



Social Determinants of Mental Health Across the Lifespan

RUTH S. SHIM, MD, MPH

LUKE & GRACE KIM PROFESSOR IN
CULTURAL PSYCHIATRY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS





 **Grady**

EMERGENCY

THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Those factors that impact upon health and well-being: the circumstances into which we are born, grow up, live, work, and age, including the health system

These circumstances are shaped by the **distribution of money, power, and resources** at global, national, and local levels, **which are themselves influenced by policy choices**

HEALTH DISPARITIES AND HEALTH INEQUITIES

The social determinants of health are prominently responsible for health disparities and inequities experienced within and between countries

Health disparities: differences in health status among distinct segments of the population including differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, or living in various geographic localities

Health inequities: disparities in health that are a result of systemic, avoidable, and unjust social and economic policies and practices that create barriers to opportunity

THE CAUSAL CHAIN

“Why is Jason in the hospital?”

Because he has a bad infection in his leg.

But why does he have an infection?

He has a cut on his leg and it got infected.

But why does he have a cut on his leg?

He was playing in a junk yard next to his apartment building and fell on some sharp, jagged steel there.

But why was he playing in a junk yard?

His neighborhood is run down. Kids play there and there is no one to supervise them.

But why does he live in that neighborhood?

His parents can't afford a nicer place to live.

But why can't his parents afford a nicer place to live?

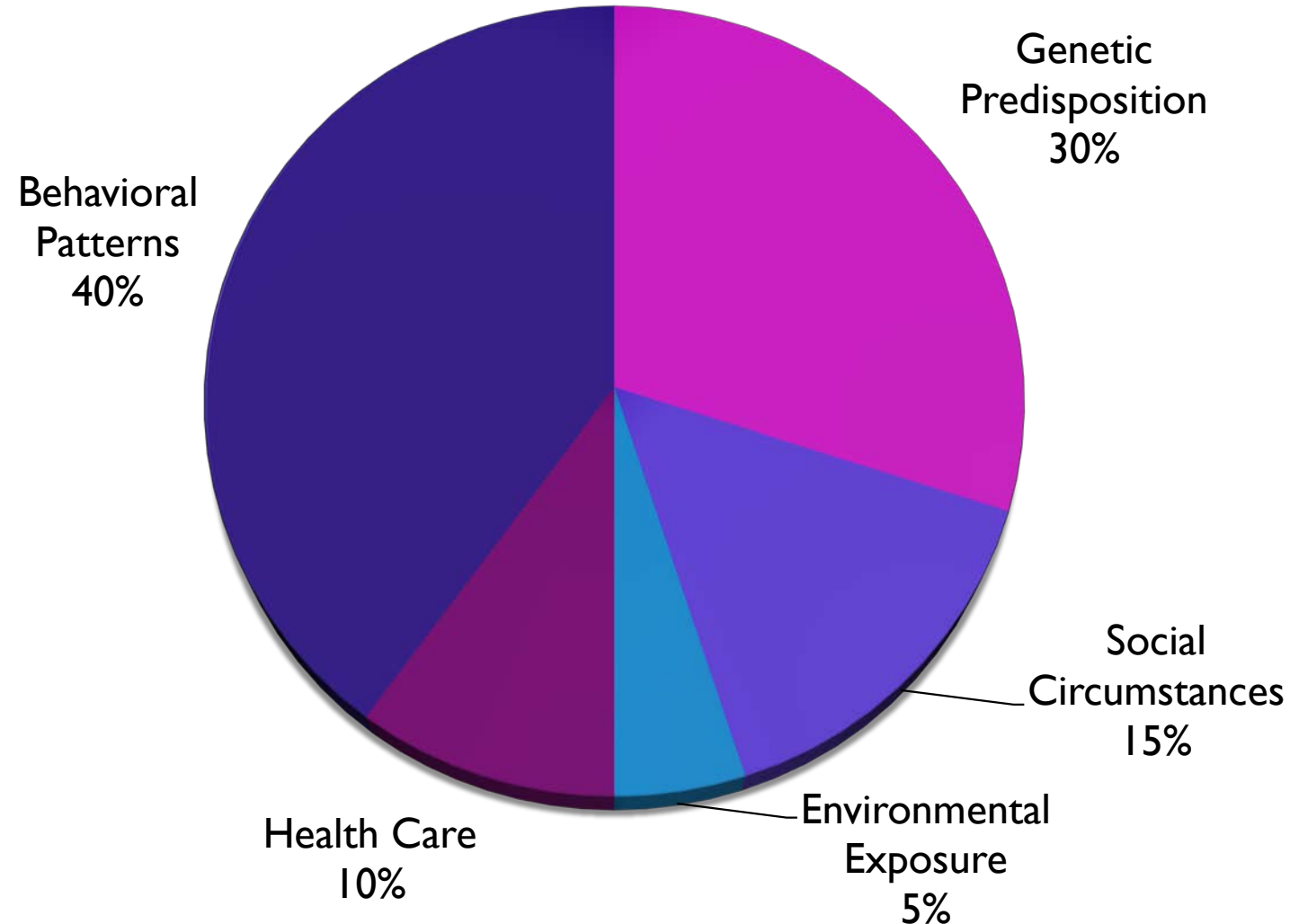
His dad is unemployed and his mom is sick.

