Creating Common Ground

Building a Shared Vision for Supporting Community Defined Evidence Practice and Moving Prevention Efforts Upstream

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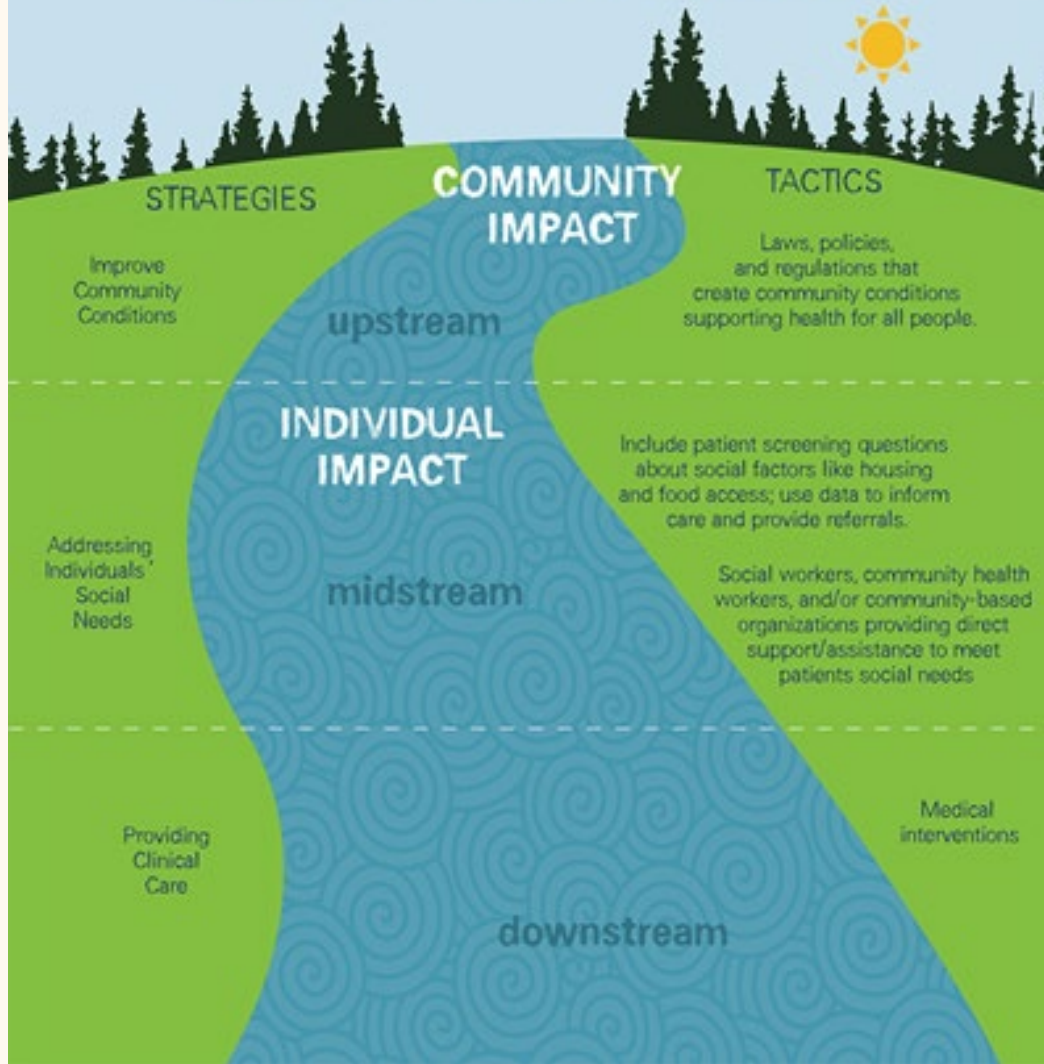**Nzinga Khalid**
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Moving Upstream

We are still standing on the bank of the river, rescuing people who are drowning. We have not gone to the head of the river to keep them from falling in.

That is the 21st century task."
Gloria Steinem

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Moving Upstream

Moving upstream addresses the root causes of illness and injury before they have a chance to occur. Both upstream and downstream interventions, policies and programs are necessary, but if we don't move efforts upstream, we will always spend our time rescuing people who are drowning rather than addressing why they are drowning in the first place.

