

County Health  
Rankings & Roadmaps

Building a Culture of Health, County by County

# Webinar

Making social connections for community  
health

July 19, 2022

countyhealthrankings.org



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Rankings & Roadmaps




Building a Culture of Health, County by County

**Health means the collective wellbeing of all living beings and the earth. We recognize and embrace that we are connected and linked to one another.**



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## Social connection & belonging: Why they matter

- Strong social ties  longer lifespan
- Belonging and inclusion  greater participation in social and political structures that influence norms and policies
- Social isolation  stress with physiological consequences or harmful coping strategies contributing to poor health outcomes.



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## Questions we will explore...

What is the difference between loneliness and social isolation?

What are the root causes of social isolation?

Who is more likely to experience social isolation?

How can we create opportunity for all residents to connect and belong?

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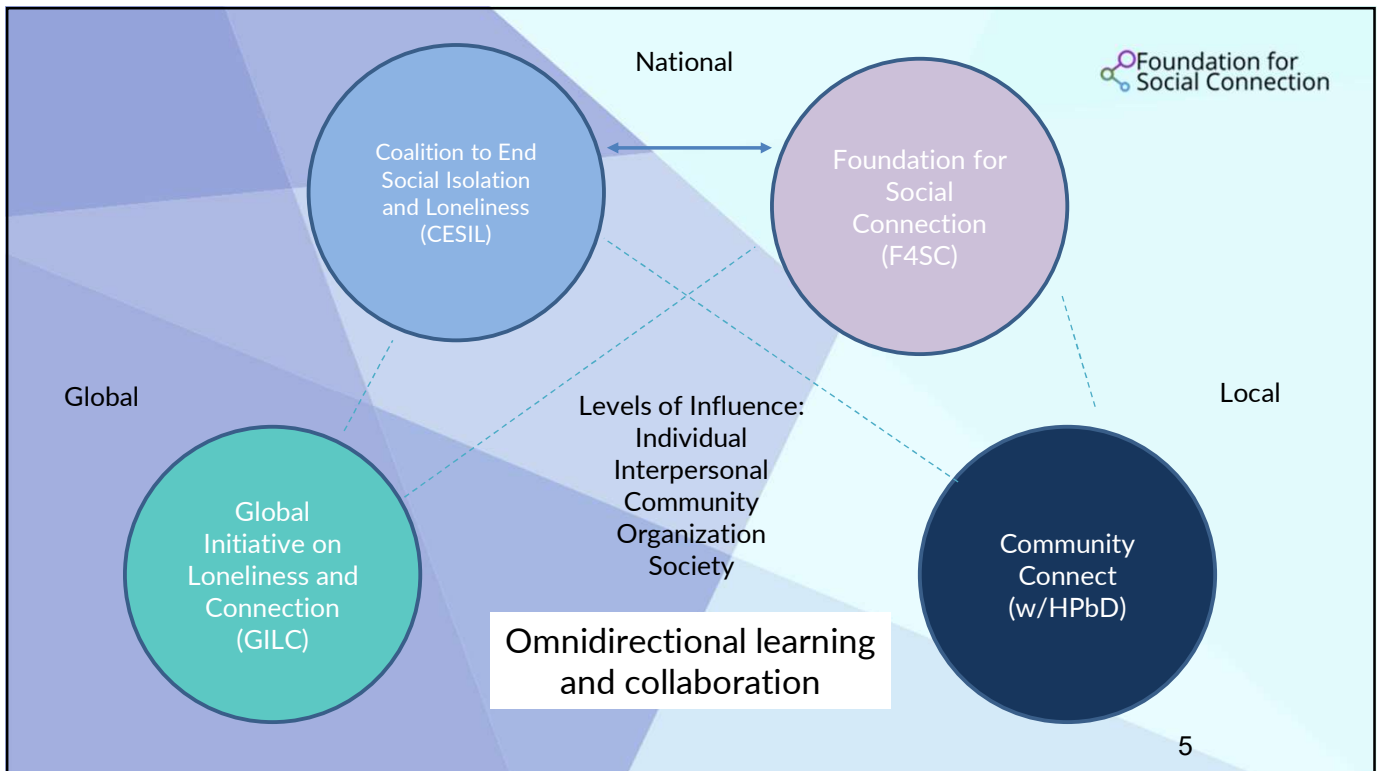
# Our guests

Help us welcome....



**Edward Garcia**  
Founder and Executive  
Director, Foundation for  
Social Connection &  
Partner, Healthspieren

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## Our guests

Help us welcome....