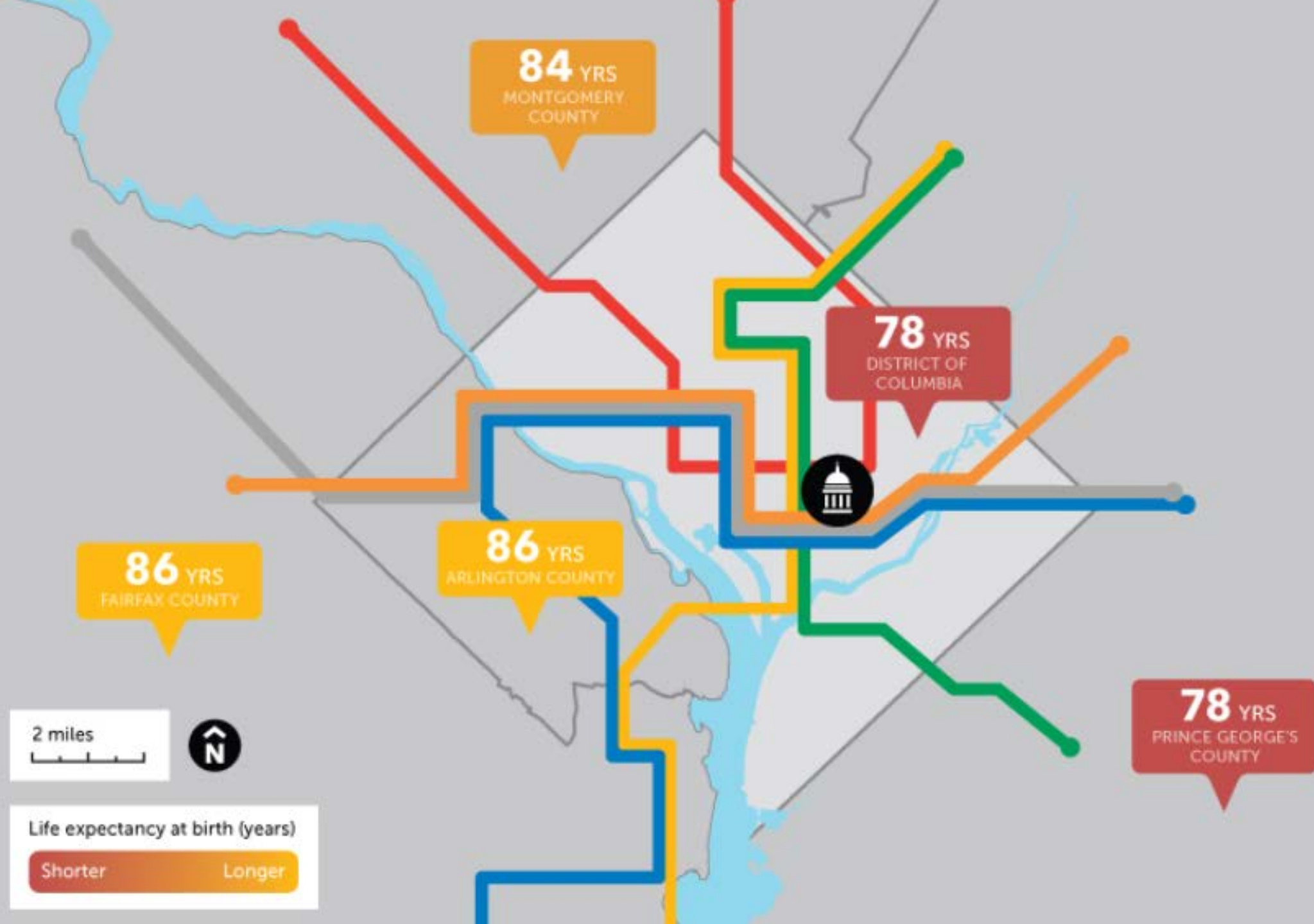
But why is his dad unemployed?