What can be done to prevent the problem from occurring *in the first place?*

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Overview and Background: Creating Common Ground

Project Goal and Outcomes

Goal: A shared vision for moving prevention and innovation upstream by creating common ground between county behavioral health and community advocates through:

- **Improved communication and collaboration** among county and community stakeholders on what is needed to advance community defined evidence practice (CDEPs)

- **Policy, practice, and regulation changes** to support and sustain CDEPs and more equitable mental health outcomes

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Project Activities

- **Conversations** with county and community stakeholders

- **Regional dialogues** to discuss and refine potential strategies and policy change

- **Webinars** to lift up examples of county/community partnerships that are elevating community defined evidence practice

- **Recommendations** to sustain long‑term systems change to support community defined evidence practice on a broader scale

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Creating Common Ground Report

- A tool to identify, examine, and change policies, practices, regulation, and systems to move further upstream and address root causes of mental health challenges and related conditions.

- A tool to examine proposed policies and system changes to ensure they advance equity and racial justice, and to hold policy makers and decision makers accountable.

- A guide to ensure California's mental health system is community - centered and increasingly elevates and supports community defined evidence practice moving forward.

- A framework not tied to specific legislation or policies in our rapidly changing political environment, but one that can be applied on an ongoing basis.

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The Importance of Community Defined Evidence Practice

Community - Defined Evidence Practices

- **A set of practices that communities have used over time** and which may or may not have been measured empirically but have reached a level of acceptance by the community.

- **Reduce behavioral health disparities and advancing equity** for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities.

- **Rooted in community - centered healing and cultural, linguistic, or traditional practices**. Examples include traditional healing, life coaching, circles of care, mindfulness, radical inclusivity, and culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach.

- **Practiced for years** and often pre - date the Western medical model.

Concept Paper: Policy Options for Community - Defined Evidence Practices (CDEPs). California Pan - Ethnic Health Network. 2021.

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CA Reducing Disparities Project

- **CDEPs do not receive the same support, funding, application, or understanding by policymakers and the dominant culture as their evidence - based practice counterparts**, due to misunderstanding, implicit bias and lack of interest in learning about other epistemologies and paradigms.

- **The California Department of Public Health Office of Health Equity (OHE) has invested significantly in CDEPs** through the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP) to build an evidence base for their effectiveness.

- The goal of the CRDP is to use **rigorous, community participatory evaluation to demonstrate effectiveness at preventing or reducing the severity of mental illness** in African - American, Asian and Pacific Islander, LGBTQ+, Latino, and Native American communities.

Concept Paper: Policy Options for Community - Defined Evidence Practices (CDEPs). California Pan - Ethnic Health Network. 2021.

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CA Reducing Disparities Project

- Do business differently, which involves attentive listening and genuine consideration of community and partner input to be responsive to community needs.

- Build community capacity to sustain efforts to reduce mental health disparities beyond the period of CRDP Phase II funding.

- Fairness in awarding contracts based on merit.

- Systems change to sustain the CRDP beyond the period of funding.

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Culture is important to me because it's made me more mature, and it's helped me with a lot of things in life and will help me in the future. It's important for more youth to grow up with their culture so they can carry on that knowledge to future generations. Culture can help out people in our communities that are struggling.

Our ceremonies heal. This is told in our very first stories. And we know that our ceremonies can resonate and heal our mind and body.

Participants in CRDP AI/AN programs

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CRDP Evaluation Findings

California Reducing Disparities Project
a culturally responsive mental health initiative

- The CRDP **increased access to mental health services and improved the mental health among participants** in unserved, underserved, and inappropriately served communities.

- The CRDP approach **strengthened community capacity to respond to mental health needs** more over time.

- Because its approach prioritizes prevention and early intervention, the **CRDP is cost effective** – every $1 spent over a four‑year implementation period saved $5, with a net estimated financial benefit to the state over $450 million.

Psychology Applied Research Center at Loyola Marymount University (2022). Statewide Evaluation of The California Reducing Disparities Project Phase 2 Executive Summary. California Department of Public Health, Sacramento, California.

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It validated me as a Black woman. It validated me as a Black woman living with a mental illness... allowed me to purge myself in a safe environment and feel that I was validated, that I was being heard, that I was loved, that I was respected.

One word I would use to capture my experience is the word 'free' because I have been free to show up as myself and not have to pretend like I'm okay when I'm not.

Participants in African American CDEP programs

Psychology Applied Research Center at Loyola Marymount University (2022). Statewide Evaluation of The California Reducing Disparities Project Phase 2 Executive Summary. California Department of Public Health, Sacramento, California.

