

Perspectives on Disability and Inclusion in Rural Communities

MULDINET Trainings – USU IDRPP

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Little Bit about Dr. Landon

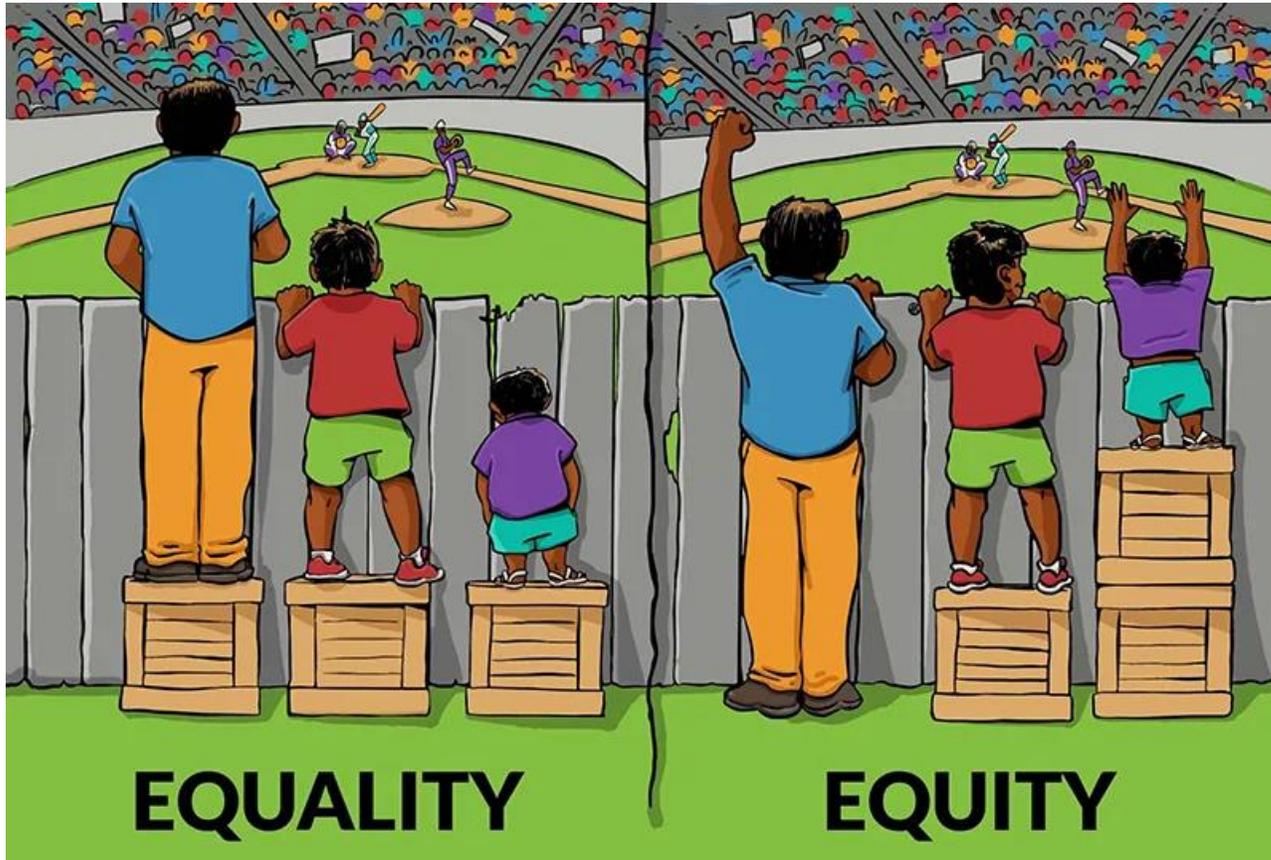
- Studied at Utah State
 - Bachelor
 - Master's
- PhD from Michigan State
 - Project Excellence – Program Evaluation for MRS for four years.
- Worked for 7 years as a Rehabilitation Counselor for the State of Idaho - VR System
- Faculty Member here at USU since 2016
 - Presently provide services in the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Center here on Campus.



For Today

- Describe Two Studies and a Model of Disability (Briefly)
- Defining Rural
- Defining Disability
 - Trends
 - Numbers
- Barriers to Community Inclusion
- Recommendations – try to work those in.
- Questions

Disability and Inclusion



- What is inclusion?
- For you to be "fully included":
 - What does it mean?
 - What does it look like?
- Equity vs Equality
- For a discussion on inclusion to be necessary, "exclusion" is by default then the "norm" and current lived experience.