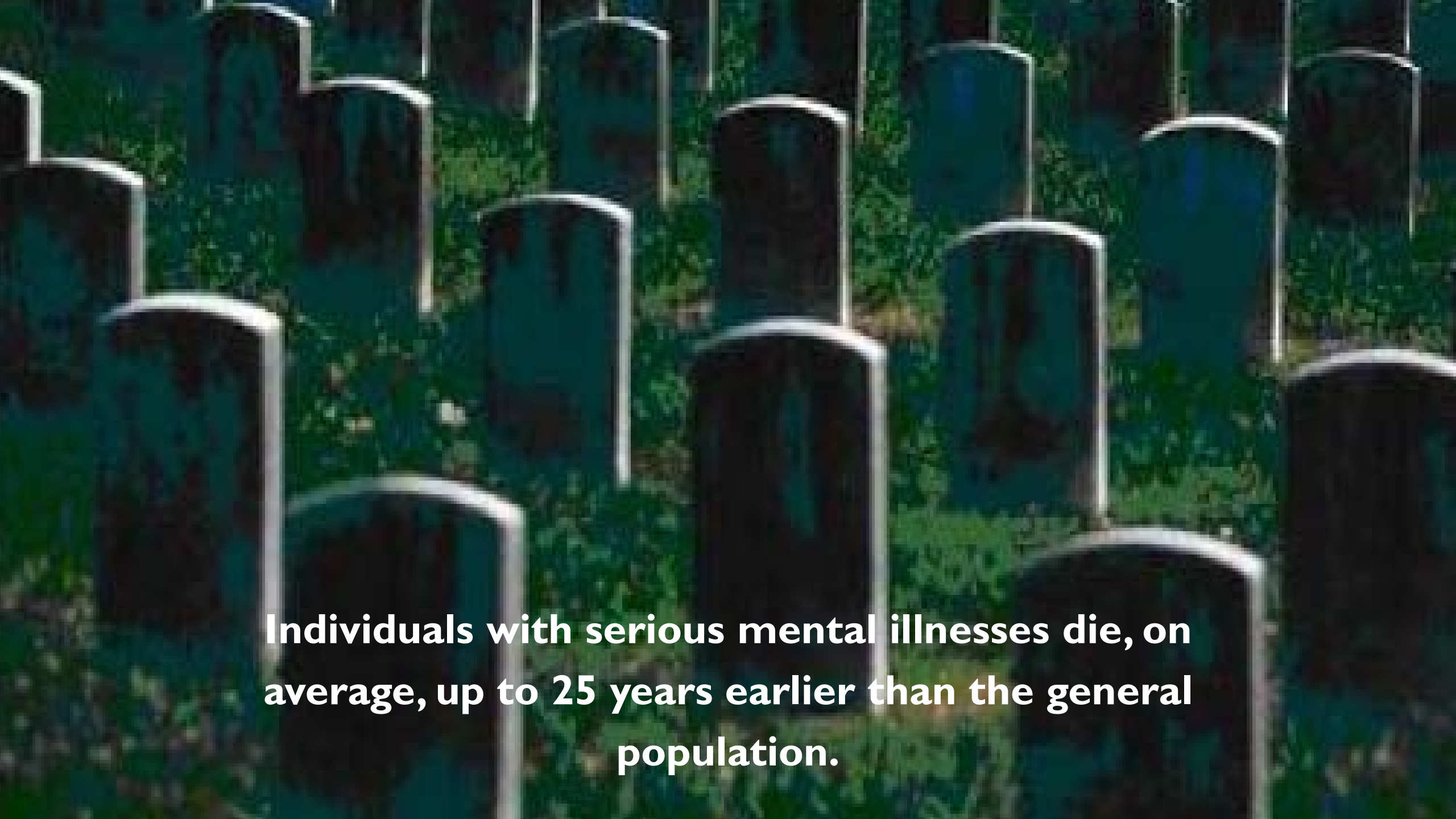
Because he doesn't have much education and he can't find a job.

But why?”

DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO PREMATURE DEATH





A photograph of a cemetery with numerous gravestones of varying heights and shapes, mostly rectangular with rounded tops, set against a background of green grass and some trees in the distance. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Individuals with serious mental illnesses die, on average, up to 25 years earlier than the general population.