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Current Context

- COVID 19
- Social isolation
- Homelessness crisis
- Revision of the MHSA/BHSA

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Outstanding Challenges

- Collaboration, transparency, and communication

- Lack of trust

- Focus on business as usual

- Centralized power and decision making

- Workforce

- Equitable funding and processes

- Equity measures and metrics

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# Principles for Creating Common Ground

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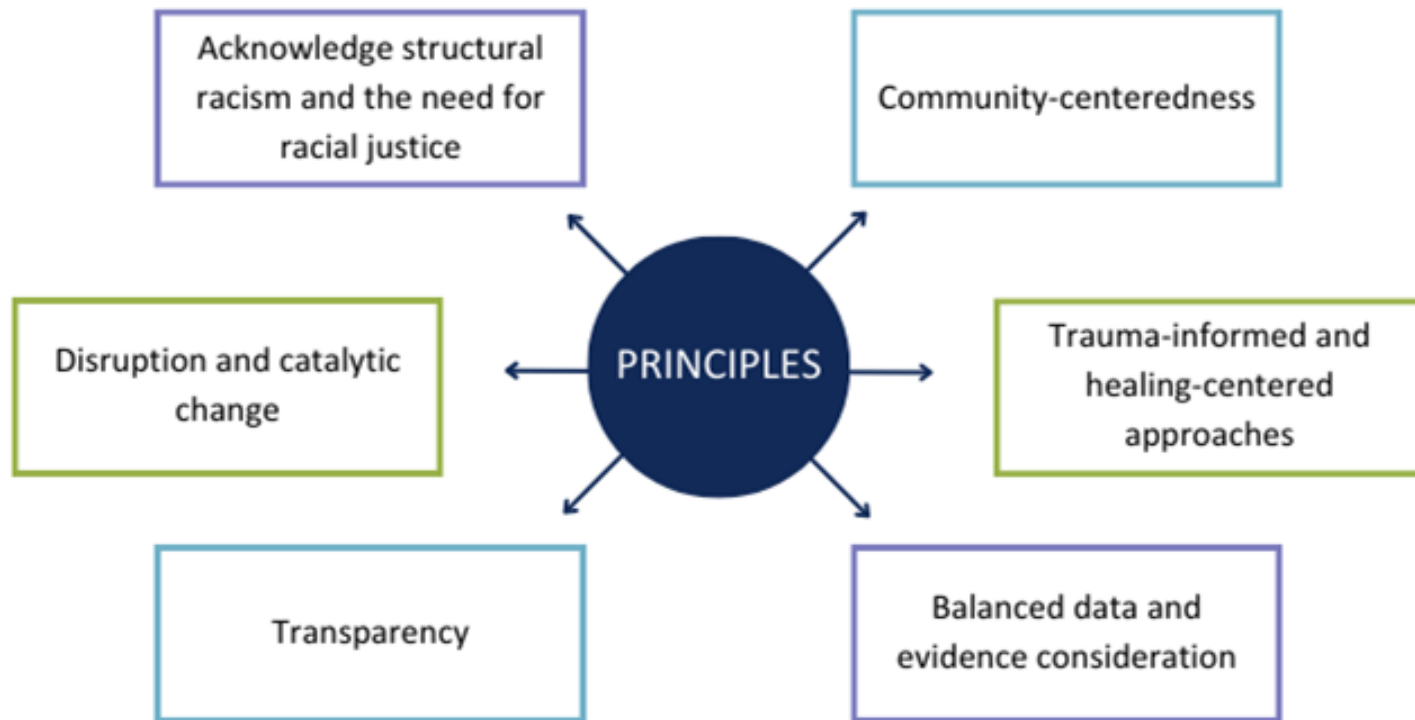
Principles for Creating Common Ground

- **Acknowledge structural racism and the need for racial justice**

- **Community-centeredness** to build trust with priority populations and center their strengths, assets, and needs

- **Trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches** that help communities reconnect with, reaffirm, and celebrate cultural identity while creating a path toward the community changes needed for health, safety, and wellbeing

- **Balanced data and evidence consideration** that includes contextual and experience evidence, and an assets based approach

- **Transparency** in decision and solution-making

- **Disruption and catalytic change** to challenge the system

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Policy Actions for Creating Common Ground

POLICY ACTIONS

Embed health equity and racial justice from the beginning	Shift and share power and decision-making with community	Strengthen partnerships across county departments and community partners
Strengthen narrative change and strategic communications	Support sustainable and long-term funding	Align and coordinate CDEP-related efforts
Increase workforce, education, and training pipeline efforts	Address the ongoing and growing crisis of isolation	Implement equitable COVID-19 recovery strategies

