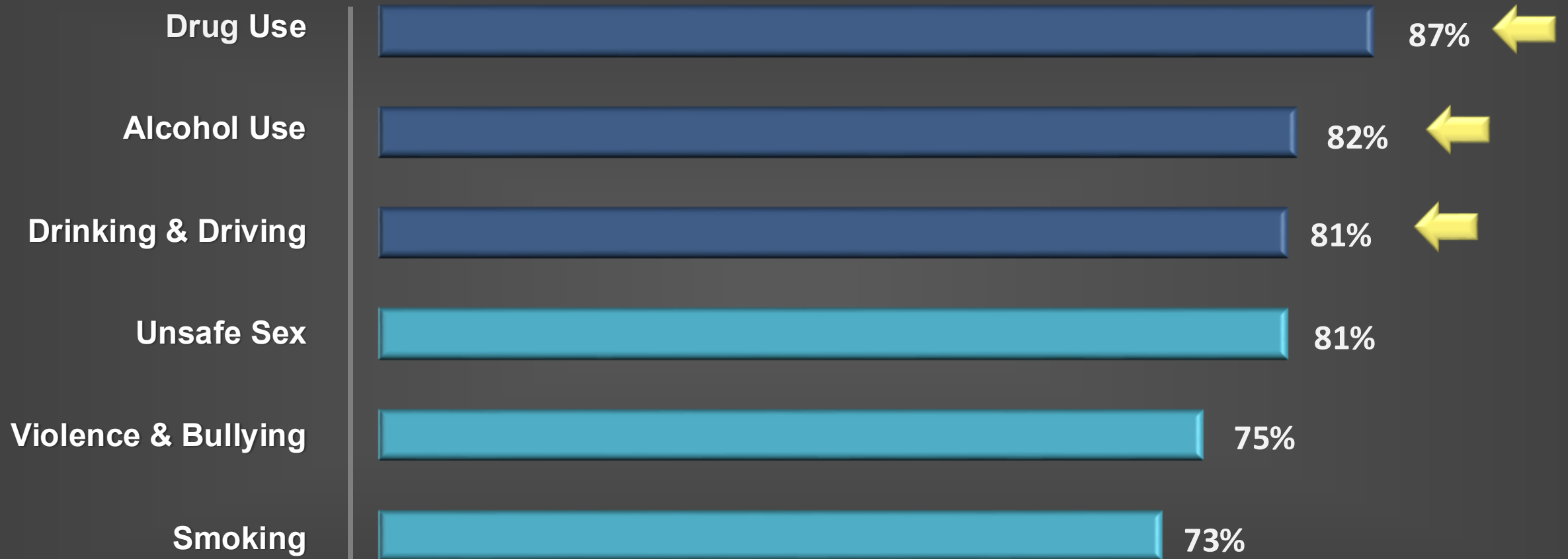
- Youth brain is not fully developed until age 25
- Youth who gamble early are more likely to develop problem gambling later in life



“The brains of people anticipating a win at the roulette table appear to react much like those taking euphoria-inducing drugs”

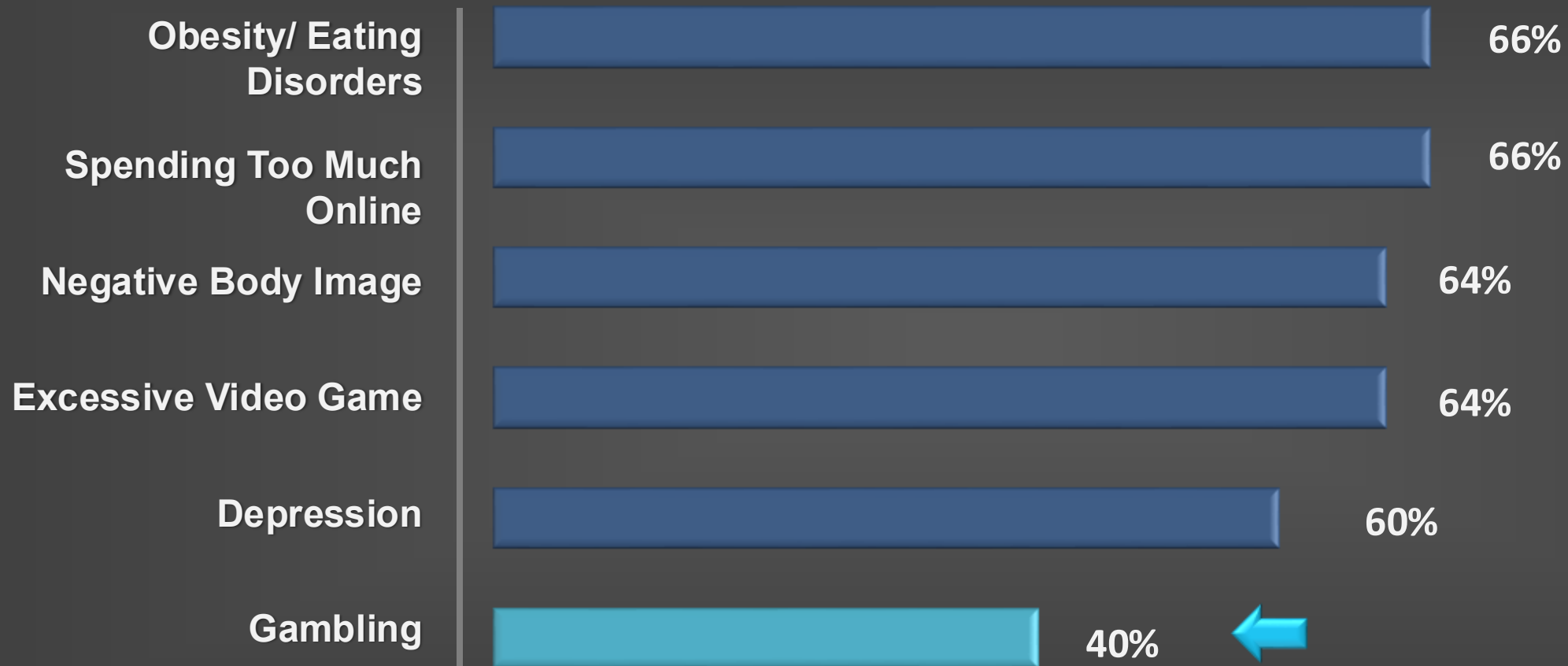
Parental Perceptions of the Seriousness of Issues Youth May Encounter

(Percent of parents perception either serious or very serious)



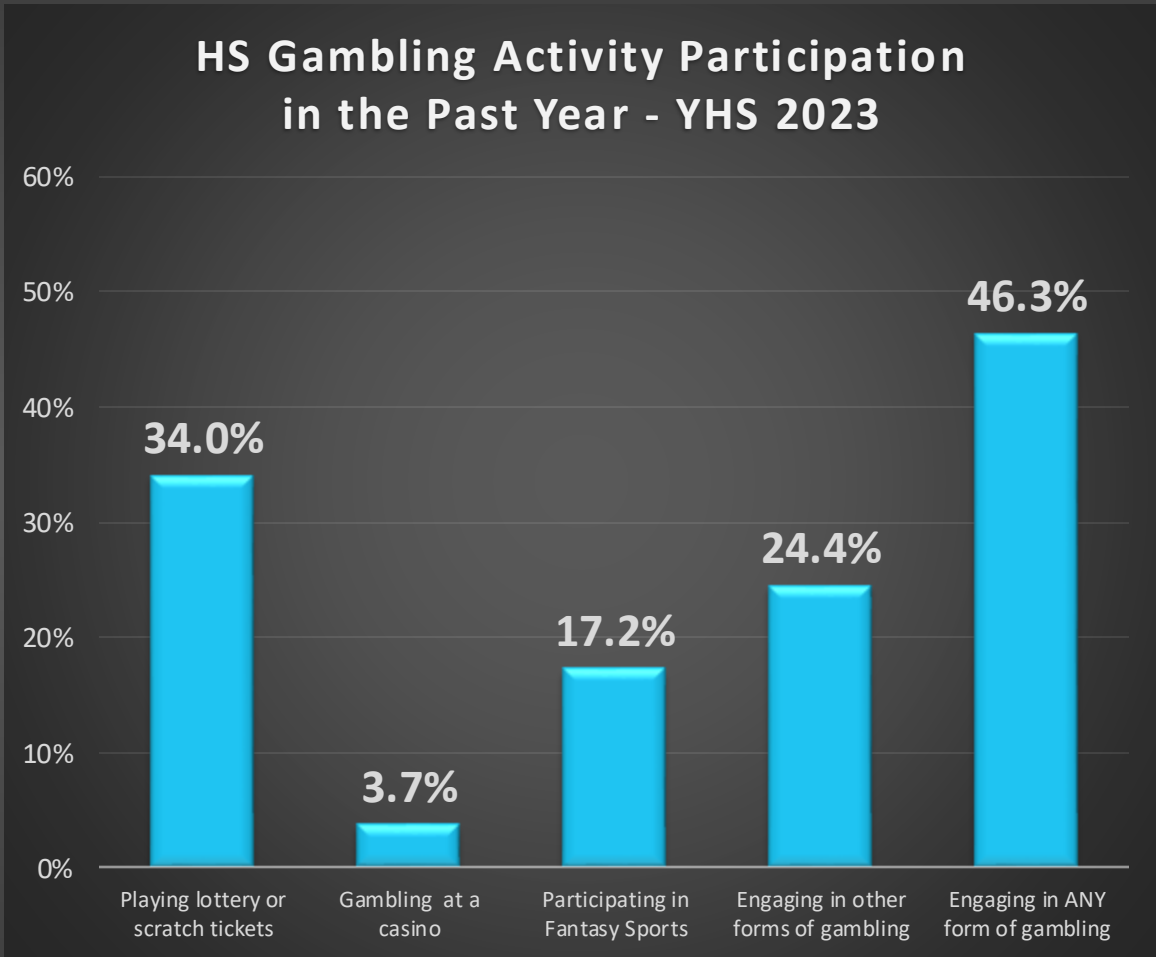
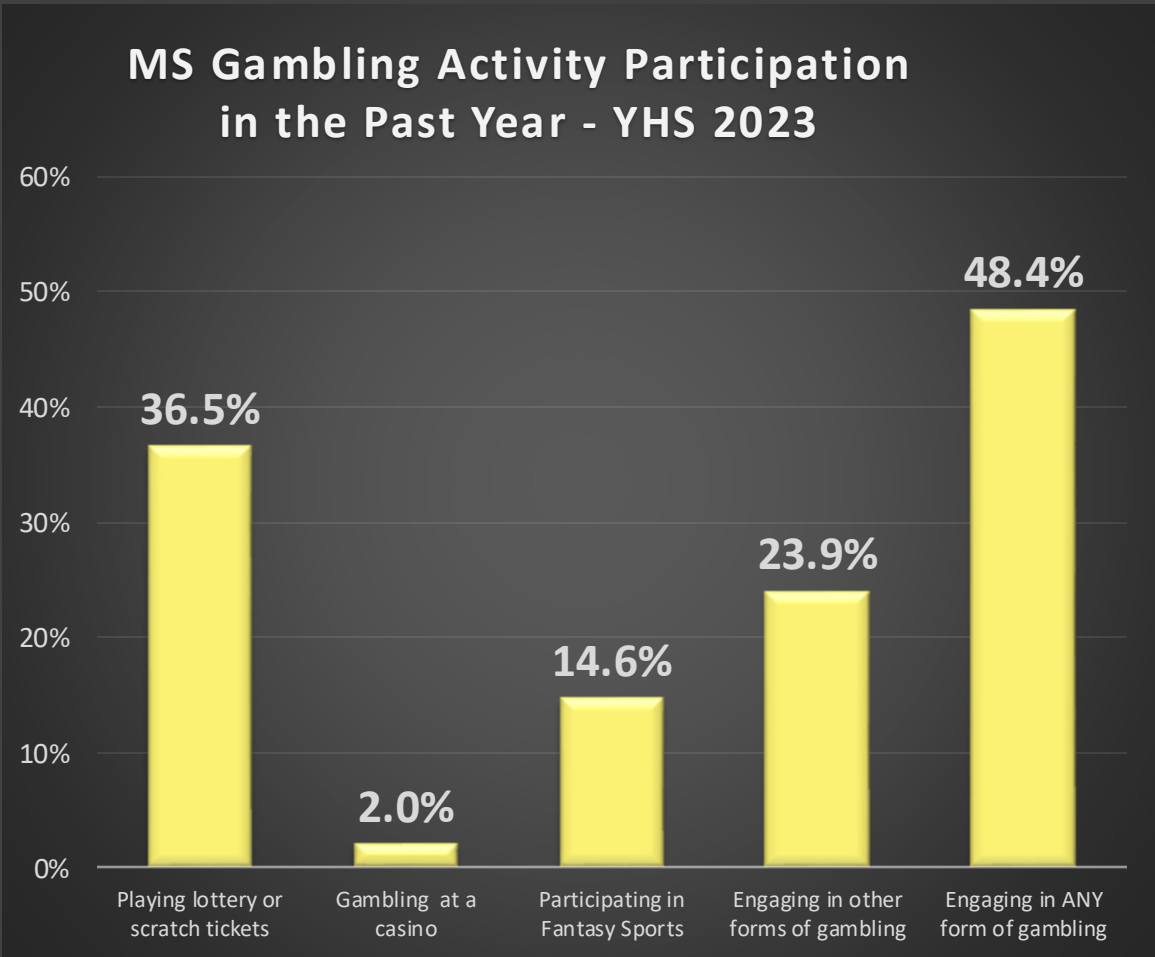
Parental Perceptions of the Seriousness of Issues Youth May Encounter