Racial and ethnic minority groups:

- Have ***less access*** to and availability of care
- Receive generally ***poorer quality*** mental health services
- Experience a ***greater disability*** burden from unmet mental health needs

Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity



A Supplement to
Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Defining Social Justice

The distribution of good (advantages) and bad (disadvantages) in society, and more specifically *how* these things should be distributed in society. It is concerned with the ways that resources are allocated to people by social institutions.

-David Miller-

“Assuring the protection of equal access to liberties, rights, and opportunities, ***as well as taking care of the least advantaged members of society.***”

- John Rawls

Homophobia

racism

sexism

classism

xenophobia

heterosexism

ableism

***Stigma Against People with
Mental Illnesses and
Substance Use Disorders***

Transphobia

Equality



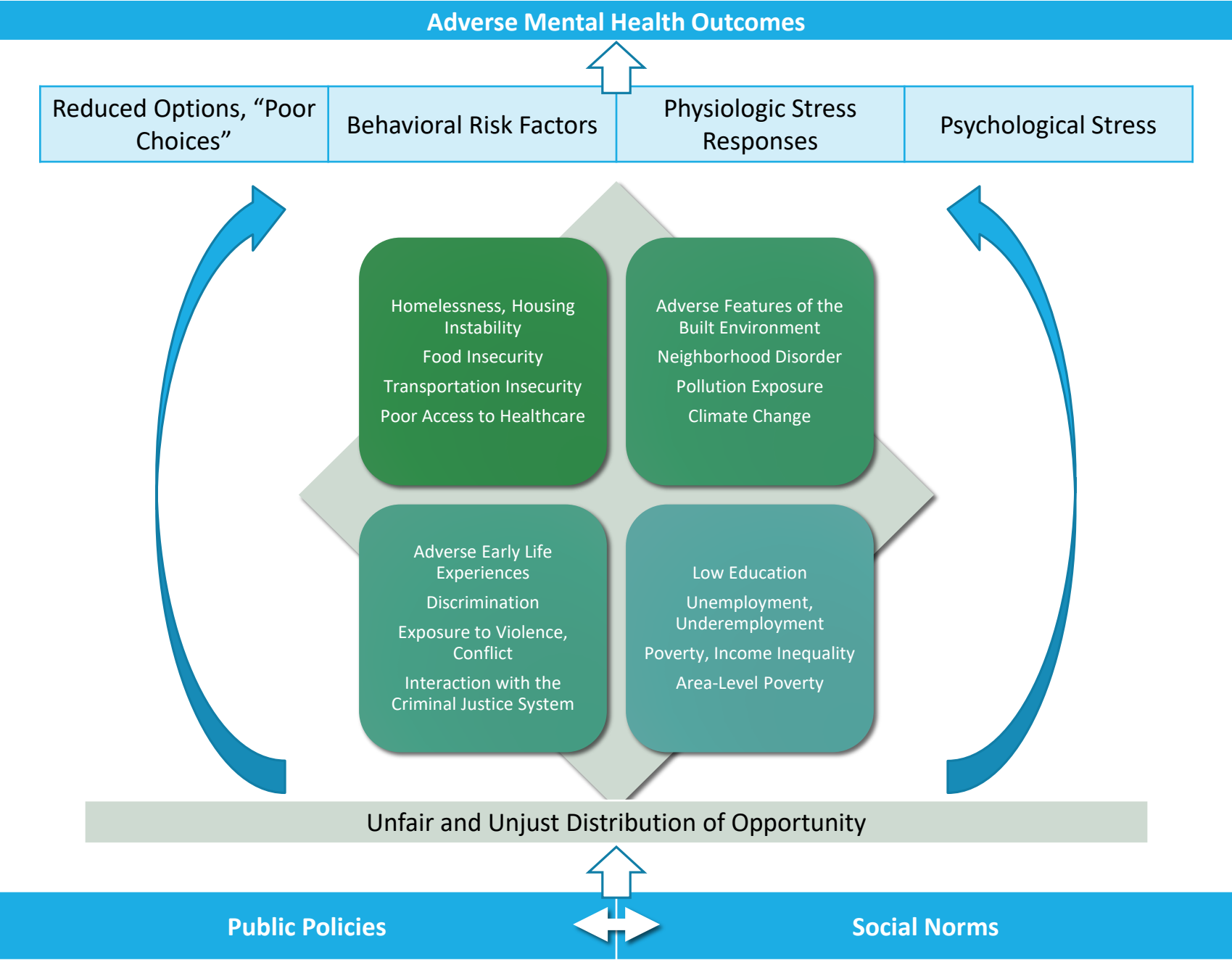
Equity



The social determinants of mental health are not distinctly different from the social determinants of health