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An Ecosystem Approach
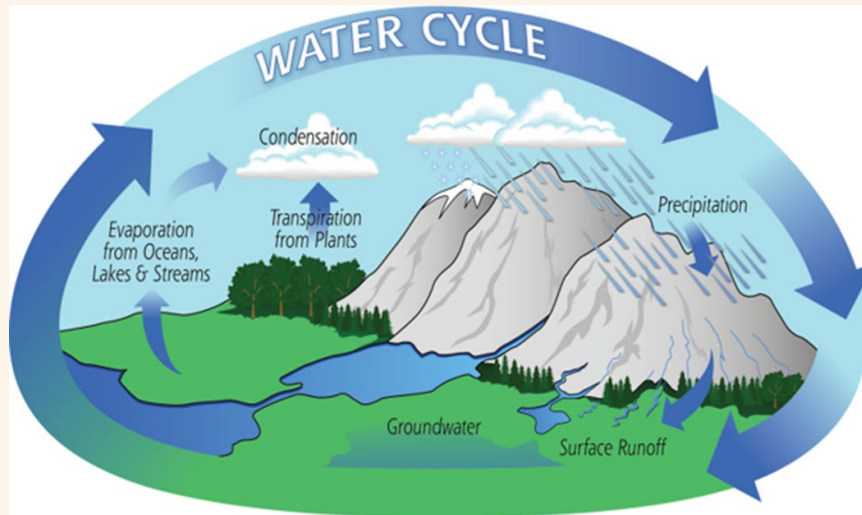
To advance a system that supports and sustains community - defined evidence practice, we need to embrace an ecosystem approach that centers community needs and experience, leads with equity and justice, and operates with transparency.

An ecosystem is a collection of partners working toward a unified goal. It includes the county department of mental/behavioral health and its community partners, contractors, and other county agencies, across different sectors.

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Policy Actions for Creating Common Ground

- **Embed health equity and racial justice into state mental/behavioral health policy, programs, and systems from the beginning** with a focus on procedural, distributional, and structural equity

- **Shift and share power and decision making with the community** to develop programs that are community defined, centered, and led.

- **Strengthening partnerships** across county departments and community partners to increase resources, strategies, and capabilities to achieve positive outcomes.

- **Strengthen narrative change and strategic** communications to share the impact of CDEPs.

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Policy Actions for Creating Common Ground

- **Support sustainable and long**-**term funding for community defined evidence practice** through legislative and administrative efforts

- **Align and coordinate CDEP**-**related efforts** and strengthen relationships across state, regional, and local agencies and systems

- **Increase workforce, education, and training pipeline efforts** to address cultural and linguistic practice and economic equity

- **Address the ongoing and growing crisis of isolation** with strategies that create conditions and opportunities for connection

- **Implement equitable COVID**-**19 recovery strategies** to address the mental health inequities exacerbated by the pandemic

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Creating Common Ground through Collaboration and Coordination

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Creating Common Ground through Collaboration and Coordination