(Percent of parents either serious or very serious)



2023: MA Gambling Activity Participation Prevalence in Youth

Percent of middle school (MS) and high school (HS) students reported engaging in some form of gambling in the last year.



Demographics and Substance Use

Middle School (MS) and High School (HS) Students.



There was no significant relationship between grade level and gambling participation for MS or HS students.



Among HS students, girls had 39% decreased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to boys.



Among MS and HS students Black, Hispanic, and Asian individuals had decreased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to White individuals.



MS and HS students who reported any lifetime alcohol use had 133% and 109% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.



MS and HS students who reported any lifetime drug use had 104% and 37% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.



MS and HS students who reported any lifetime vape use had 80% and 46% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.

Understanding Our Language: Definitions

Gambling Related

Problem gambling: All gambling behavior patterns that "compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits"

Gambling disorder: "Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress" (DSM-5)



Substance Misuse Related

Substance misuse: Excessive alcohol or other drug use that is used in an unintended way and/or results in negative impacts in a person's life.

Substance use disorder: "involves patterns of symptoms caused by using a substance that an individual continues taking despite its negative effects." (DSM-5)

Types of Gambling



**Lottery
Tickets or
Scratchers**



**Sports
Betting**



**Electronic
Games**



**Slot
Machine**

**Horse
Racing**



**Card
Games**

**Dice
Games**



Casino



**Raffle
Tickets**



Bingo



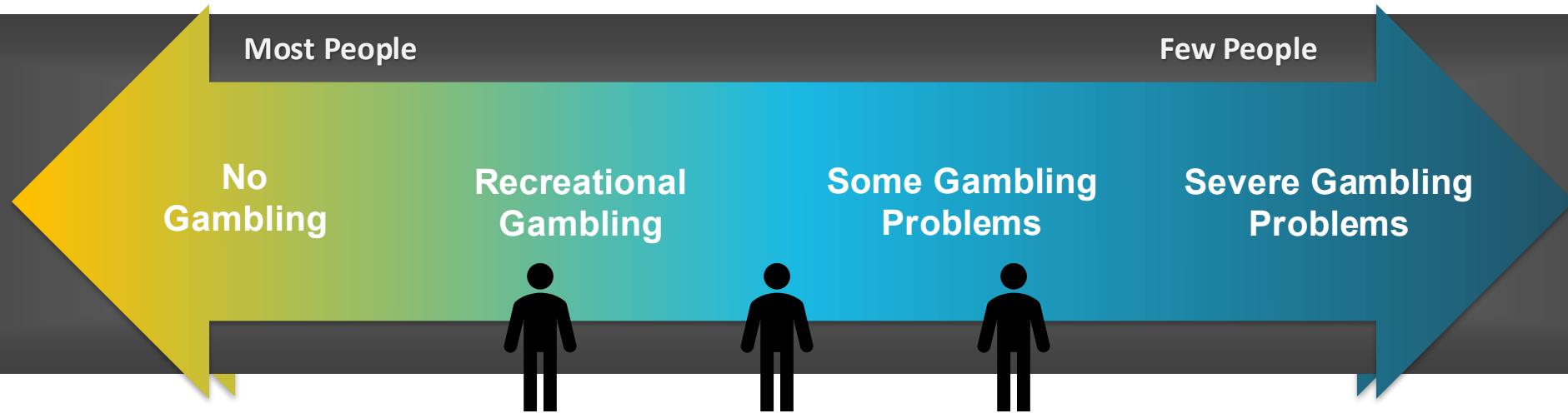
**Games of
Skill**



**Culturally
Specific**



Defining Our Language: The Gambling Continuum



This is the gambling continuum, referred to as a spectrum as participation can range from not gambling to problem and severe problem gambling.

People can move back and forth across this continuum

Gambling Continuum



Gambling Continuum

**No
Gambling**

**Recreational
Gambling**

**Some Gambling
Problems**

**Severe Gambling
Problems**



When people or groups are engaged in risky gambling, they may exhibit the following behaviors:

- ✓ Betting more than planned
- ✓ Spending more time gambling than planned
- ✓ Borrowing money to gamble
- ✓ Illusions of control

Gambling Continuum

**Recreational
Gambling**

**Some Gambling
Problems**

**Severe Gambling
Problems**



Problem gambling refers to any kind of gambling that results in negative impact(s) on the person's or group's life or on the lives of their family, friends, and/or co-workers.

The negative impact can occur occasionally, or it can be ongoing and serious situation.

Gambling Continuum

Severe Gambling Problems



Severe Problem Gambling is when people or groups have been diagnosed as having a gambling problem found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

Compared to the number of people who gamble, very few people are diagnosed with severe problem gambling (2%).

The DSM-5 categorizes severe problem gambling as: “persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress.”

