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How do food and physical activity policies affect our health?

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How do food and physical activity policies affect our health?

Who am I?



- A scientist who...
 1. asks communities about their health goals.
 2. asks communities about resources and barriers that affect their ability to achieve their health goals.
 3. co-develops policies to support progress toward their health goals.
 4. helps implement, evaluate, and refine those policies.

What is a *policy* ?

“a **definite** course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to **guide and determine** present and future decisions”

Quick Questions



Examples of informal individual-level health policy questions:

- Do you let people smoke in your house?
- Are you a vegan?
- Do you only buy whole, 2%, or skim milk?
- Do you wear a bicycle helmet when you ride a bicycle?

Policy is “a **definite** course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to **guide and determine present and future decisions**”

Why Do We Have Health Policies?

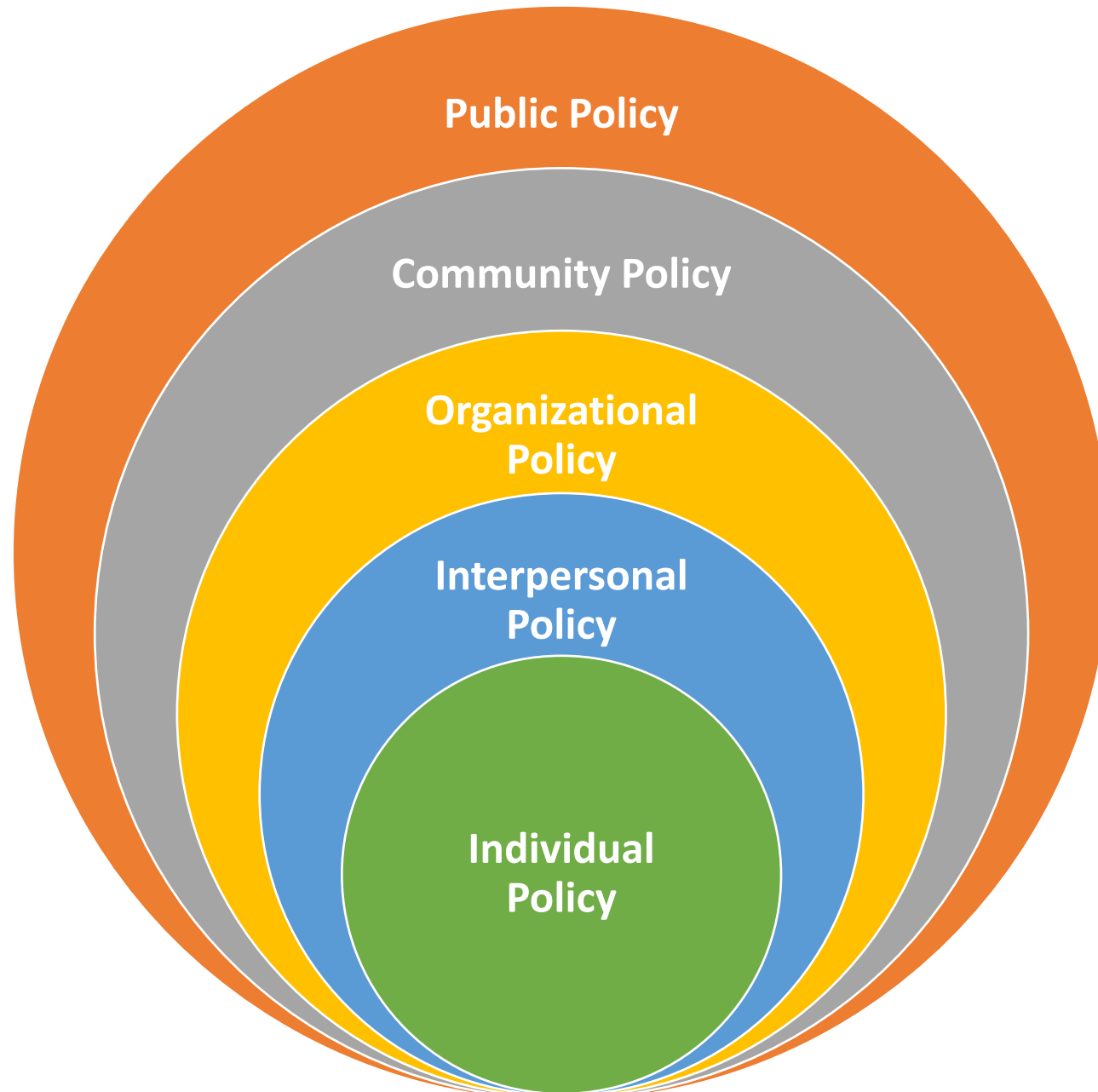


- “Health policy defines health goals at the international, national or local level and specifies the decisions, plans and actions to be undertaken to achieve these goals.” –WHO¹
 - Often takes form of “law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice” –CDC²
- Example: If Arkansas’s **health goal** is to prevent traumatic brain injuries, Arkansas might pass a **law** to mandate bicycle helmets on public streets.

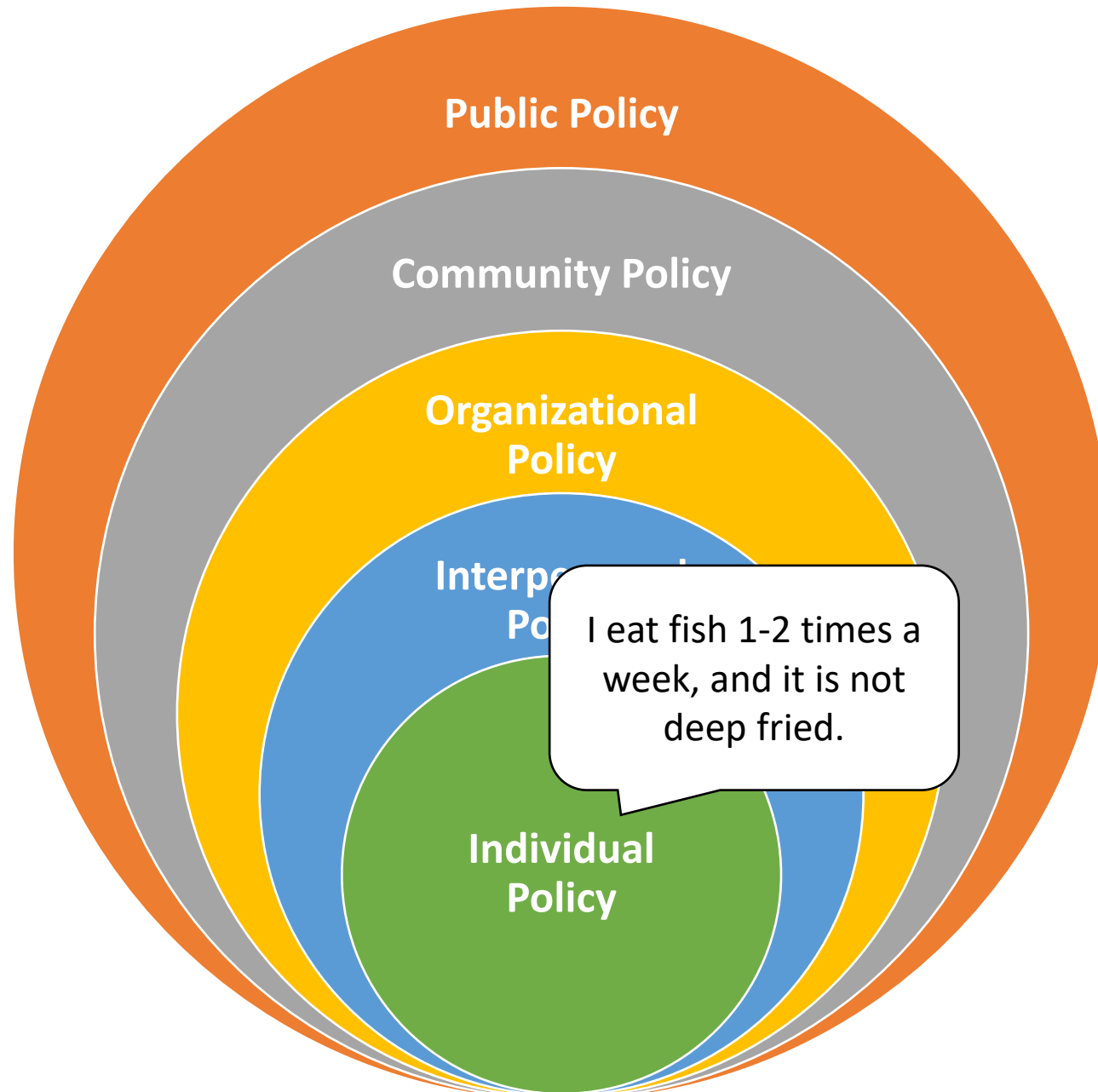
¹ <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-policy>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/analysis/process/definition.html>