But deserve special emphasis, because:

- mental illnesses and substance use disorders are highly prevalent and highly disabling
- behavioral health conditions are high-cost, high-morbidity, and high-mortality illnesses
- they have been largely neglected in conversations and interventions about the social determinants of health

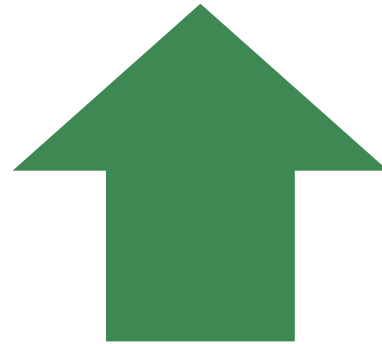




Public
Policies



Social
Norms





“Medicine is a social science, and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale.”

-Rudolph

Virchow

Addressing Public Policies

01

Take action beyond the walls of our clinics, treatment centers, and hospitals

02

Advocate for policies that increase employment opportunities, end structural racism, improve housing standards, etc.

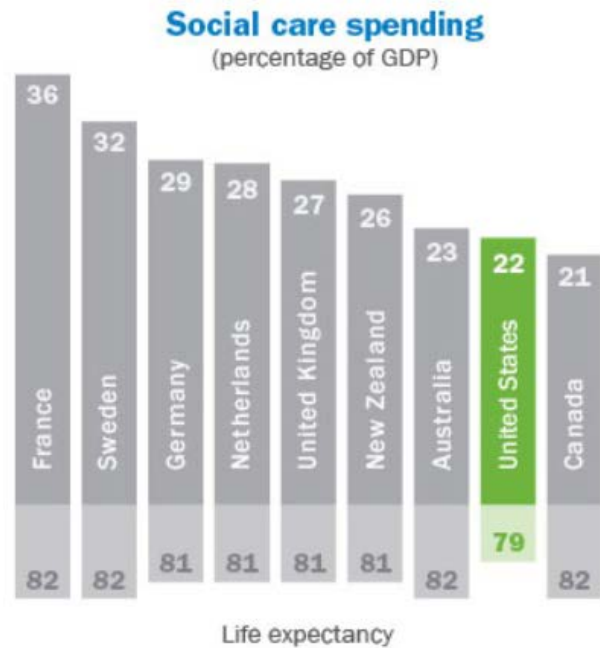
03

Communicate with elected officials (individually, or through community and professional organizations)

04

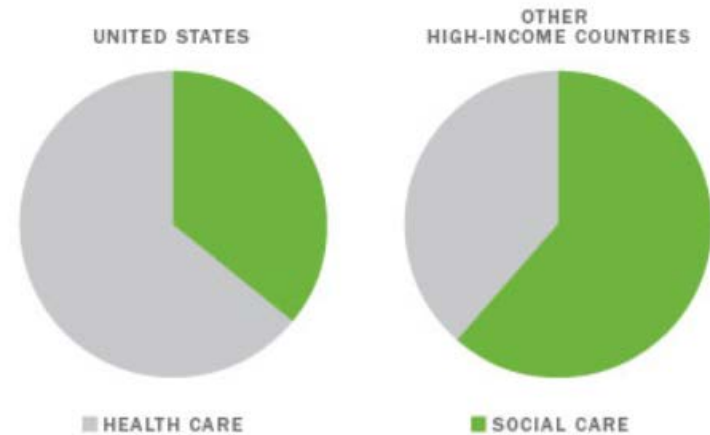
Form strong cross-sector collaborations and relationships

People **live longer** in countries
that **spend more** on **“social care”
programs*** that support health



Social care includes programs like education, retirement benefits, housing assistance, employment programs, disability benefits, food security

The **United States** is the
only country
that **spends more** treating
health issues
vs **social care programs**



And **prevention
programs** get only
3 percent
of **US health care dollars**



Changing Social Norms

01

Create social norms of tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion

02

Partner with communities, with an emphasis on inclusion and mutual respect

03

Educate and **legislate** to effectively change social norms

04

Cultivate a culture of social inclusion, and **speak up** when this culture is not respected

**“When we speak,
we are afraid our
words will not be
heard or welcomed.
But when we are
silent, we are still
afraid. So it is
better to speak.”
– Audre Lorde**