**Edward Garcia**  
Founder and Executive Director, Foundation for Social Connection & Partner, Healthsperien



**Risa Wilkerson**  
Executive Director of Healthy Places by Design

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Advancing community-led action & proven, place-based strategies to ensure health & wellbeing for all.

[www.healthyplacesbydesign.org](http://www.healthyplacesbydesign.org)



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# Join Us! Discussion Group

**When:** Immediately following the webinar

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**How:** Zoom

**Why:** Deepen the webinar learning, allow  
further exploration



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## Loneliness

(subjective: perceived  
discrepancy between  
actual and desired  
levels of social  
connection)

VS.

## Social Isolation

(objective: few social  
relationships, roles,  
memberships; infrequent  
social interaction)



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## Strong social connections and networks can boost a person's lifespan by 50 percent.

Scientific American

A meta-study of more than 300,000 participants across all ages reveals that strong social networks are linked to longer lives.

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## The Impact of Social Isolation & Loneliness on Health and Economy



### Physical Health

- 26-32% higher risk for Premature Mortality
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Type2 Diabetes
- Immune & Respiratory illnesses



### Economic Health

- \$6.7B in Medicare Spending
- Lower productivity
- More Absenteeism
- Lower quality of work



### Mental & Behavioral Health

- Depression & Anxiety
- Suicidality
- Addiction



### Cognitive Health

- Cognitive decline
- Dementia
- Alzheimer's Disease



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## Who experiences social isolation?

- New mothers and those with young children
- LGBTQ and other at-risk youth
- Recent immigrants
- Older adults
- Those reentering society after being incarcerated
- Rural communities
- Patients and their caregivers



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**Social isolation** is not a personal choice or individual problem, but one that is **rooted** in community design, social norms, and systemic injustices.



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## System Designs that Lead to Isolation and Oppression

- Culture
- Education
- Health Care
- Housing
- Internet Access
- Public Space
- Justice
- Security
- Transportation



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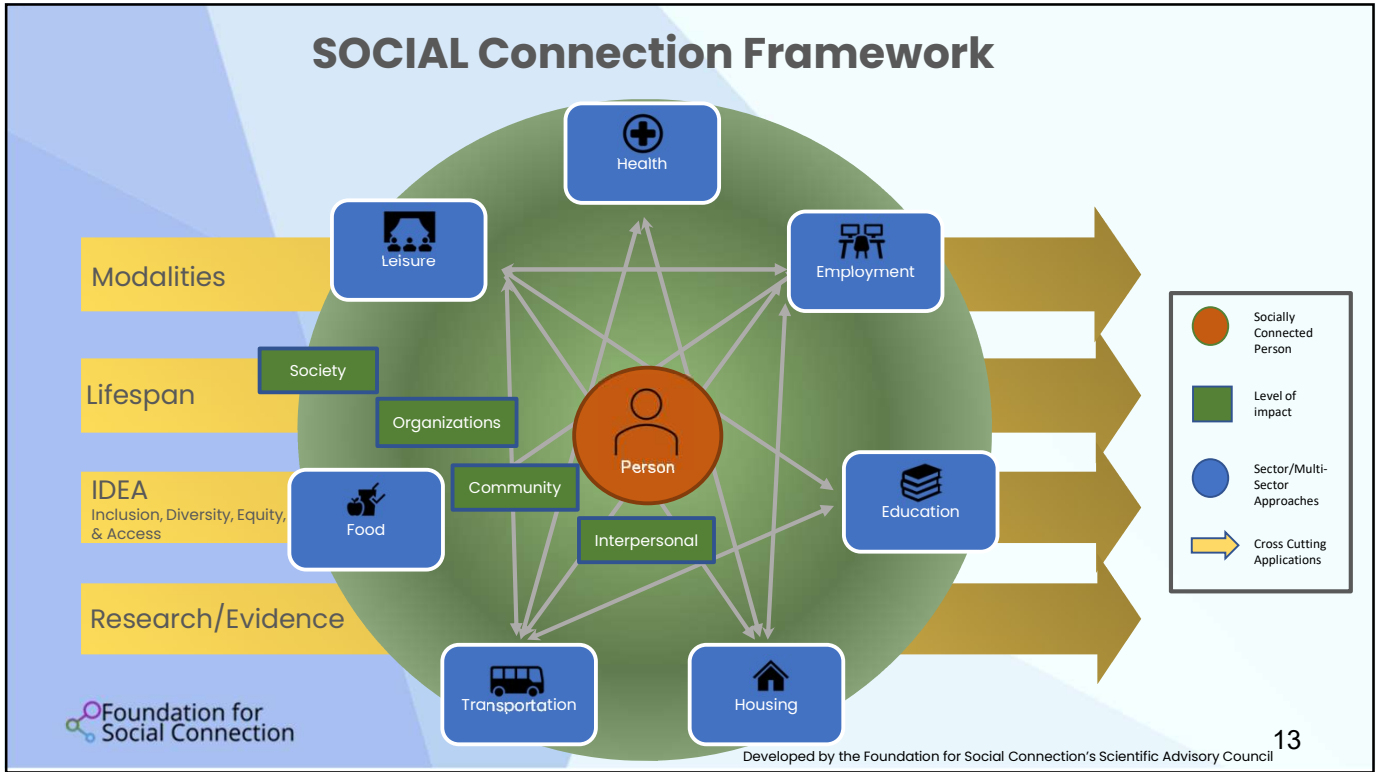
**“Connection builds a virtuous cycle: when people feel valued and cared for within the community, they are more likely to contribute and participate in creating healthy, equitable places.”**