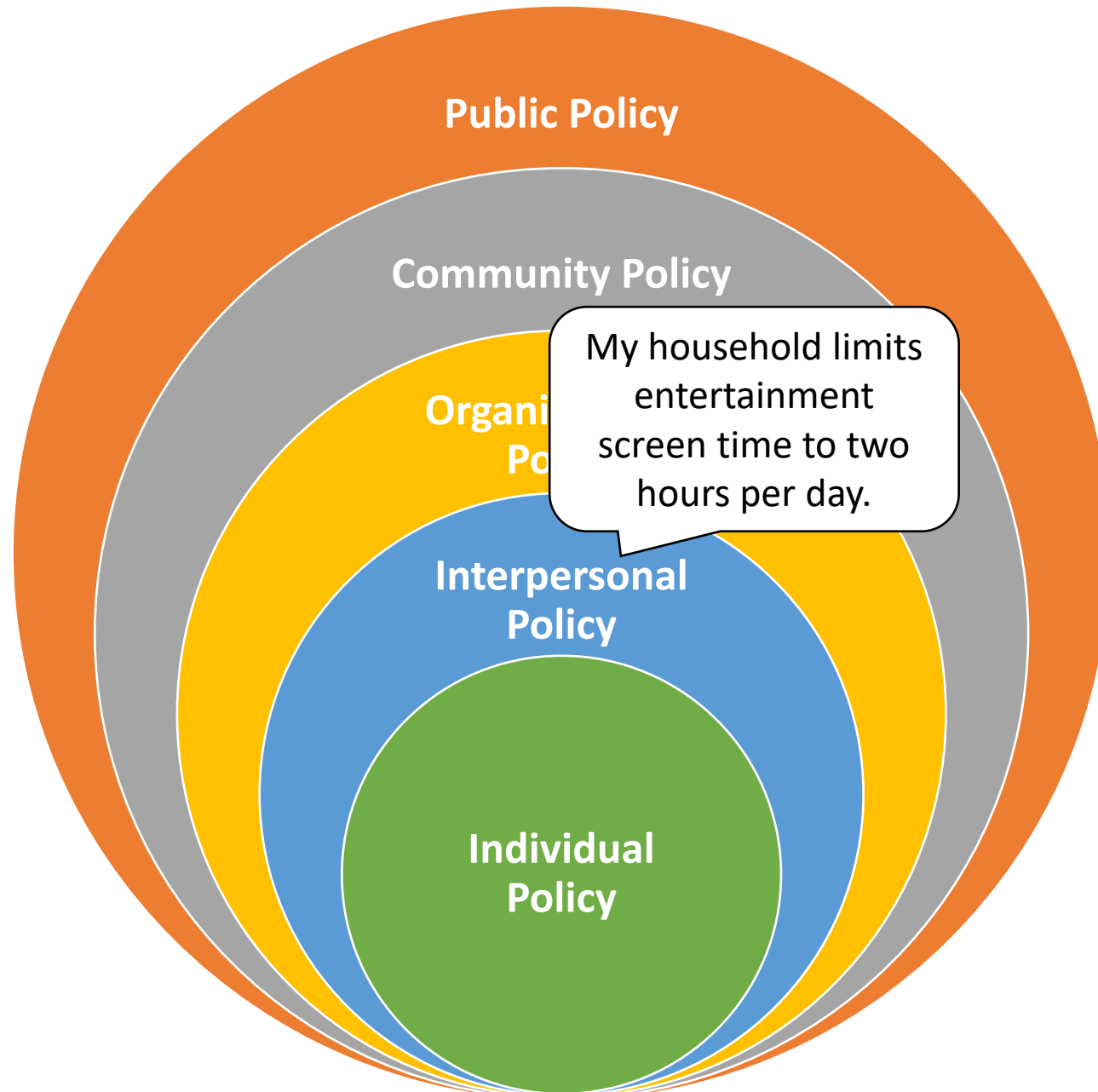
Health Policies Work at Multiple Levels