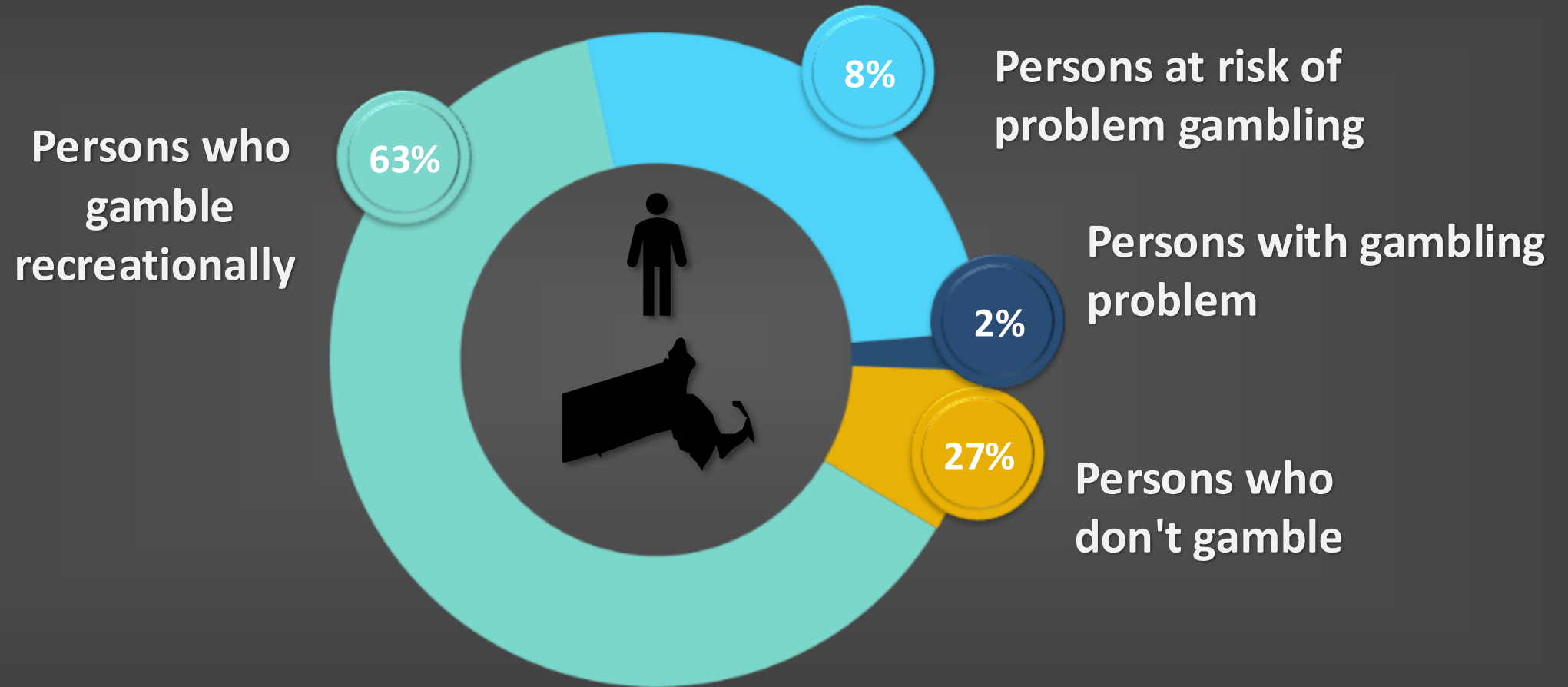
Gambling Continuum

What About Massachusetts

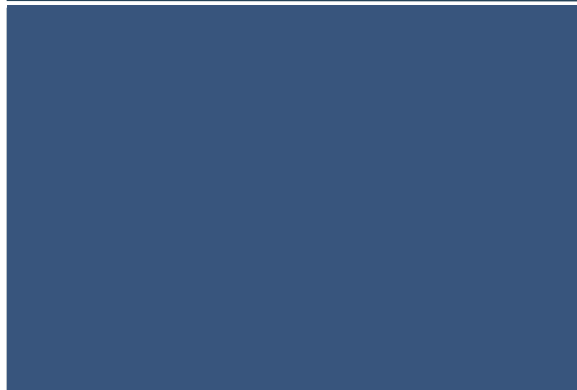
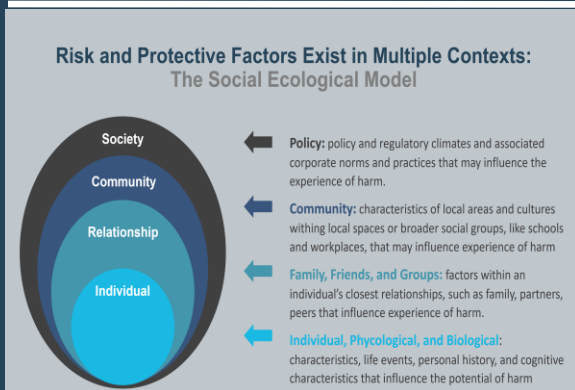
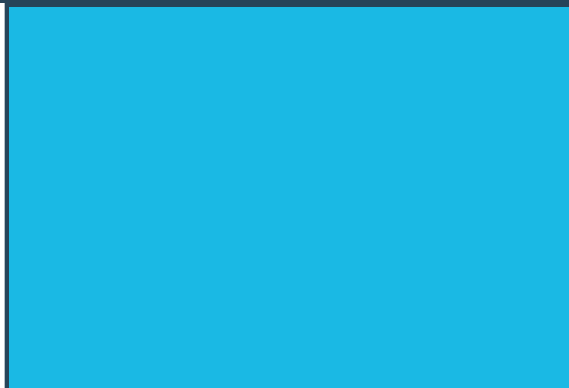


Gambling Participation

Massachusetts



SECTION 2: THE INTERSECTION



Let's take an example:

Depression and insomnia are closely linked

Problems that co-occur where two or more distinct health problems occur simultaneously in



Bidirectional

Causal ?

Risk Factor



Why Does This Matter

- Populations impacted are at significant risk when you consider their various dimensions of risk (intersectionality)
- This nexus is not comprehensively being addressed across the country and there are populations impacted that are not being served
- Huge need for prevention to apply best practices of prevention to both problems

Understanding Our Language: Definitions

Problem Gambling



Substance Use Disorders

Understanding similarities and differences between gambling and substance use disorders can have implications for the prevention of these disorders and suggests they may have common underlying pathways in their development, onset, and course in the lives of those negatively impacted.

Specifically, understanding the similarities may provide insight about appropriate prevention approaches that may be applicable for both disorders. Conversely, understanding the differences may inform healthcare providers about issues they need to treat in unique ways for each disorder.

Understanding Our Language: Definitions

Problem Gambling

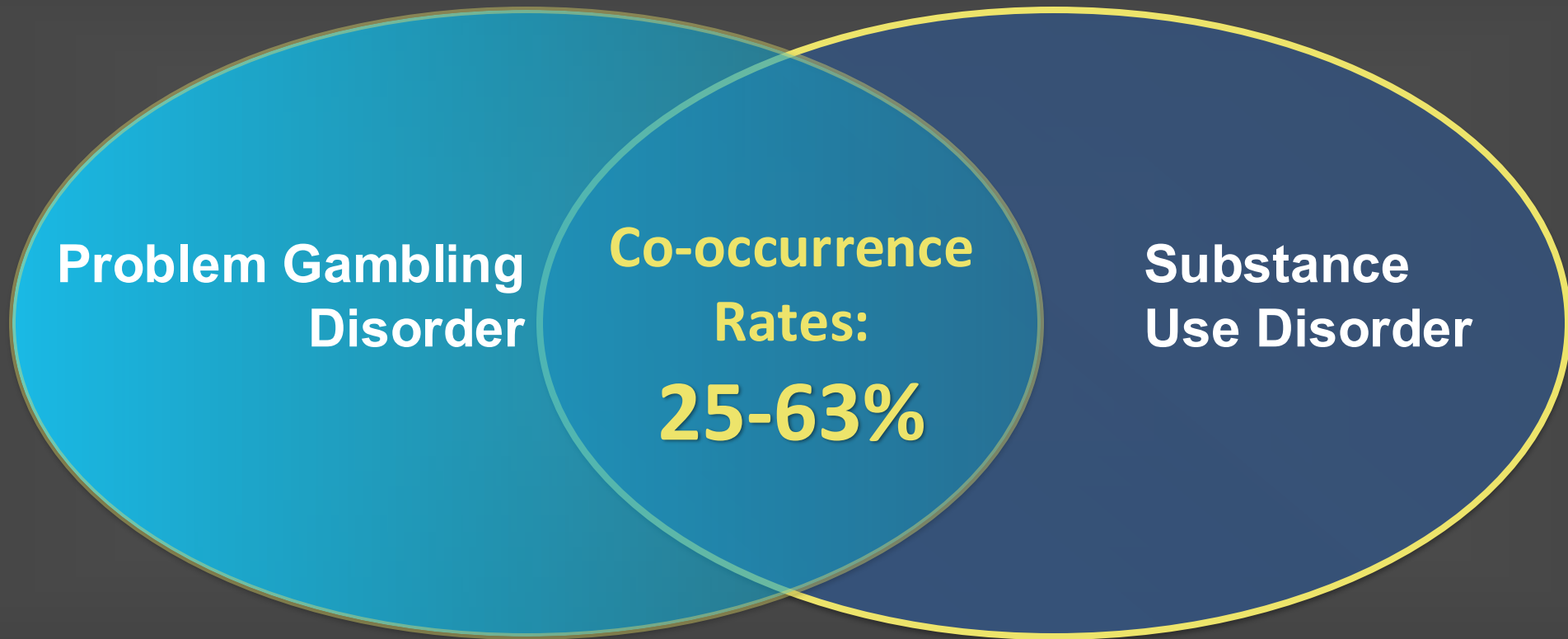
Substance Use Disorders



Co-occurrence Rates

Problem Gambling

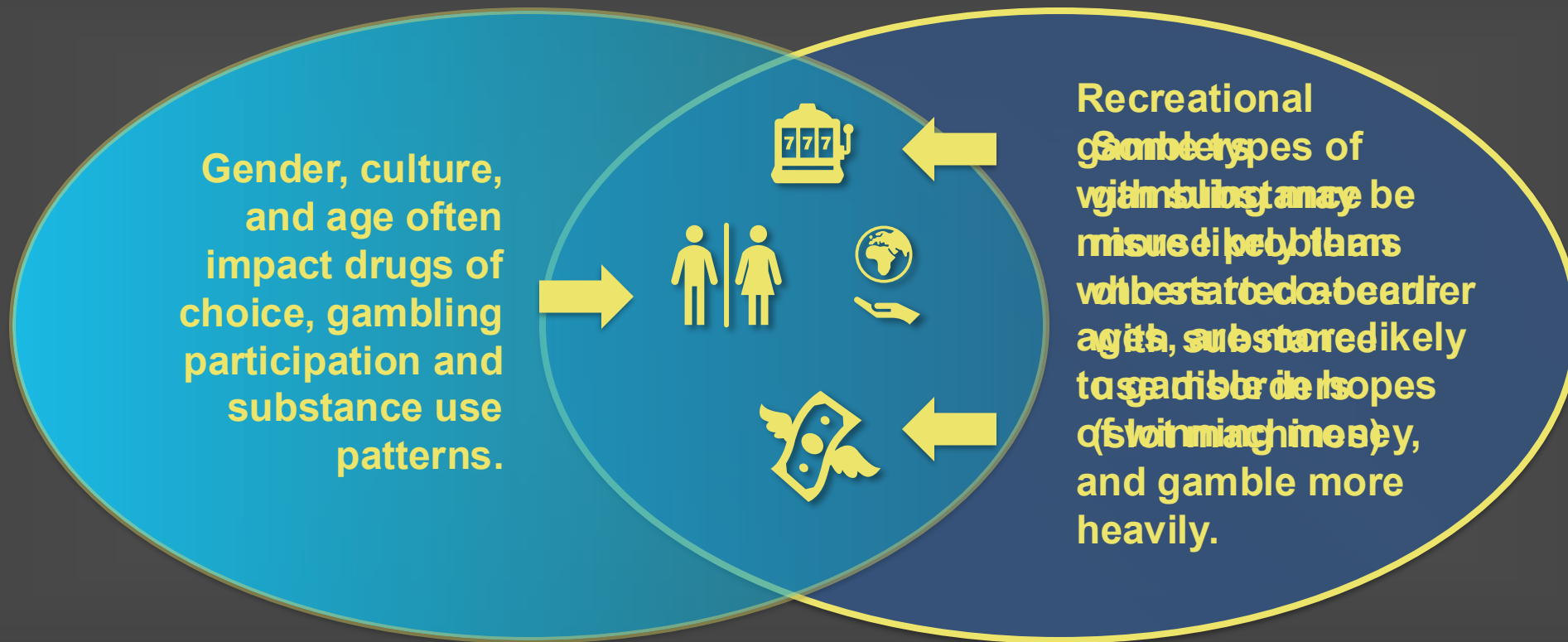
Substance Use Disorders



Additional Intersections

Problem Gambling

Substance Use Disorders



Social and Structural Determinants of Health (SDOH) Impacts Both

Problem Gambling

Educational attainment
High School degree or Less

Socio-economic status
Annual income less than 15,000

Neighborhood and built environment
Gambling availability/access

Social and community context
Parental gambling/low family connectedness

Healthcare access and quality
Number of providers, knowledge of and access to supports



Substance Use Disorders

Educational attainment
Low educational attainment

Socio-economic status
Low and high family income

Neighborhood and built environment
Alcohol and other drugs availability/access

Social and community context domain
Parental substance use/community norms favorable towards use, low neighborhood attachment