—  
Belonging & Civic Muscle, Thriving Together

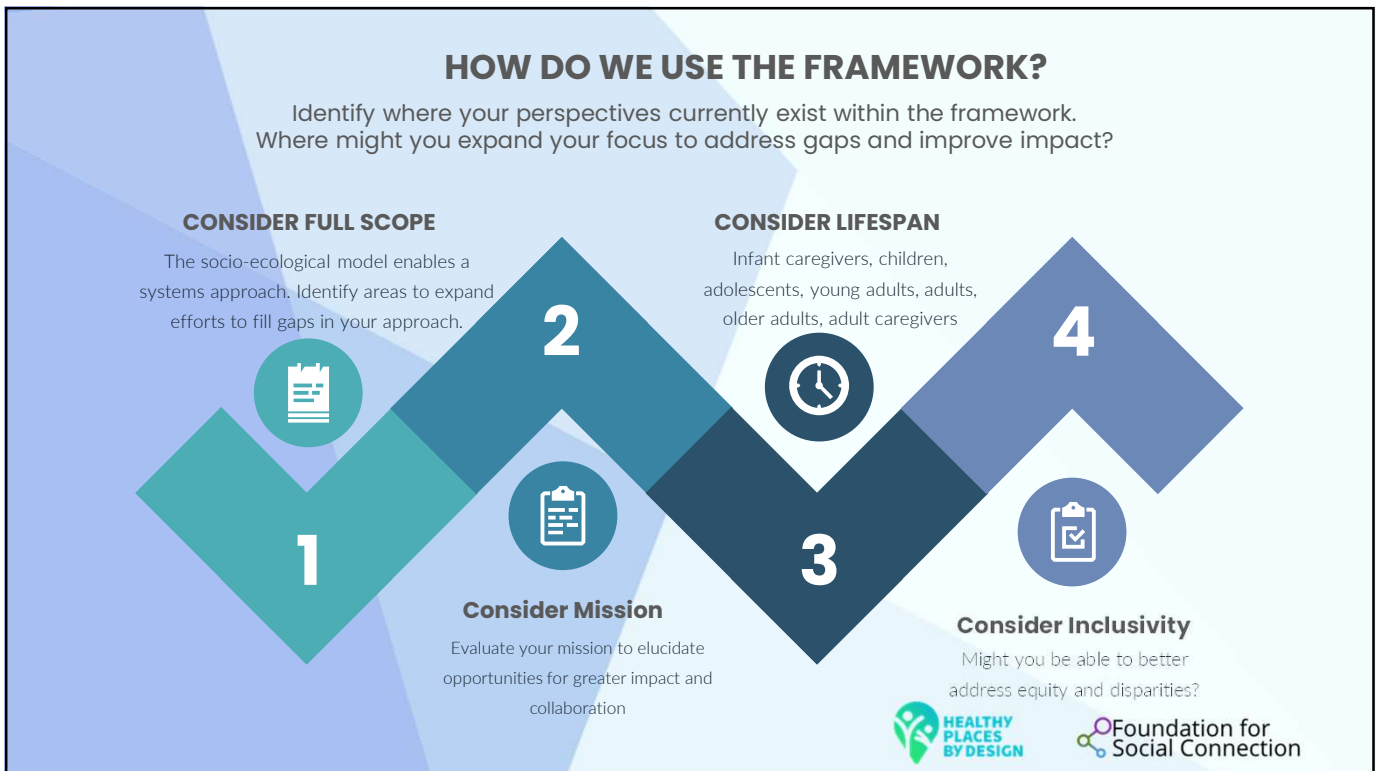


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## Policy, Systems, and Environment (PSE)