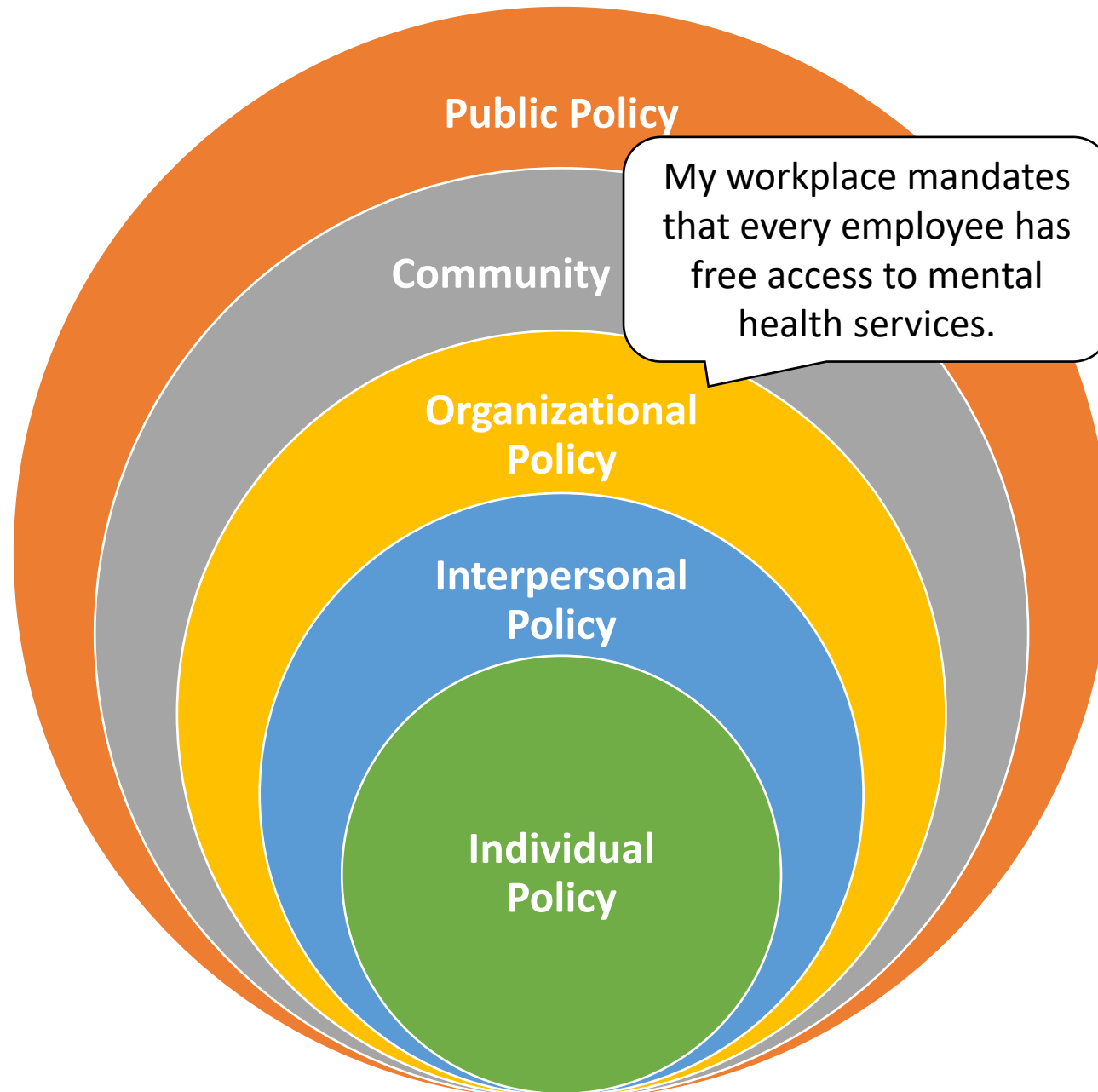
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