Healthcare access and quality
Knowledge of and access to supports



Key Features of Risk and Protective Factors

**Exists in
Multiple Context**

**Are Correlated
and Cumulative**

**Associated With
Multiple Outcomes**

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk Factors

Factors that **increase** the likelihood of developing problem gambling or substance use disorders

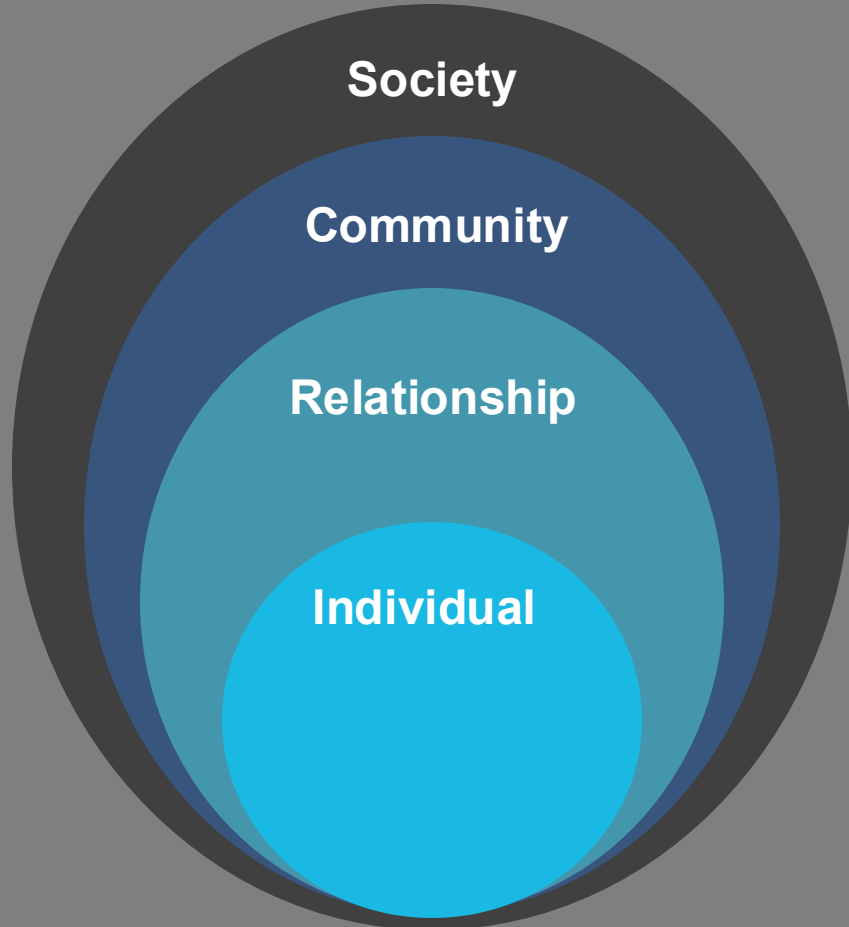


Protective Factors

Factors that **decrease** the likelihood of developing problem gambling or substance use disorders.



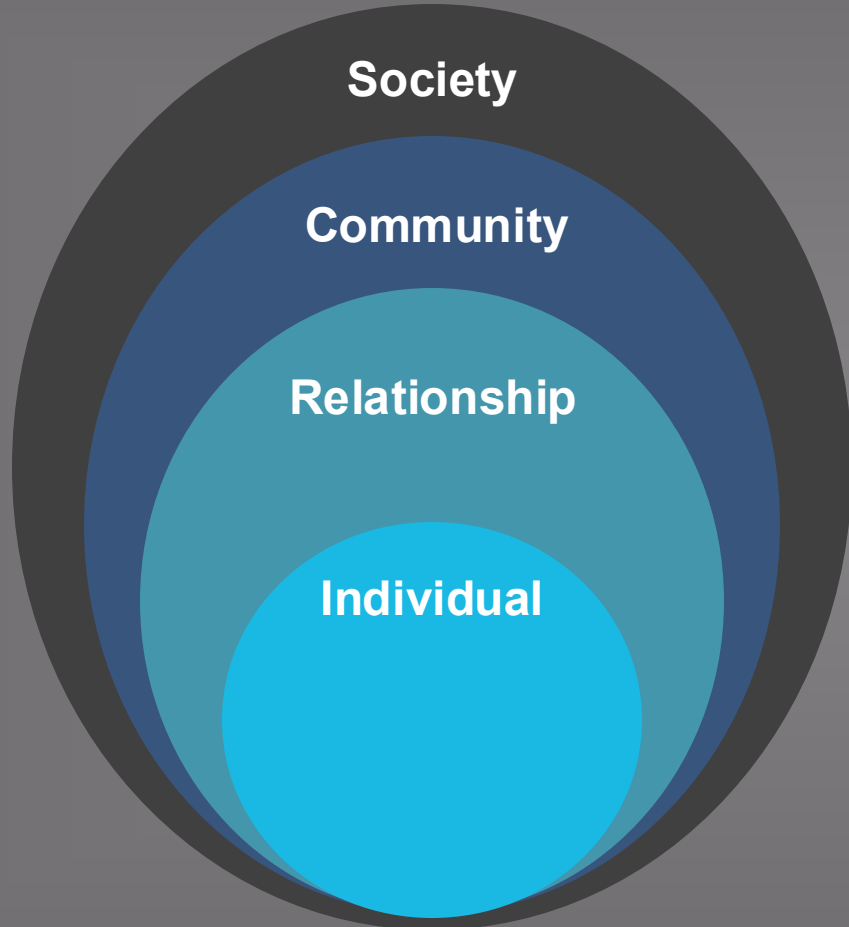
Risk and Protective Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts: The Social Ecological Model



This model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors.

Helps us understand the range of factors that put people at risk for problem gambling and substance misuse or protect them from experiencing negative consequences of problem gambling and substance misuse

Risk and Protective Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts: The Social Ecological Model



Policy: policy and regulatory climates and associated corporate norms and practices that may influence the development of gambling problems or substance misuse / disorders.



Community: characteristics of local areas and cultures within local spaces or broader social groups, like schools and workplaces, that may influence development of gambling problems or substance misuse / disorders>

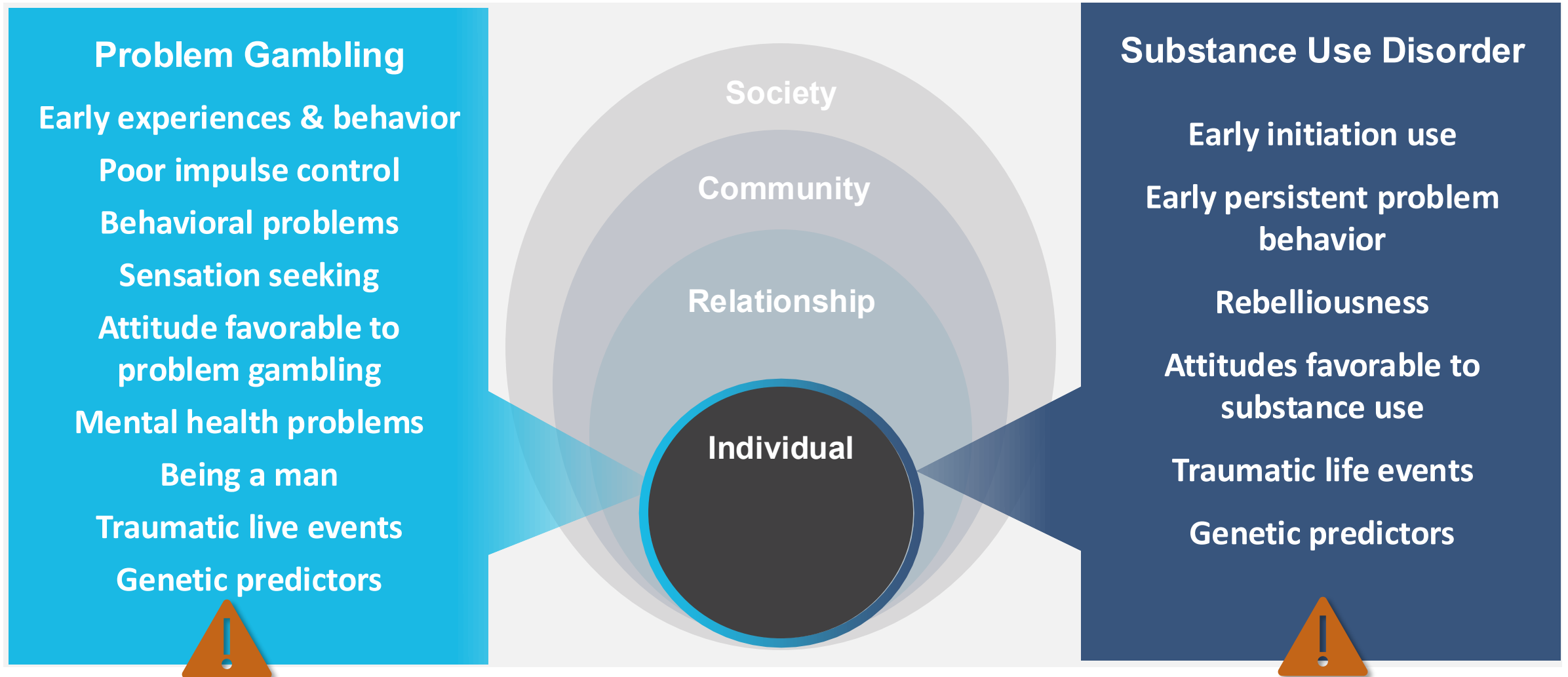


Family, Friends, and Groups: factors within an individual's closest relationships, such as family, partners, peers that influence development of gambling problems or substance misuse / disorders.

