

Community-Led Mental Well-Being Framework

Framing

Mental well-being has emerged as a critical concern in the United States due to the compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including isolation, alongside social and political polarization, and economic pressures. Additionally, increased awareness and destigmatization of mental health issues have highlighted the need for better access to mental health services and support systems. Foundations are now more focused than ever on identifying strategic opportunities to enhance mental well-being. Over the past five years, FSG has worked with several foundations to develop comprehensive strategies for improving mental well-being rooted in a combination of local community engagement and national research and best practices. This work underscores the need to broaden our understanding of mental well-being and the pivotal role foundations can play in supporting progress at the community level.

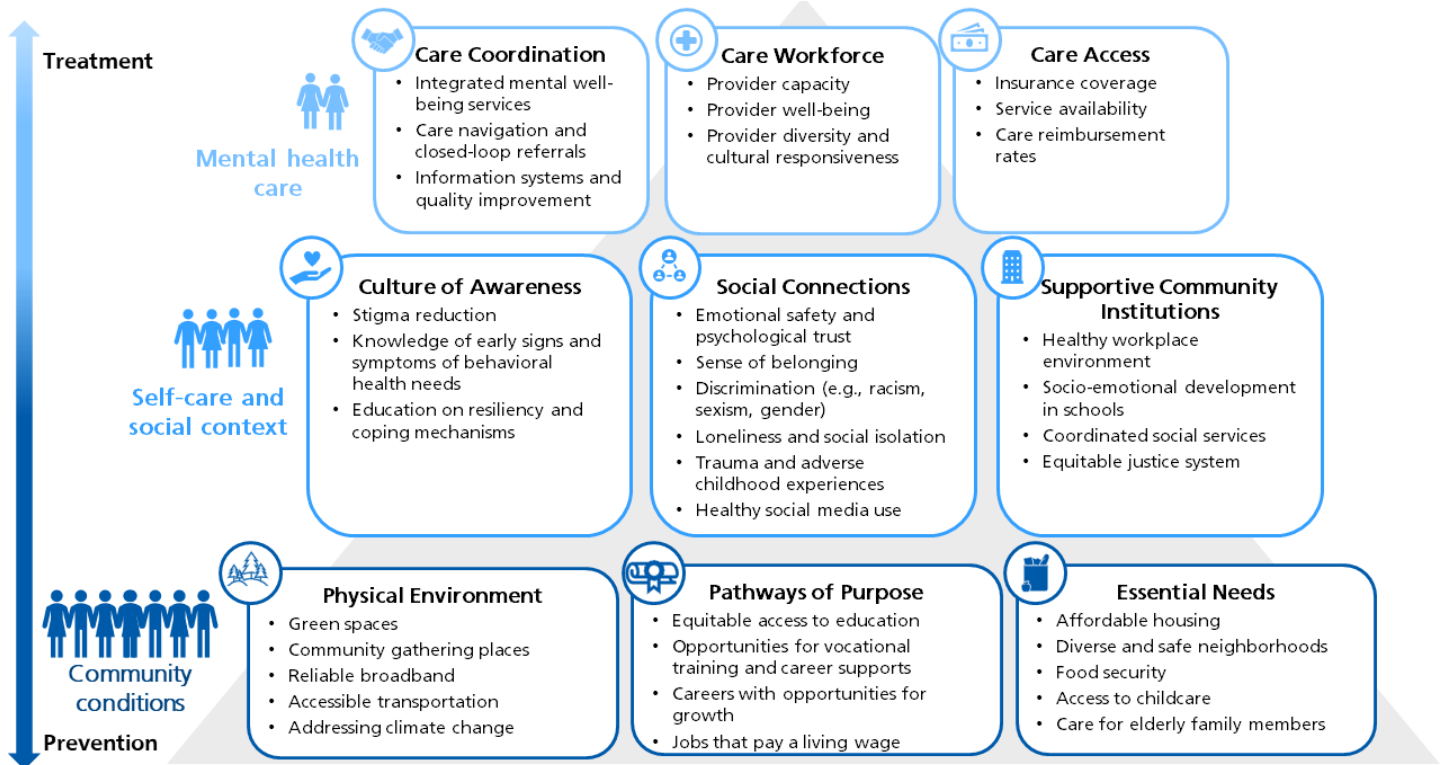
Background

Recently, we partnered with the [Texoma Health Foundation](#) (THF) to create a community-led strategy for enhancing mental well-being across four counties in Northern Texas and Southern Oklahoma. THF sought to ensure that their strategy was informed by the latest medical and public health research and guidance, but recognized there was a gap in the landscape of frameworks that connected the whole spectrum of well-being from holistic, community level determinants to clinical care. Together we set out to develop an evidence-based and community-informed understanding of the points of intervention across that spectrum. This understanding provided a frame and baseline for considering where the Foundation could focus its investments within the Texoma community.