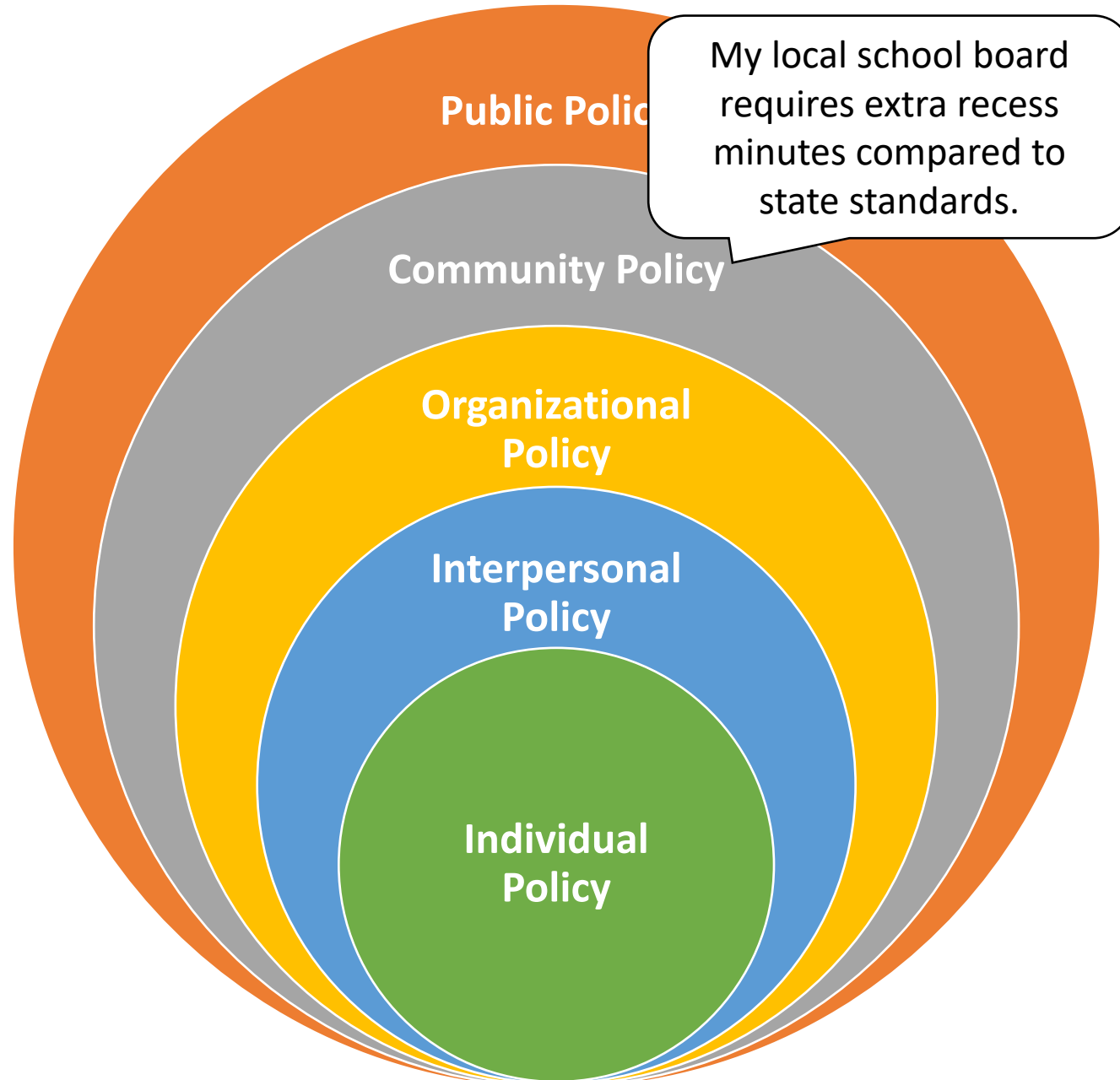
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