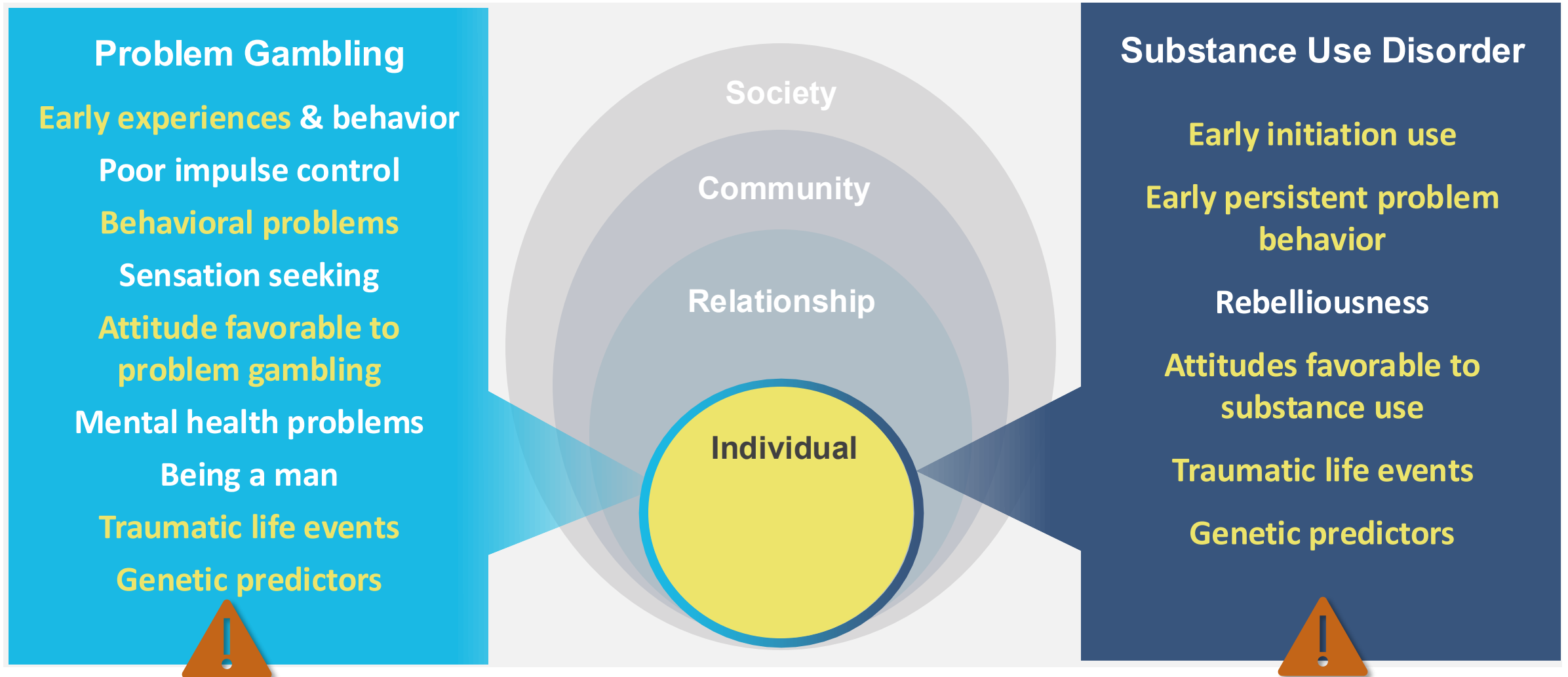


Individual, Psychological, and Biological: characteristics, life events, personal history, and cognitive characteristics that influence development of gambling problems or substance misuse / disorders.

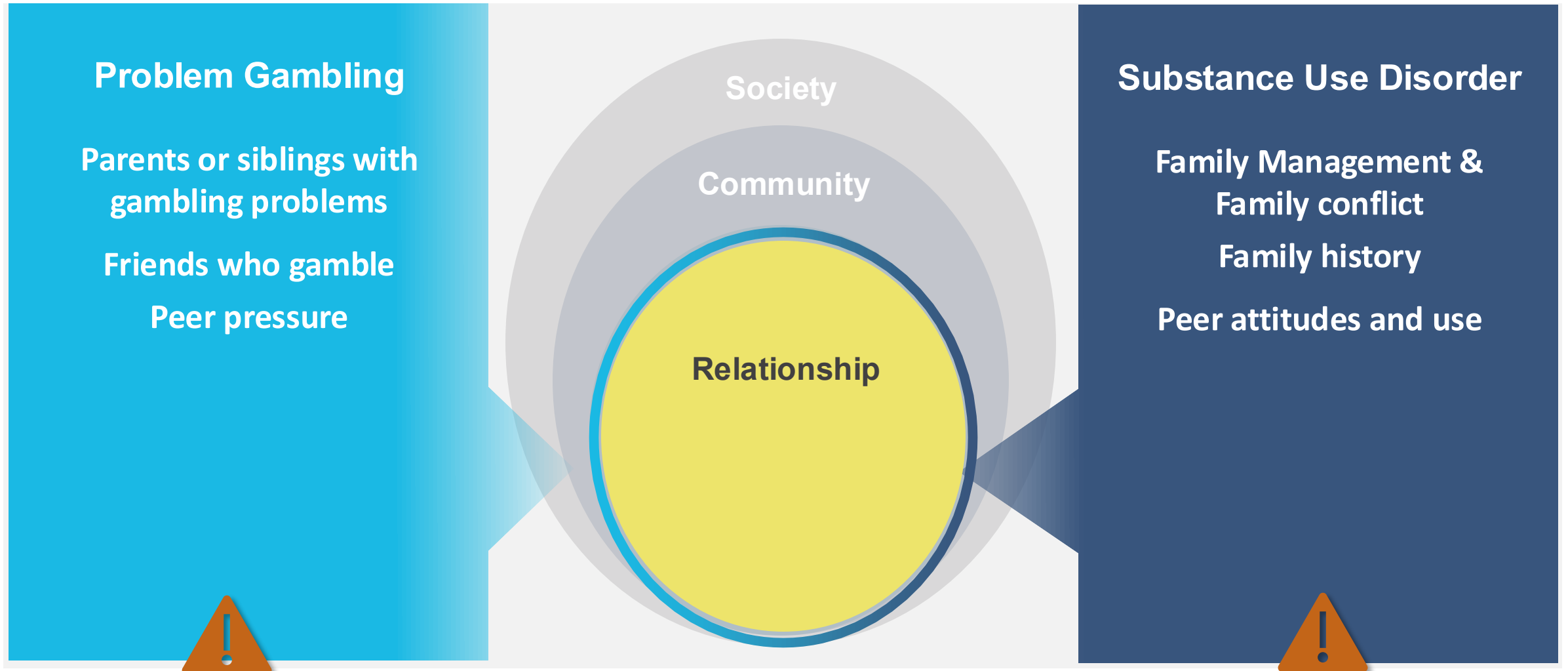
Risk Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts:



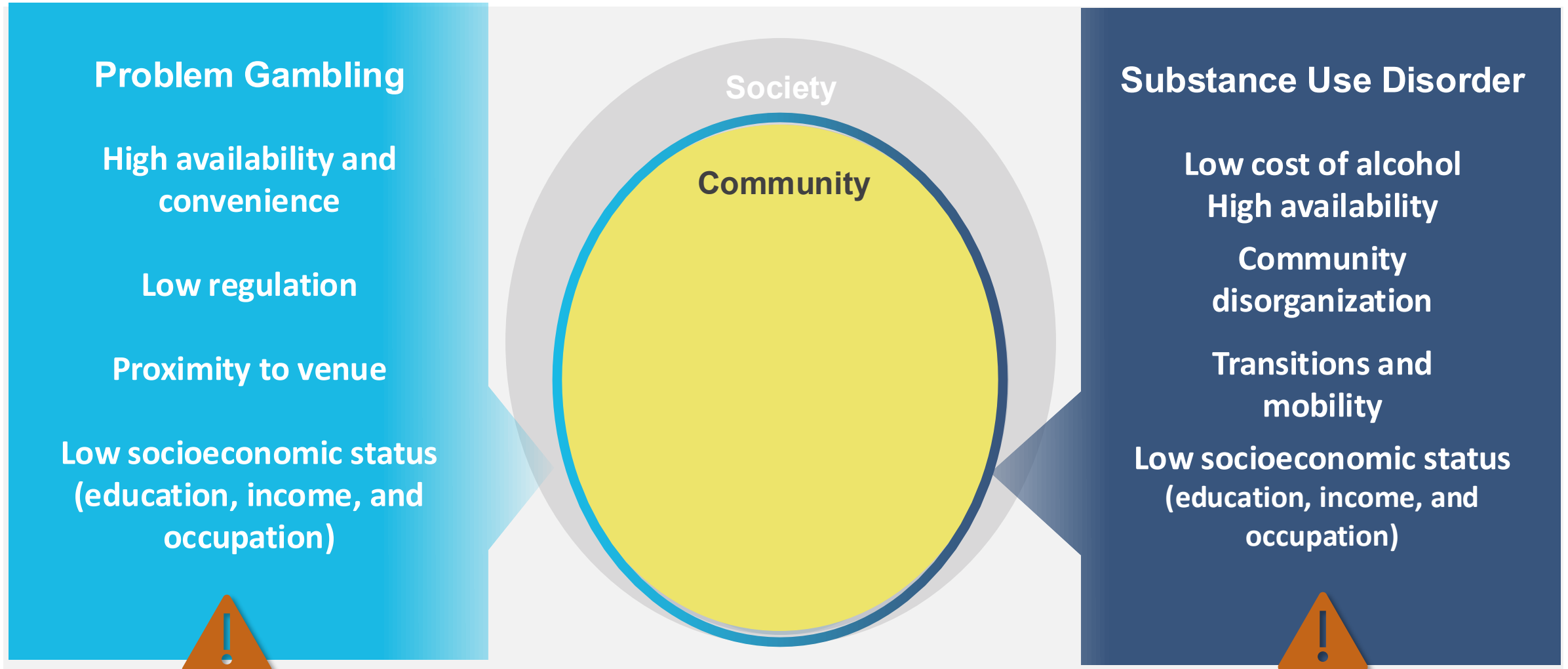
Risk Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts:



