

Conceptual Model for the Research Development Program

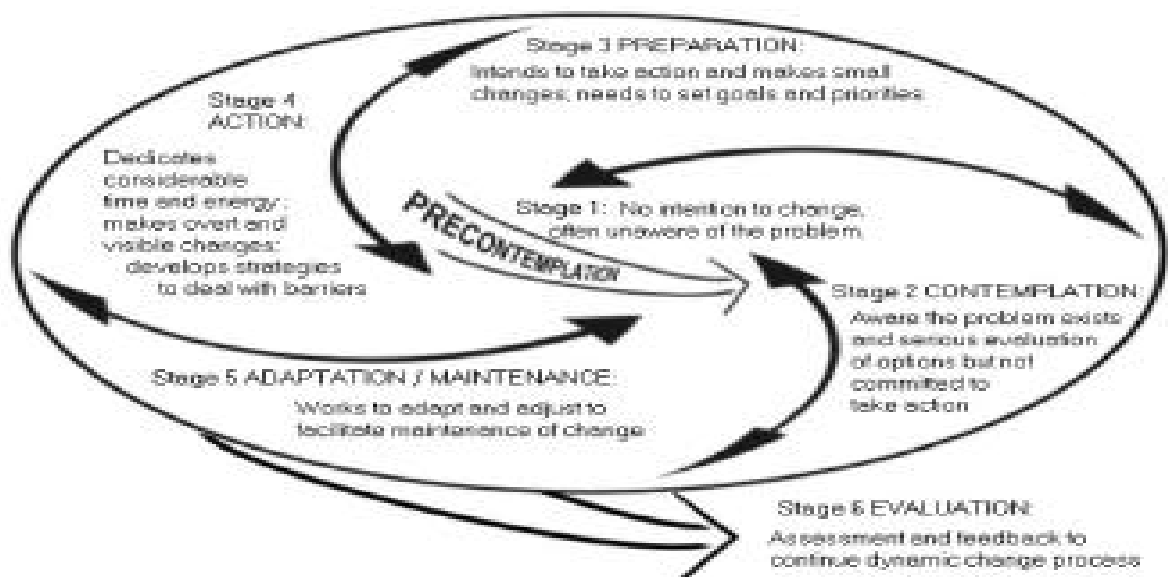
Social work practice is guided by an ecological perspective that explains the etiology and treatment of individual substance abuse problems as involving multiple social systems at different levels: families (micro level), organizations and communities (mezzo level) in a broader societal context (macro level). The ecological meta-theory assumes that change strategies must be planned and implemented across multiple systems to be effective.

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM), a dominant intervention model in health promotion, is widely applied in the chemical dependency field. Prochaska argues that the success of behavior change lies in proactively applying stage-matched interventions across multiple systems, which will increase participation, retention, and progress, and impact change rates in those at risk for unhealthy behaviors. The "stages of change" is the most frequently applied construct of the TTM model.

Despite interest in the TTM, researchers have just begun to investigate ethnicity as a variable impacting the stages of change and the utilization of the processes of change. Our Research Development Program is based upon the premise that integration of the TTM and ecological models may facilitate consideration of cultural factors influencing drug use and drug cessation by minority populations. Thus, for example, ethnic identification that can buffer ethnic minority youth from drug abuse. At a broader level, such a focus may allow for clinical practice interventions as well as policy, organizational, and administrative interventions that promote service utilization and retention and reduce the ill effects of addictive behavior, allowing for systems other than the individual to be the target of the intervention, as appropriate.

This perspective underlies our Program Conceptual Model:

Figure 1. Stages of Developing and Maintaining Change with Individuals, Families, Organizations, & Communities in an Ecological Context (IFOCEC) Model



The above stages of change apply to the following levels in an ecological system:

- **INDIVIDUAL:** Person, family, organization, community, and other entities such as legislative bodies subject to the change process in the context of the ecological system.
- **MICRO LEVEL:** Family (nuclear, extended, other), peers, and other immediate social contacts that encourage or discourage the use of drugs and promote or inhibit recovery.
- **MEZZO LEVEL:** Organizations; communities; neighborhoods; and cultural, religious, social, athletic, and civic groups. Includes shared cultural values and beliefs such as the appropriate/inappropriate use of drugs; the times and places (if any) that alcohol or other drugs are used; forms of substance use by youth, adults, and older adults; the role of churches and other cultural institutions in preventing or treating drug use; and the use of informal and formal helping resources to address drug problems.
- **MACRO LEVEL:** Societal prescription/proscriptions/prohibitions; governmental policies; institutional policies and their effects such as institutional discrimination; cultural values and norms that promote or diminish drug use and encourage or discourage participation in treatment and promote recovery; and general population characteristics such as urban/rural, age, isolation, impoverishment, education, and income levels.

While our conceptual model provides the global conceptual framework underlying the Research Development Program, our more specific research focus emphasizes the study of ethnicity and psychosocial factors as they relate to strategies for improving drug abuse prevention and treatment for African Americans and Mexican Americans. That is, viewing substance abuse from an integrative transtheoretical /ecological model, we are particularly interested in explicating how ethnicity and psychosocial factors such as individual resources, social resources, social structural factors, and culture contribute to prevention and treatment issues in *underserved* populations. And, to clarify the concept of "treatment," we focus on a continuum of treatment dimensions representing different stages of treatment studied in the literature: treatment readiness, treatment utilization or treatment entry, treatment retention, and treatment outcome.