Process

Together with the Foundation, we reviewed 17 widely used mental and community well-being frameworks (see appendix for sources) and supporting peer-reviewed literature on the drivers of mental well-being to identify common themes and ways to consider the relationship between the different contributors to mental health. Key commonalities included the importance of belonging and social connection (including a focus on experiences of discrimination), early intervention (screenings, integrated care, awareness), and the socio-economic and physical environment. On the other hand, few frameworks connected the dots between structural and social determinants with the mental health care system, and most placed little emphasis on the role of inequitable policies and practices. Based on our research we combined elements across these sources in a new community-focused framework for considering points of intervention to improve community mental well-being.





Orientation

The framework is comprised of 3 tiers on a spectrum from prevention to treatment—from social determinants of health (community conditions) to more specific preventative approaches (self-care and social context), to mental health care. Each of the key drivers of those factors are displayed in 3 categories within each tier. As you move along the spectrum, the portion of the population that you will reach either narrows or broadens as a result. This framework is not fully comprehensive or definitive and is intended as a starting point for community specific reflection and engagement.

Use

Foundations seeking to support a community level approach to mental well-being can leverage this framework to broaden their understanding of its drivers and as a starting place for reflection on how the mental health crisis is manifesting in their community. The framework can help guide local research, frame conversations with community, and inform consideration of areas for grant-making, convening, partnerships, advocacy, and research.

Each tier of the framework offers unique benefits and considerations based on a community's experience and priorities and a foundation's assets and expertise. For instance, focusing on mental health care can address the urgent needs of community members experiencing the most acute mental health challenges, but may fall short in addressing root causes of mental health challenges within the community. Ultimately, change at all of these levels is needed, and foundations will need to consider how they can support portfolio approaches and collaborate with others to contribute to progress.

To utilize this framework as a starting point for working alongside your community to improve mental well-being, we have developed the worksheet found on the next page.

What's next?

Beyond understanding the various ways to enhance mental well-being and assessing your foundation's potential impact, the next crucial step is to engage with your community and listen to their needs. If you'd like to connect with an FSG team member for more detail on the framework or the process, please reach out to us [here](#).

Mental Well-Being Framework Thought Starters

Tiers of Mental Well-Being Engagement

	Benefits	Considerations
Mental health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses immediate, acute mental health needs of those currently impacted by the crisis Offers an opportunity for targeted and measurable strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates deep impact but for fewer people Potentially limits near term impact at scale because many health care challenges are shaped by public policy Can be more capital intensive depending on approach (e.g., funding direct services)
Self-care and social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaches a broad range of community members in culturally relevant ways by meeting them where they are Has the potential for long term, sustainable impact through empowering individuals, institutions, and changing culture around mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially has less measurable effects on mental health outcomes in the near term Potentially has diffuse impact on mental health outcomes in the short term without increased access to mental health care
Community conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the foundation and enablers of mental well-being Broad health and social benefits for the community beyond benefits for mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most diffuse and difficult to measure the impact on mental health outcomes Requires substantial resources and focus to have meaningful impact at scale

Based on the benefits and considerations shared above, is there a specific tier of key driver(s) of mental well-being that your organization would like to focus on?

- Mental health care
 Self-care and social context
 Community conditions

How does this differ or align with what you are currently focused on?

Who currently experiences the greatest inequities in each of these drivers of mental well-being?

How does that impact mental well-being outcomes and experiences?

What are community priorities for overall mental well-being?

Is there a specific tier or key driver(s) of mental well-being that the community would like to prioritize?

What kinds of institutions and actors can influence these key drivers of mental well-being?

Where do we already have partnerships and relationships, and where do we need to build them?

What kind of approaches would be required to shift the drivers we are focused on? (e.g., policy shifts, collaboration, programs)?

Where are we positioned to lead, and where can we support others?

Appendix

Mental Well-Being frameworks reviewed in research:

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. "Models and Frameworks for the Practice of Community Engagement." Accessed June 11, 2024. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_models.html.
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- The University of Western Australia. "Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework." Accessed June 11, 2024. <https://www.uwa.edu.au/about-us/leadership-and-governance/mental-health-and-wellbeing-framework>.
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- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Workplace Well-Being." Office of the Surgeon General. Accessed June 11, 2024. <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html>.
- Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. "Three Aspects of Health and Healing: The Biopsychosocial Model in Medicine." October 11, 2021. <https://surgery.wustl.edu/three-aspects-of-health-and-healing-the-biopsychosocial-model/>.
- Well Being Trust. "Framework for Excellence in Mental Health & Well-Being." Accessed June 11, 2024. <https://wellbeingtrust.org/areas-of-focus/framework-for-excellence-in-mental-health-well-being/>.



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