Risk Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts: Relationship

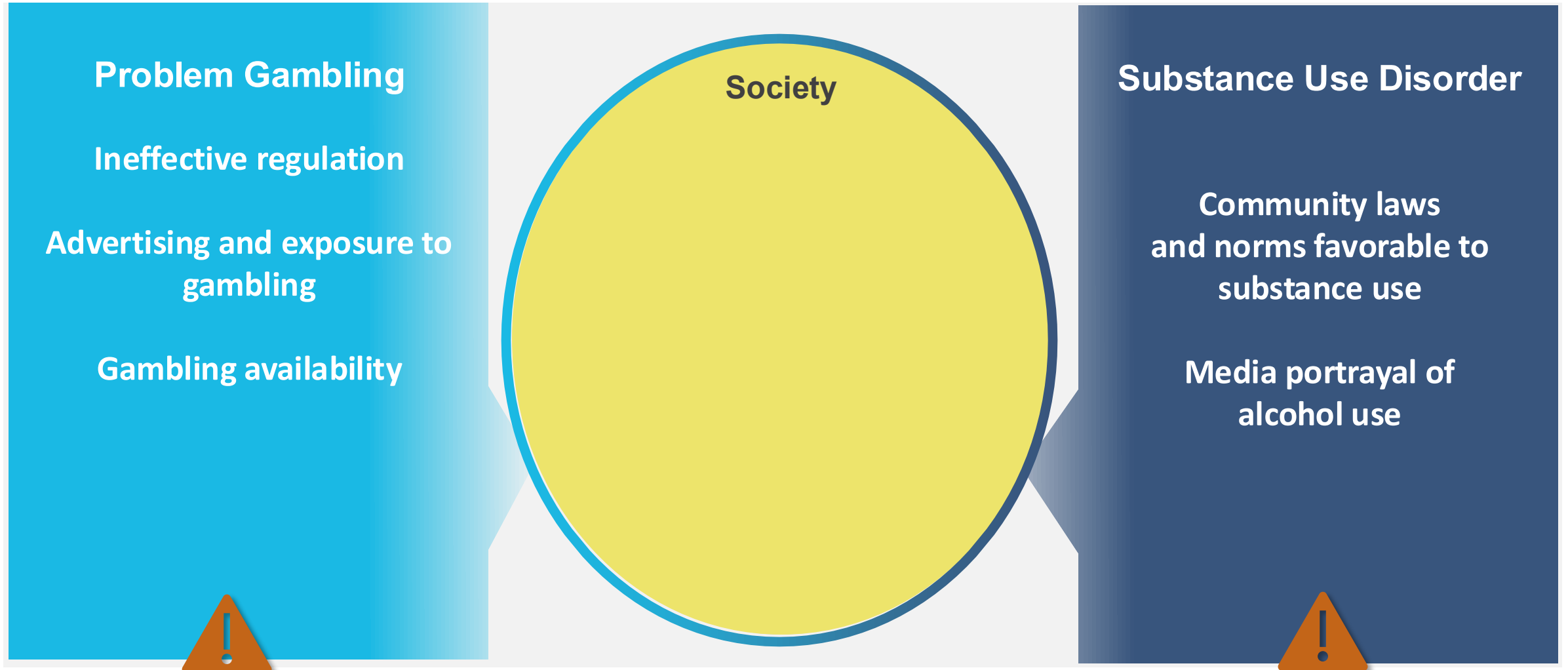


Risk Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts: Community

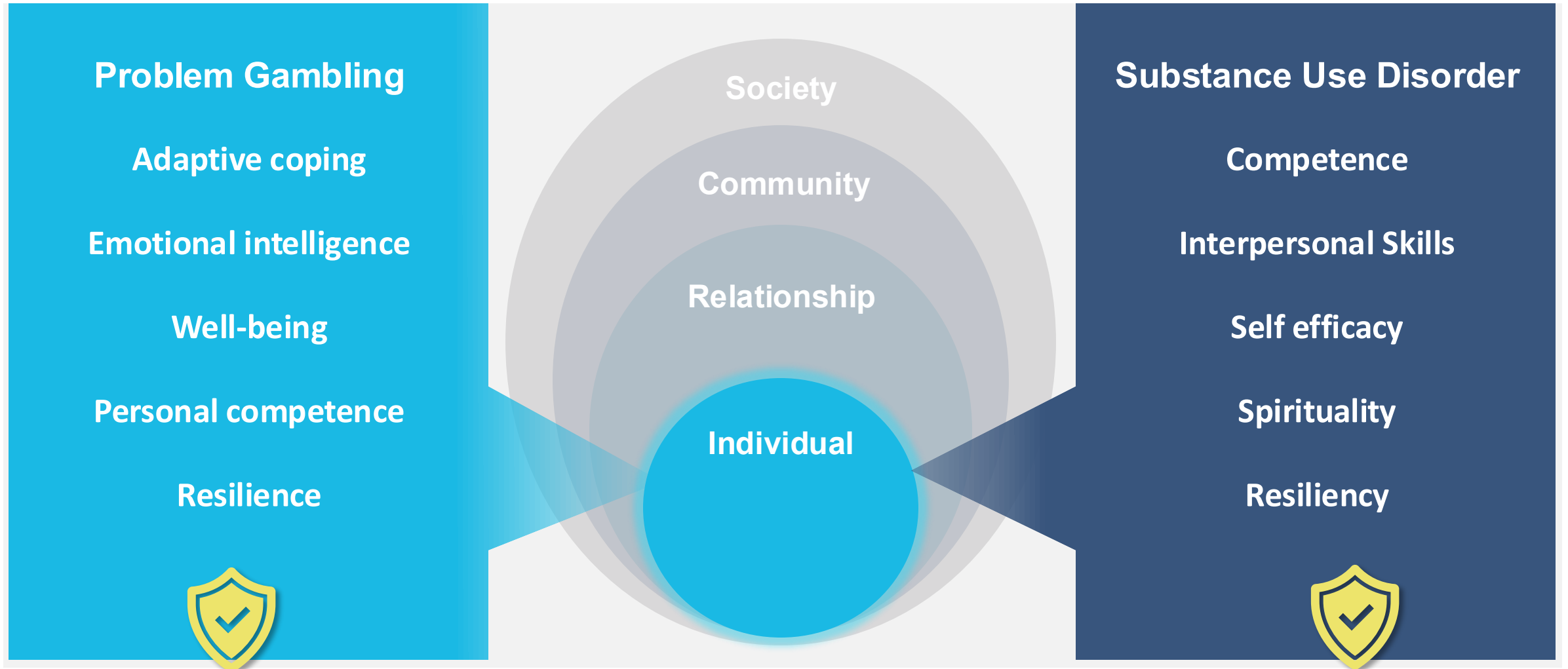


Risk Factors Exist in Multiple Contexts:

Society



Protective Factors Individual



Protective Factors: Relationship

Problem Gambling

Social Support

Quality of life



Society

Community

Relationship

Substance Use Disorder

Social involvement
Recognition / positive
behavior

Bonding & Positive
Communication

Parental monitoring

Healthy beliefs & standards



Protective Factors : Community

Problem Gambling

Regulations

Self efficacy programs
across sectors

Health and policy
involvement



Society

Community

Substance Use Disorder

Opportunities to develop
healthy beliefs (Family, school,
and community)

Norms communicating
clear and consistent
expectations for non using.

Programs providing for
prosocial involvement



Protective Factors: Society

Problem Gambling

Supply reduction

Legal age restrictions

Demand reduction

Restrictions advertising

Policies



Society

Substance Use Disorder

Supply Reduction Policy

Demand reduction

Media Literacy

Socio-economic stability



Shared Risk and Protective Factors

Problem Gambling

Substance Use Disorders



Examples of Shared Risk and Protective Factors for Problem Gambling and Substance Misuse



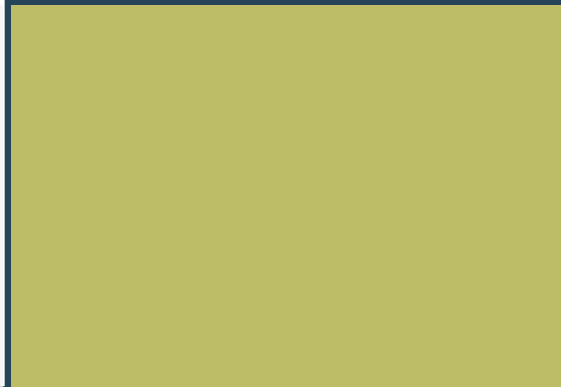
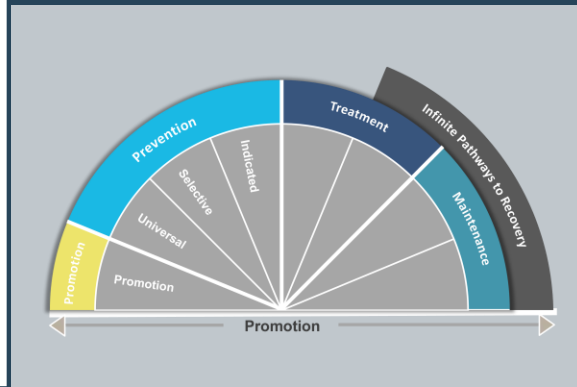
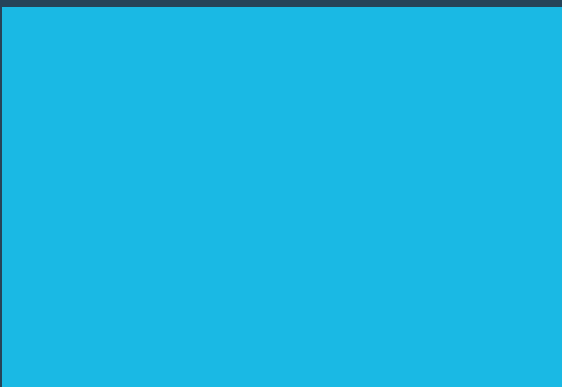
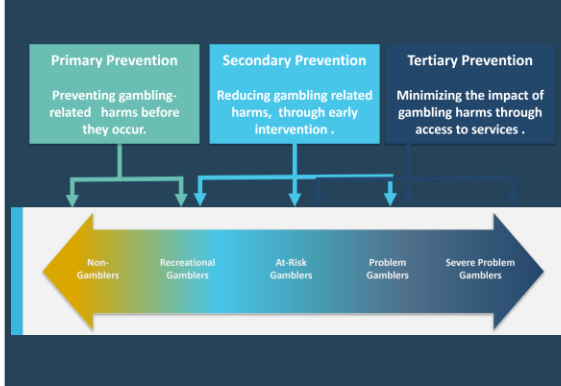
 Risk Factors	 Protective Factors
Poor impulse control	Adaptive coping strategies
High sensation seeking	Emotional intelligence
Early use or exposure	Resilience
Depression	Interpersonal skills
Childhood trauma	Social competence
Peer gambling / use	Social bonding
Family history of addiction	Parental bonding
Lack of parental objections knowledge	Supervision
Familial attitudes	School connectedness
Accessibility	Coordination of resources
Lack of community awareness	Community support
Social acceptance	Opportunities for prosocial involvement in the community
Media, such as alcohol / lottery ads	Recognition for prosocial involvement