- Leading with health equity and racial justice

- Acknowledgment, reconciliation, and healing

- Transparency in partnerships and contracting

- Community - centered funding for communities with highest need

- Open and honest communication

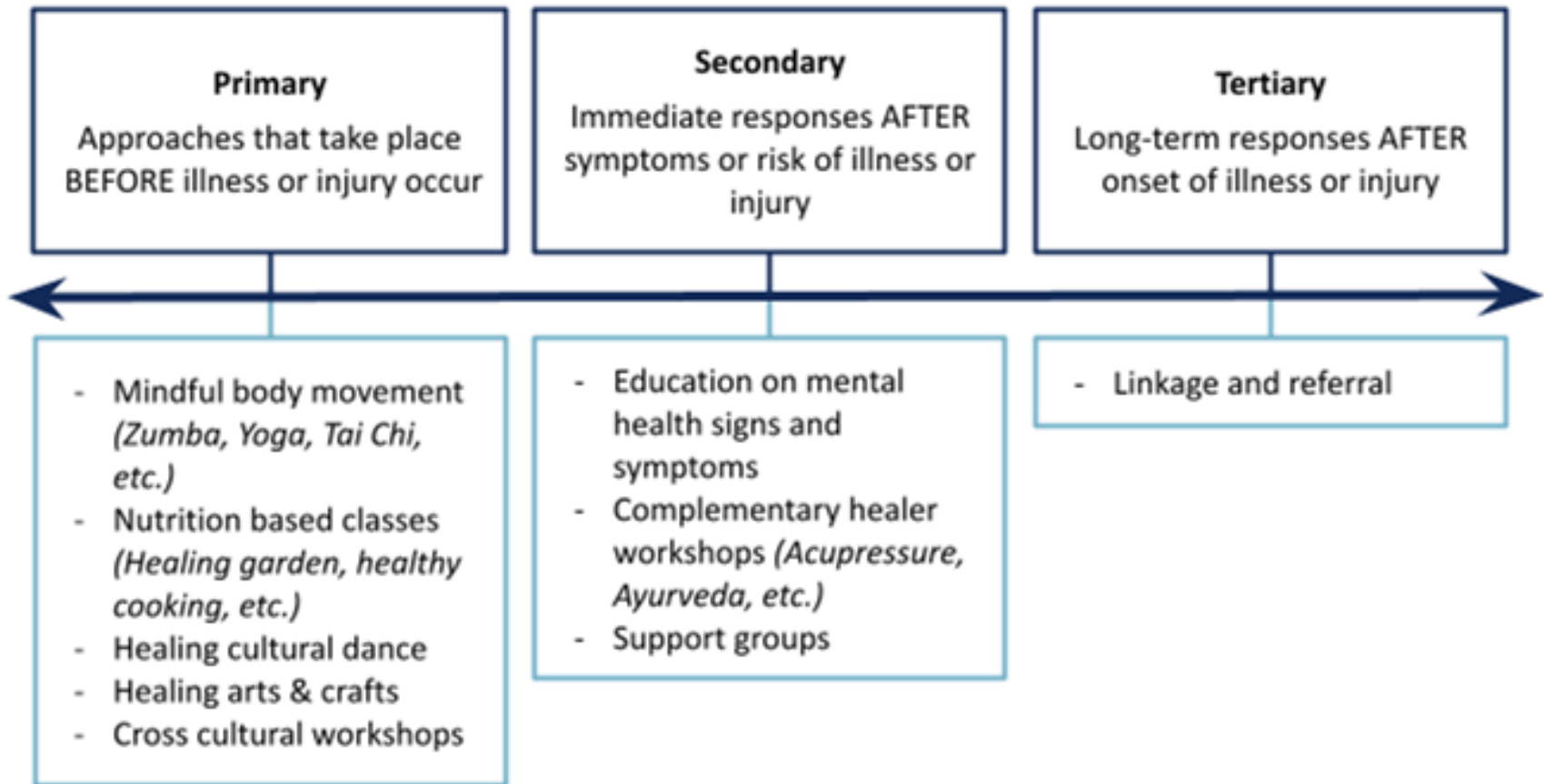**PREVENTION** INSTITUTE

Case Examples

The Holistic Wellness Program (Fresno, CA)

- Addresses aspects of prevention, stigma reduction, and access and service linkage

- Activities emphasize culture, connection, and community needs and strengths

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The Holistic Wellness Program (Fresno, CA)

Primary

Approaches that take place BEFORE illness or injury occur

Secondary

Immediate responses AFTER symptoms or risk of illness or injury

Tertiary

Long-term responses AFTER onset of illness or injury

- Mindful body movement (*Zumba, Yoga, Tai Chi, etc.*)
- Nutrition based classes (*Healing garden, healthy cooking, etc.*)
- Healing cultural dance
- Healing arts & crafts
- Cross cultural workshops