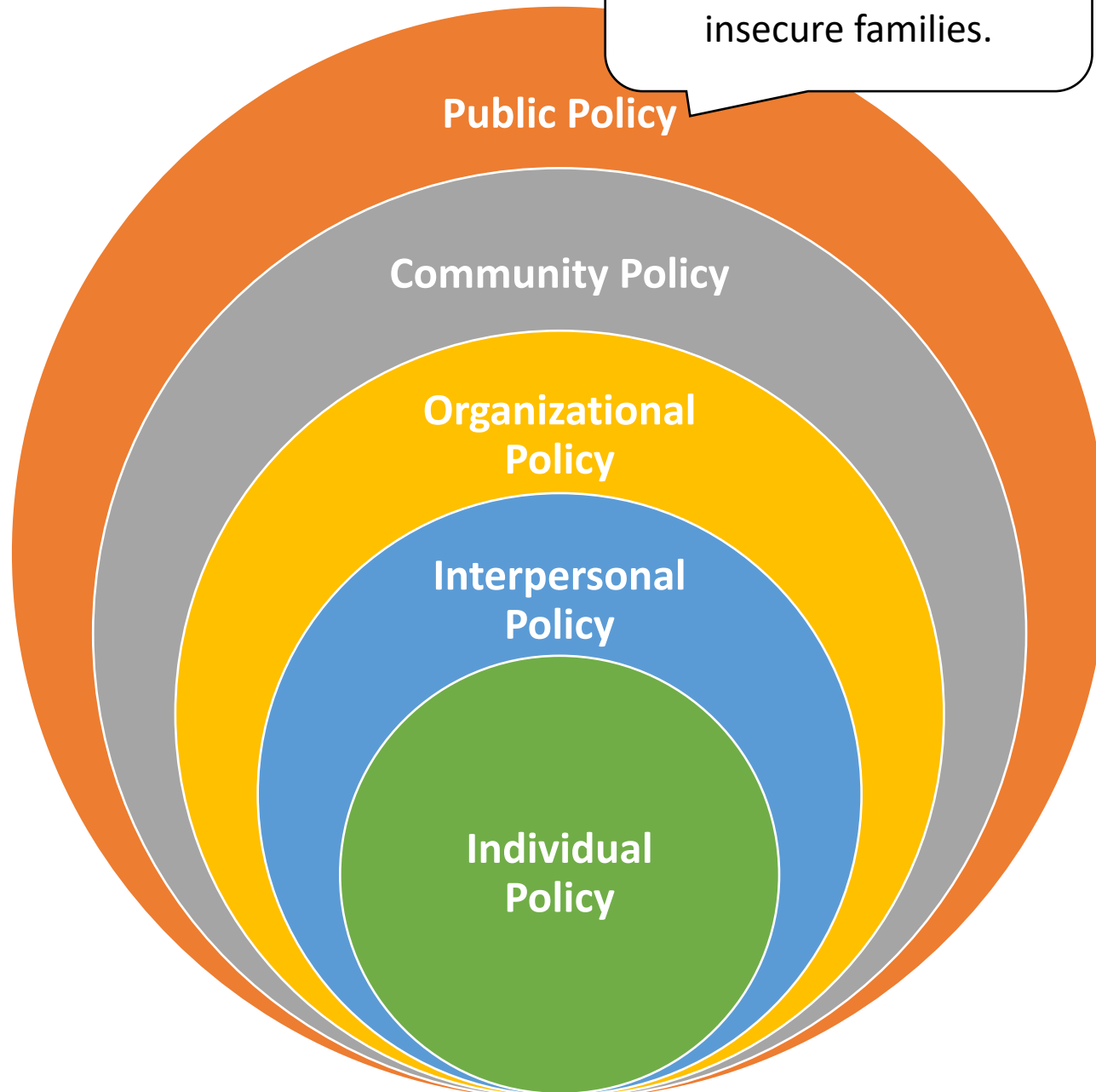
Health Policies Work at Multiple Levels