Individual Level

Relationship Level

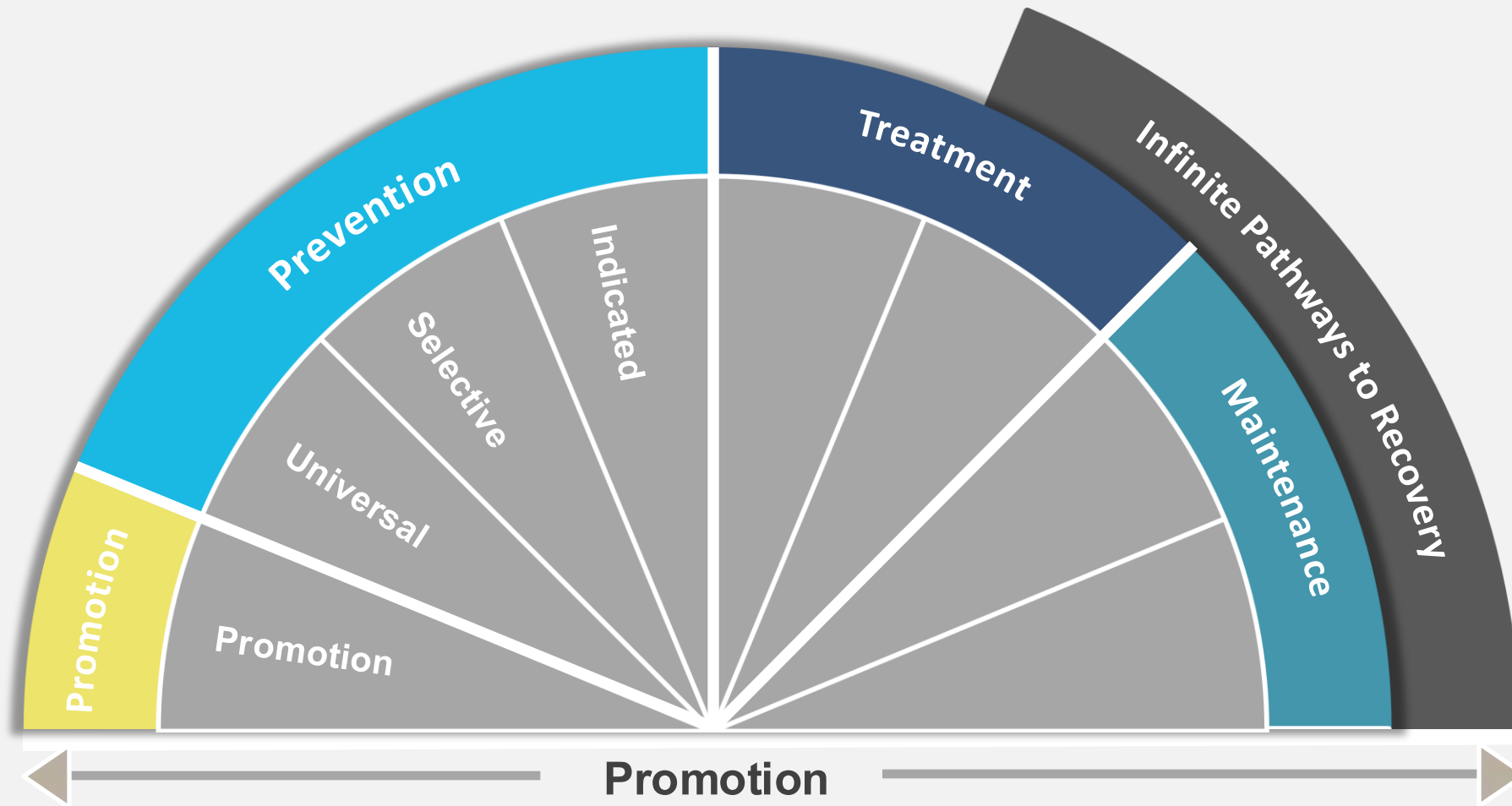
Community Level

SECTION 3: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE



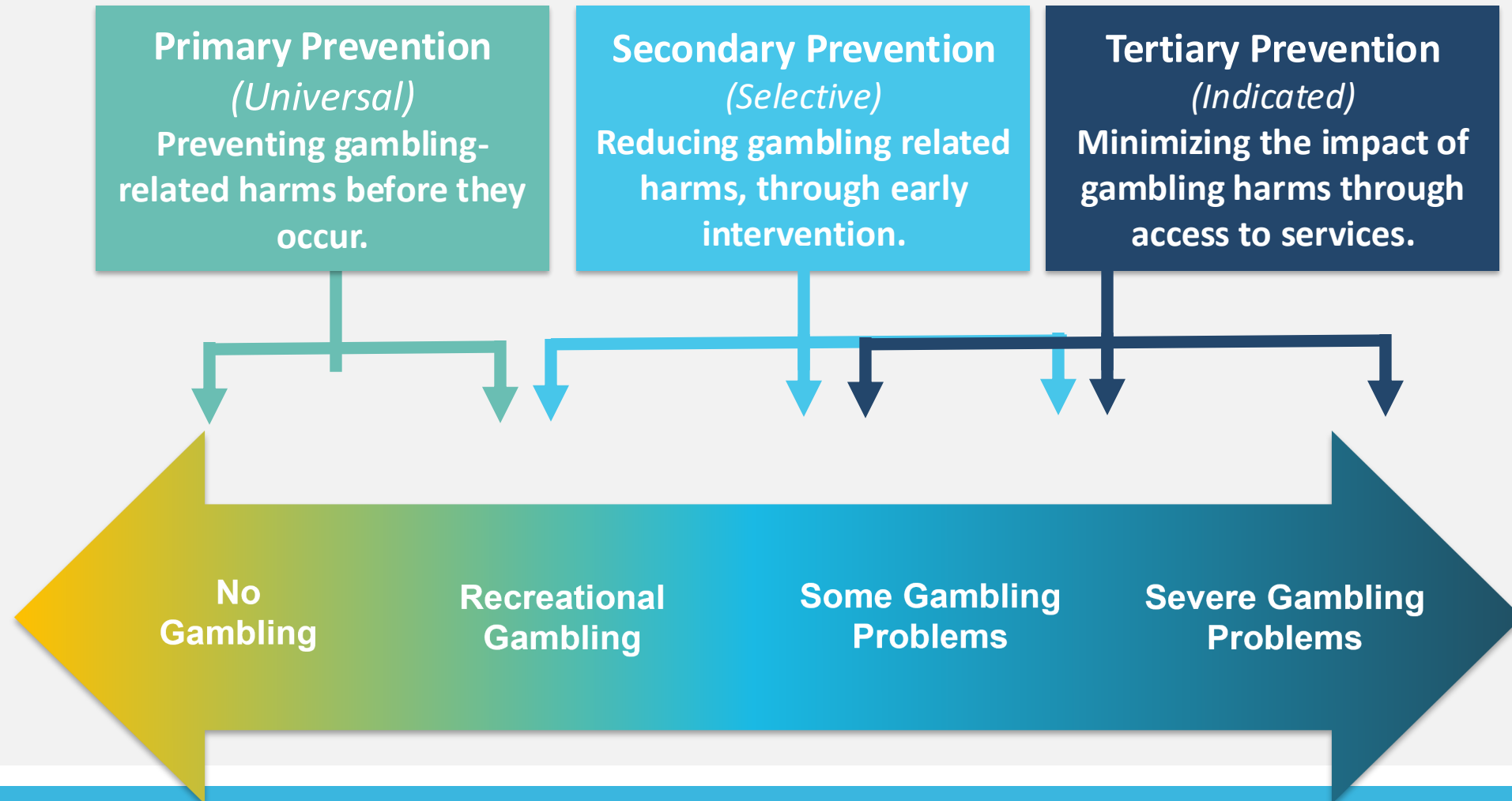
Substance Misuse Prevention interventions

Populations and The Continuum of Care



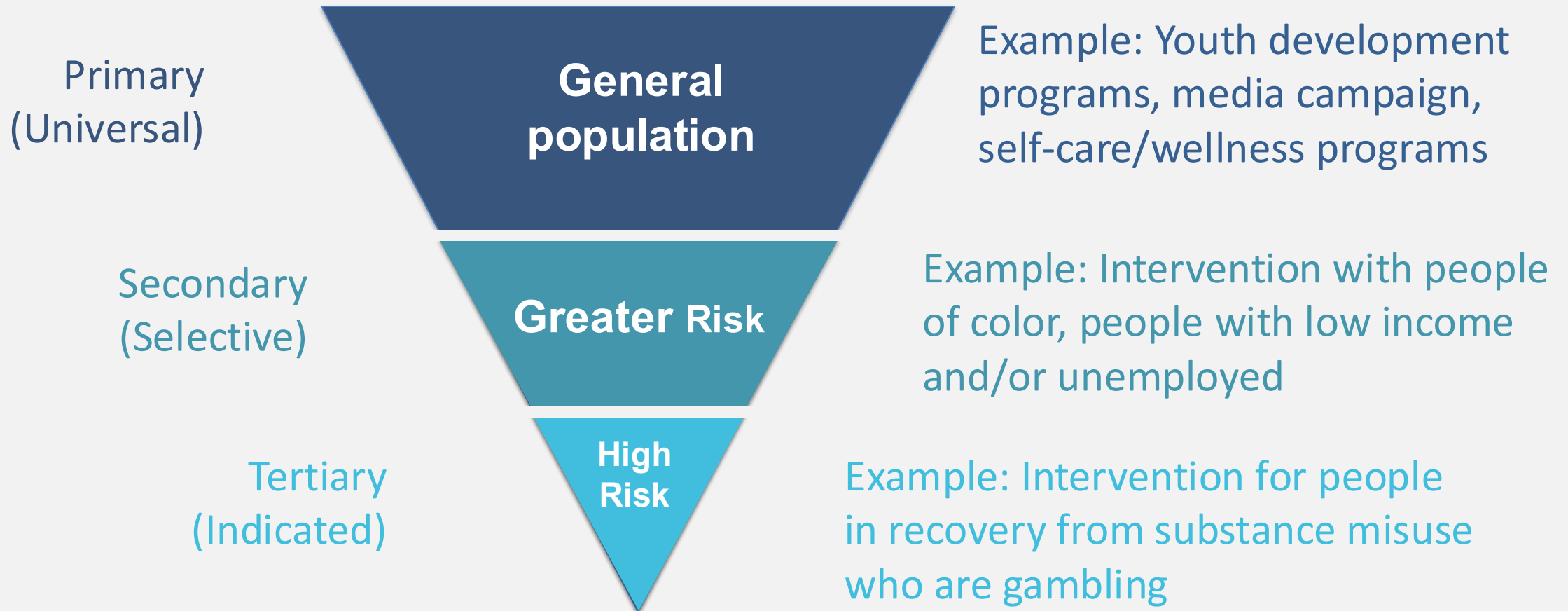
Crosswalk with Substance Misuse U,S or I