*Social Connectedness*

Policy change examples include:

- Provision of county or city public land (or previously vacant land) for green spaces or farmers' markets
- Passing a law allowing residents to plant community gardens in vacant lots

System change examples include:

- Creating a community plan to account for social health impacts of new projects
- Develop a referral system in local hospitals to help patients access further social connection resources

Environmental change examples include:

- Incorporate spaces specifically designed for gathering
- Co-locate adult and childcare centers, or senior centers within schools



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## National Policies

Transformational Change for Social Connection:

1. Establishing a Nationally Coordinated Response to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness
2. Expanding Access to Behavioral Health through Medicare and Medicaid and Enforcing Parity
3. Increasing access to Social Determinants of Health broadly
4. Direct Funds for Public Health at the State and Local Level; Including Supporting Schools and CBOs
5. Address the Evidence Base through Funding Research
6. Requesting the GAO to Conduct a Comprehensive, Governmental-Wide, Study



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## Public Spaces

- Co-create inclusive, healthy public spaces
- Design safe places for all ages to gather
- Equitably maintain the quality of public spaces
- Activate public spaces to encourage healthy social interaction



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## Transportation

- Think "people first"
- Use policy levers to promote health and equity
- Support elements that enhance public life



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## Housing

- Strengthen and safeguard inclusive, affordable housing
- Include spaces specifically designed for gatherings
- Zone to encourage diversity



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## Community-Led Solutions

- Shift power to community members
- Elevate practices rooted in culture
- Harness creative communications channels
- Create universal broadband access



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## Community Norms

- Use a “social in all policies” framework
- Implement trauma- and resilience-informed practices
- Declare community values



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### Tips for Overall Success:

- Build partnerships within the state and community.
- Prioritize social connectedness

### Tips for Enhancing Representation:

- Think through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.
- Capture diverse views to inform your ongoing efforts.

### Tips for Intergovernmental Partnerships:

- Reach out to contacts within DHS, DOH, and AAA's.
- Ask questions about what they are doing to address social isolation and loneliness.
- Utilize a feedback loop to inform state level policies.
- Develop cross agency trainings or webinars.



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**Tips for Rural Communities:**

- Set incremental, realistic goals.
- Build partnerships with rural stakeholders.
- Work with partners to expand broadband and connective services.

**Tips for Engaging Seniors:**

- Partner with your Department of Aging, Medicaid department.
- Meet seniors where they are and offer solutions based on their lived experience.
- Integrate with other trusted programs and services.
- Focus on institutional long-term care.



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**Get Started !**

- Host conversations in your community
- Join us as part of the Local Leader for Socially Connected Communities Network (*email: [gabriellap@healthyplacesbydesign.org](mailto:gabriellap@healthyplacesbydesign.org)*)
- Commit to Connect Nationwide Network of Champions



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# POLL

Do feel you could adapt the strategies shared during the webinar to use within your community?

Yes

No

Maybe

# Questions?





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Click on survey  
link in the chat



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Assimilation efforts  
have lasting  
consequences

AP U.S. News World News Politics Sports Entertainment Business Technology Health Science Climate and environment  
**US finds 500 Native American boarding school deaths so far**  
By FELICIA FONSECA May 11, 2022



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Health

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — A first-of-its-kind federal study of Native American boarding schools that for over a century sought to assimilate Indigenous children into white society has identified more than 500 student deaths at the institutions, but officials expect that figure to grow exponentially as research continues.

The Interior Department report released Wednesday expands to more than 400 the number of schools that were established or supported by the U.S. government, starting in the early 19th century and continuing in some cases until the late 1960s. The agency identified the deaths in

<https://apnews.com/article/religion-education-native-americans-cbd724ae4e423c788089ef98cec4315a>

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August 16, 2022

**Lisa Wade**  
Executive Director  
Nay'dini'aa Na'  
Kayax (Chickaloon  
Village Traditional  
Council)

**Tatewin Means**  
Executive Director  
Thunder Valley  
Community Development  
Cooperation

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**IN**  
**SOLIDARITY**  
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