- Education on mental health signs and symptoms
- Complementary healer workshops (*Acupressure, Ayurveda, etc.*)
- Support groups
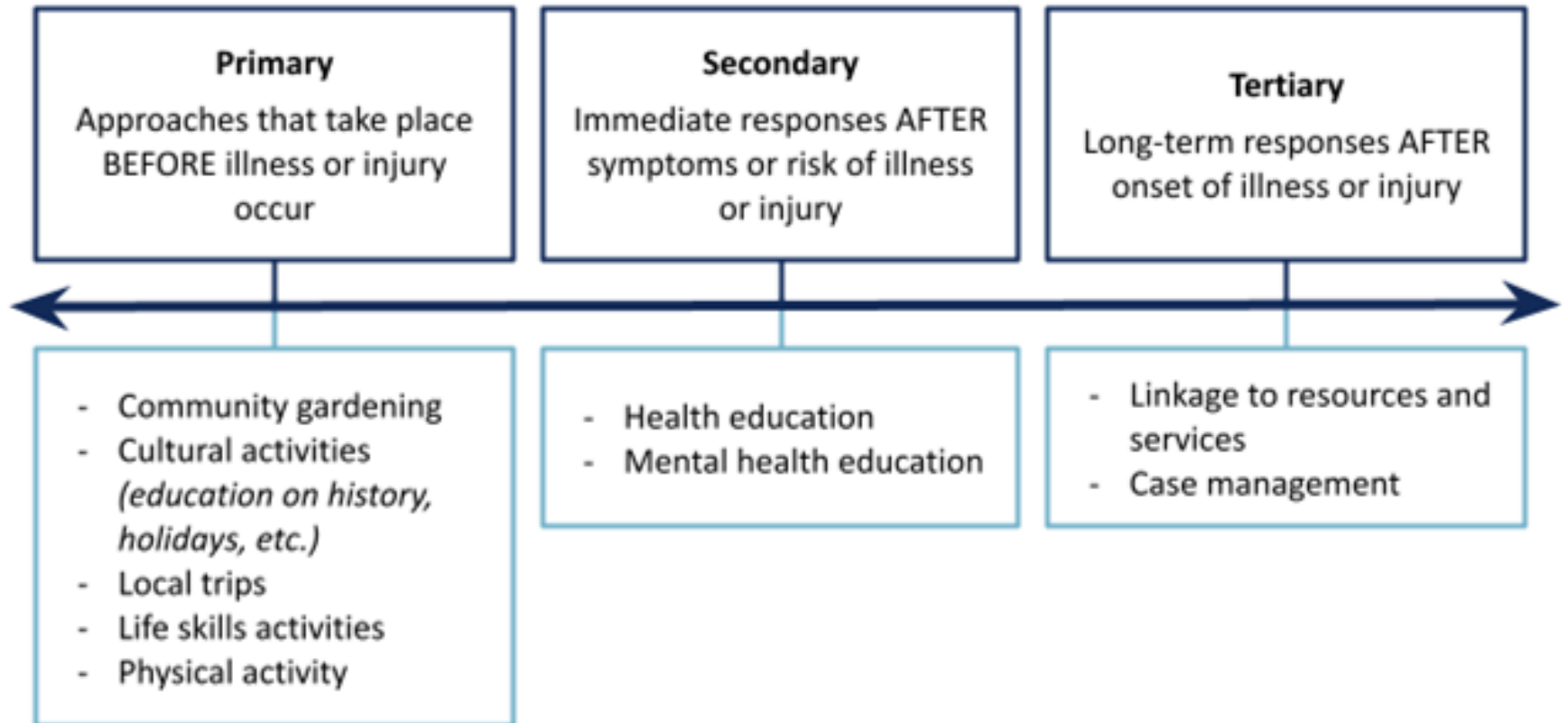
- Linkage and referral

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Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County (Oroville, CA)

- Zoosiab program and other activities weave traditional practice and cultural awareness into supporting mental health needs of Hmong residents

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Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County (Oroville, CA)

Primary

Approaches that take place BEFORE illness or injury occur

Secondary

Immediate responses AFTER symptoms or risk of illness or injury

Tertiary

Long-term responses AFTER onset of illness or injury

- Community gardening
- Cultural activities *(education on history, holidays, etc.)*
- Local trips
- Life skills activities
- Physical activity

- Health education
- Mental health education

- Linkage to resources and services
- Case management

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Strategies for Collaboration

Open and Honest Communication

- Consistent dialogue between community organization and county behavioral health
- Foster trust through transparent communication
- Acknowledge power structures

Community Engagement in Reporting Outcomes

- Include programs in selecting relevant measurement outcomes that resonate with population they serve
- Be cognizant of program staff capacity and ease of surveying community members

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Strategies for Collaboration

Centering Community Knowledge and Experience

- Provide maximal autonomy for community partners to implement their work in a culturally relevant and relatable way
- Recognize the unique nature of CDEPs and programs across communities

"It's really coming into it and try to create win-win situations that really benefit our communities, and I think that over time fosters that trust, it fosters that open dialogue [...] understand that our goal in the end is ultimately to serve our communities."

- Division Manager, Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health

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Next Steps

- Utilize the elements of the policy framework to **examine policies, practices, funding opportunities and programs** to ensure equitable support of community defined evidence practices and support of collaboration and partnership within the mental/behavioral health ecosystem.

- Focus on the **lessons for creating common ground through collaboration and communication** to lay a foundation for strong community - centered partnerships and support of community defined evidence practice.

- Use the policy framework to **monitor equitable development, implementation, and evaluation of policy and funding proposals** .

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