Gambling Participation and the Medical Model



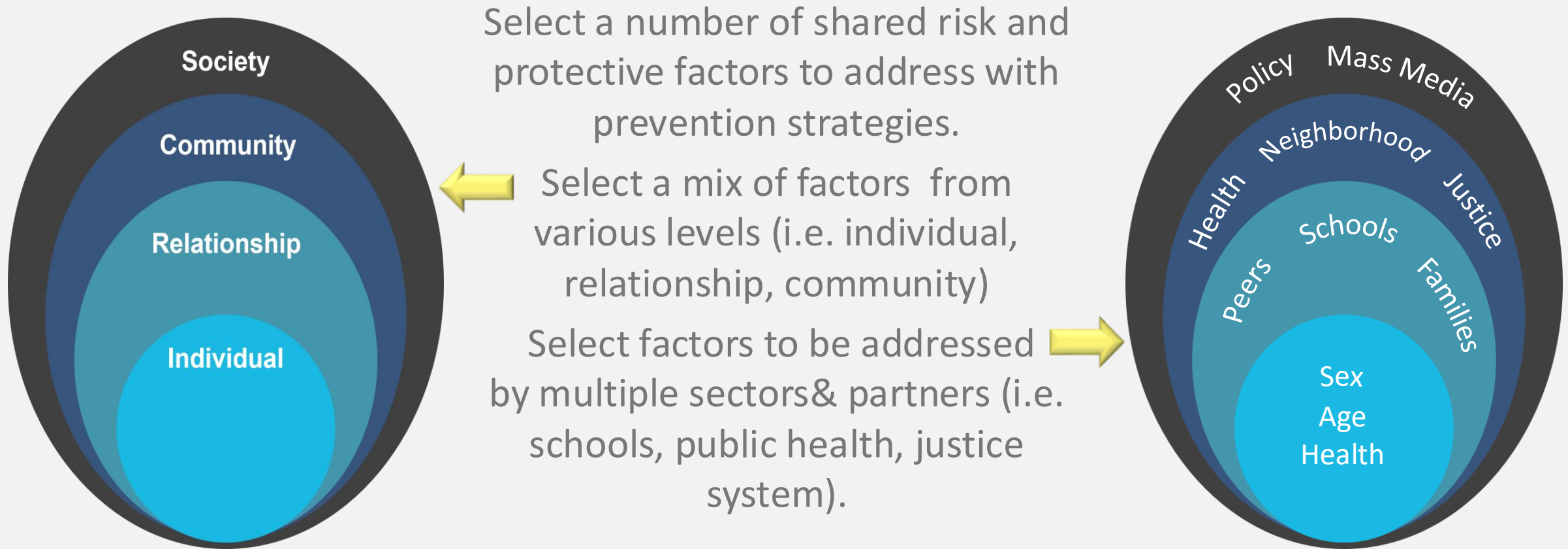
Address the Intersection

Interventions at Multiple Levels



Selecting Strategies

Intervene at levels and sectors



Addressing the Intersection

Apply lessons learned preventing other behavioral health problems



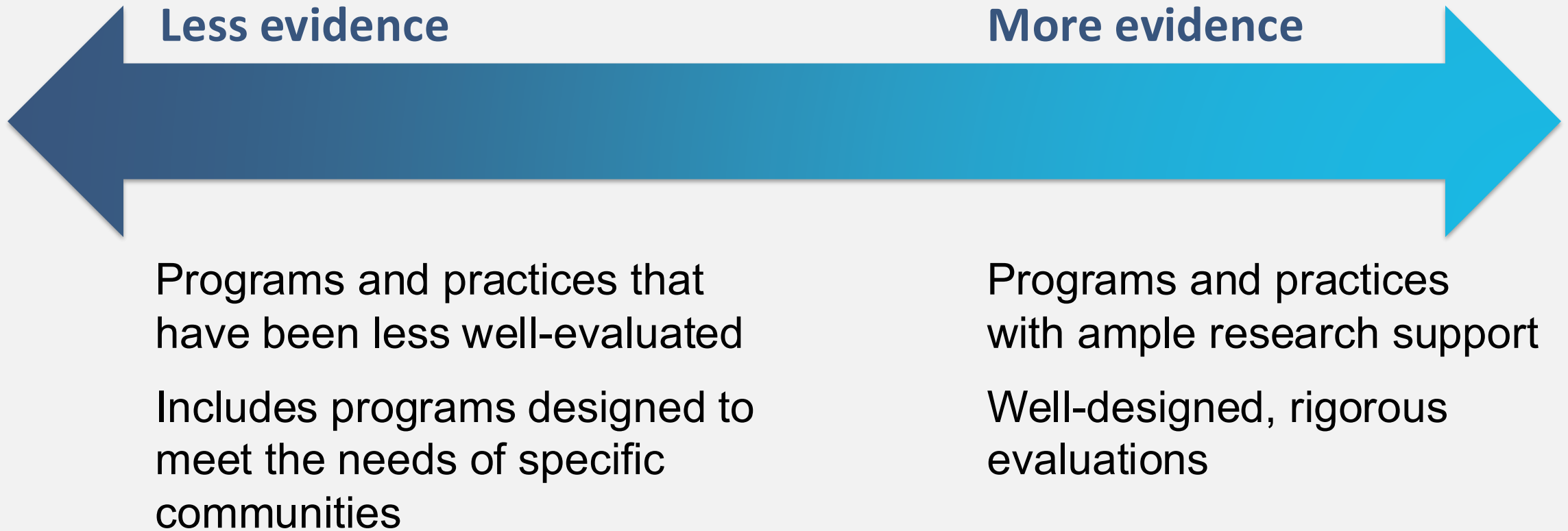
Addressing the Intersection

What are some other strategies/interventions from other public health fields that could be applied to problem gambling prevention?



Selecting Programs

Evidence-Based Continuum



Address the Intersection

Select promising strategies that make theoretical and practical sense
(and that address underlying risk factors)



Recommendations to Address the Intersection

Evaluate! Evaluate! Evaluate!

- Document the “story” of your intervention.
- What components did you add? Which did you omit? Why?
- What were your expected outcomes?



Address the Intersection

Address Underlying Social and Structural Determinants of Health
Impacting Populations You Have in Common

- Educate coalition members and other partners on the Importance of Health Equity
- Discuss the populations that Substance Misuse and Problem Gambling share and the social determinants of health that impact them.
- Work collaboratively to address the social determinants of health in your prevention efforts by sharing data, resources, and potential partners



Address the Intersection

Acknowledge Challenges

- Different funding sources
- Lack of PG prevention funding
- Lack of prevention research/EBP capacity (PG)
- Stigma
- Lack of knowledge and awareness and perception of harm about the nexus





Address the Intersection

Promote Collaboration

- Build awareness about the nexus: printed materials, social media, e-newsletters
- Develop uniform prevention messaging so multiple issues can be addressed at once
- Build program and organizational capacity to address nexus
- Identify and develop partners you can collaborate with

Address the Intersection

The Benefits

- Deliver an integrated approach
- Efficient and relevant
- Impact through multiple context
- Leverage resources and funding streams
- Collaborate with new partnerships



Addressing the Intersection with Partners

Who are some potential organizations or sectors to partner with to address the intersection?





PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Q & A



PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

THANK YOU

Shannon Cassidy | Technical Assistance Provider

**Ben Spooner | Assistant Director, MA Center of
Excellence on Problem Gambling Prevention**

Upcoming MCOE PGP Health Equity Academy Trainings

- **Intersections of Suicide and Problem Gambling Prevention (*In-Person)** – UMass Lowell/UTECH Building
October 22, 2025: 10:00 – 2:00 PM
- **What's Equity Got To Do With It? Centering Equity into Problem Gambling Prevention (Virtual)**
November 6, 2025: 1:00 – 3:00
- **Engaging the Community and Partners to Build Capacity to Prevent Problem Gambling (Virtual)**
November 19, 2025: 1:00 – 3:00



We Are on Social Media!

Scan the QR codes below to follow our pages



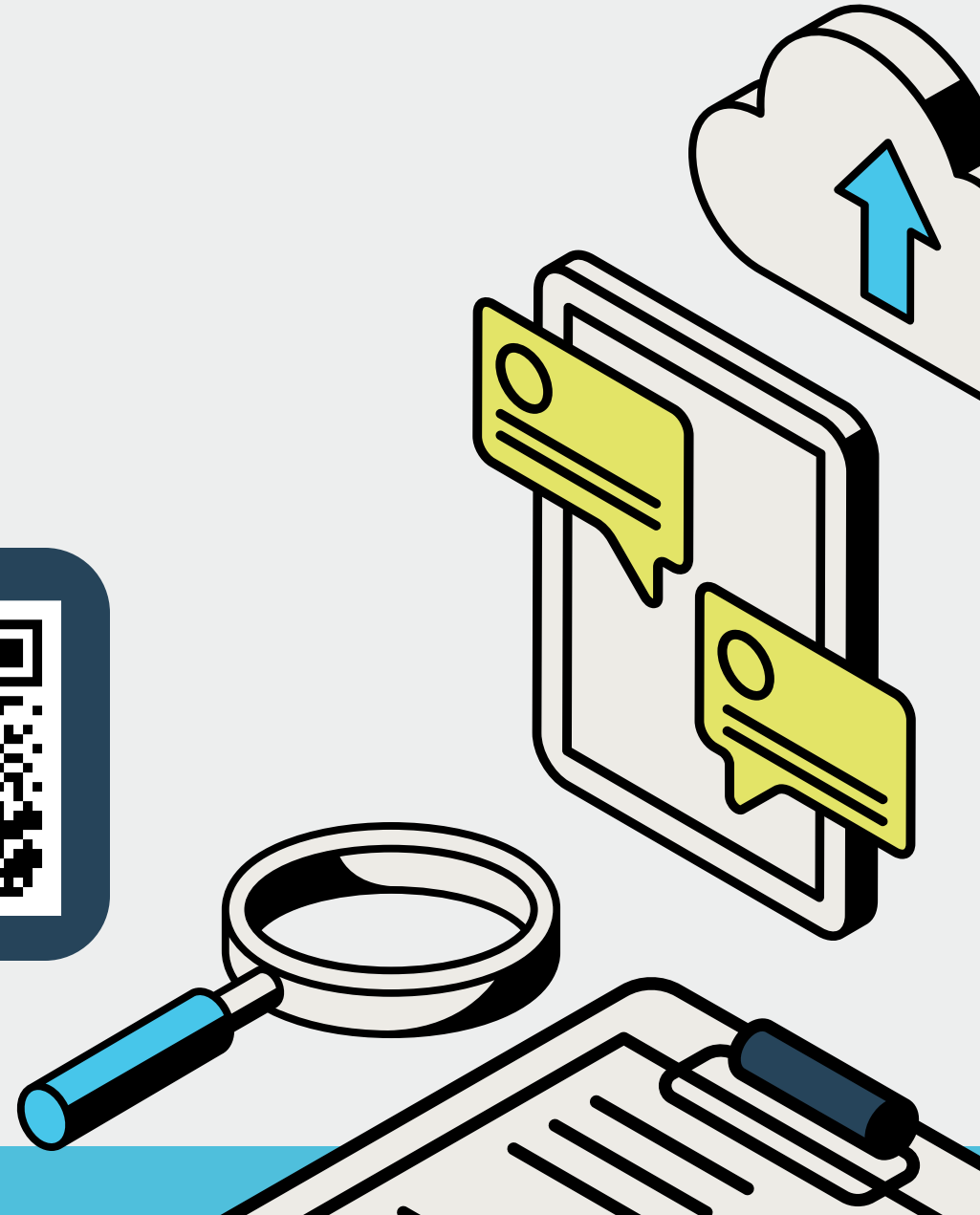
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