Health Policies Work at Multiple Levels



My country provides SNAP benefits to food insecure families.



Health Policies Work!



- Evidence-based health policy interventions work because they **nudge** people to make healthy choices and **minimize** appeal of unhealthy behaviors
 - Wear a helmet, or we will make you pay money!
 - Drink fluoridated water, or buy expensive filters or bottled water!

Pros & Cons of Health Policies



Desirable Consequences

- Improved health
- Improved access to health services
- Savings
- Reduced inequities
- Increased autonomy
 - Makes health easier

Undesirable Consequences

- Unintended harms
- Reduced access to health services
- Costs
- Increased inequities
- Decreased autonomy
 - Takes choices away

Examples from UAMS CHR's Work



- **Policy Context:** Food pantries serve food insecure people at high risk for diabetes and other chronic diseases.
 - **Health Goal:** Improve clients' nutritional health.
 - **Policy:** When the food pantry purchases food or solicits donations, it will prioritize fresh or low-sodium canned vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains.

Examples from UAMS CHR's Work



- **Policy Context:** Free community meal programs serve people at high risk for hypertension.
 - **Health Goal:** Reduce diners' sodium consumption.
 - **Policy:** Move salt shakers away from table to corner of the dining room.

Examples from UAMS CHR's Work



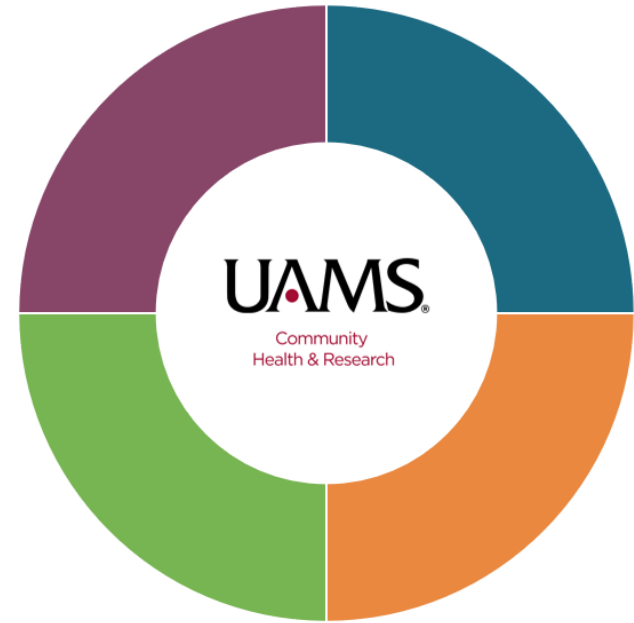
- **Policy Context:** School district nutrition programs provide a high proportion of many students' calories. Arkansas school children are at high risk for overweight/obesity.
 - **Health Goal:** Increase Arkansas students' consumption of healthier and local foods.
 - **Policy:** Adopt comprehensive nutrition policies that exceed USDA national standards for school breakfasts' and lunches' lean proteins, flavored milk, competitive food sales, etc., with an emphasis on increasing healthier local products where feasible.



Thank You

COMMUNITY HEALTH & RESEARCH

The Community Health and Research team at UAMS Northwest is leading the way to improve health outcomes for all. We seek to identify and understand health needs through research and programs and work to create an environment where every person has access to their best health.



OUR GOAL:

a better state of **health for all**