2 Studies and Model of Disability

- Landon et al (2019):
 - From a rehab counselor perspective, what are the barriers to rural rehab service delivery?
 - 10 Interviews (had to have five or more years of experience serving rural areas).
- Landon et al (2021):
 - Asked Supervisors from rural states: What are the professional dispositions (i.e., commitments, values, beliefs, characteristics) that rehabilitation counselors must possess for effective rural rehabilitation counseling practice?
 - Presently a supervisor over a rural area, but also at least three years of experience as a counselor providing services in a rural area.
 - 14 interviews representing five different states.

2 Studies and Model of Disability

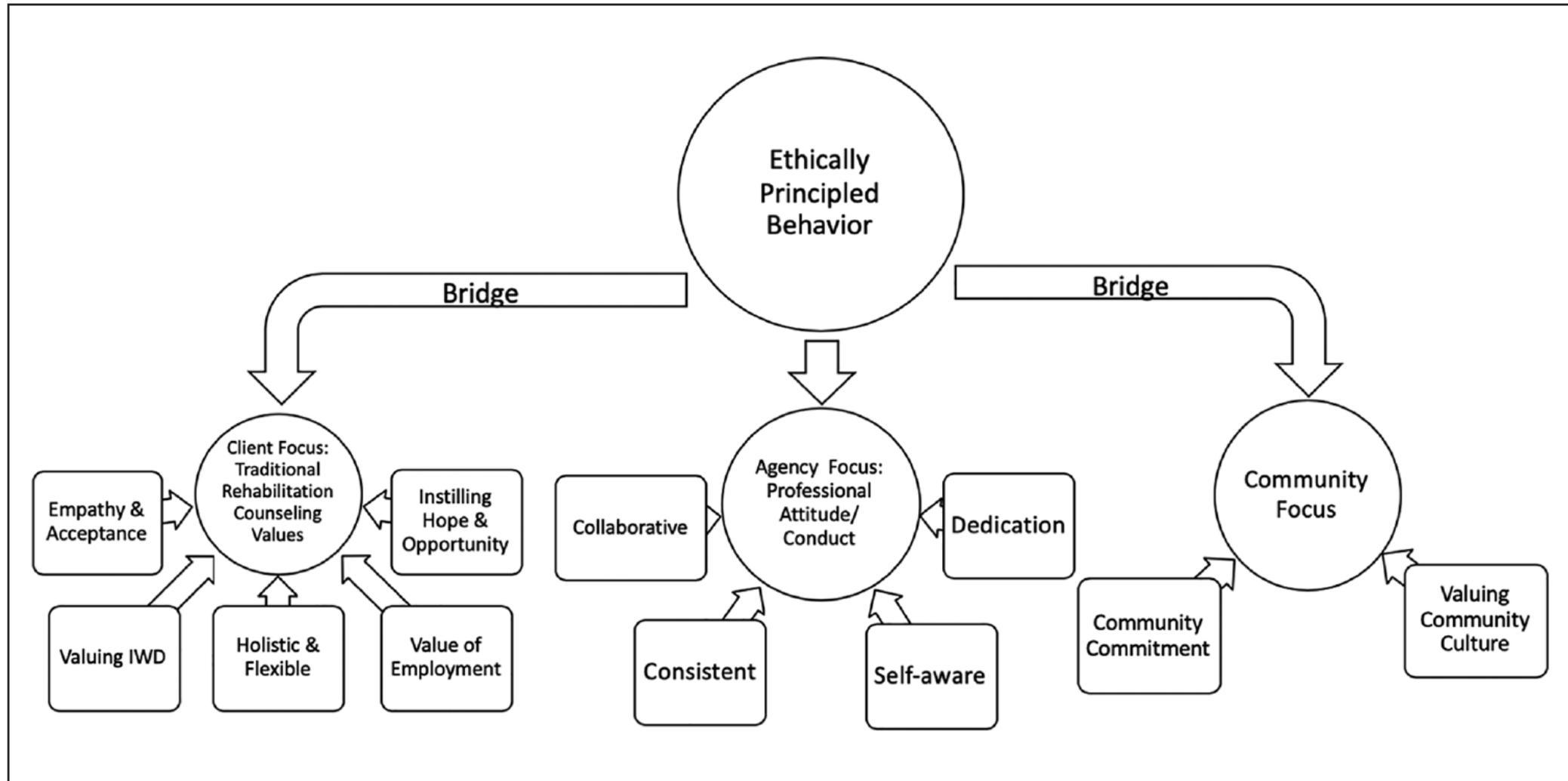
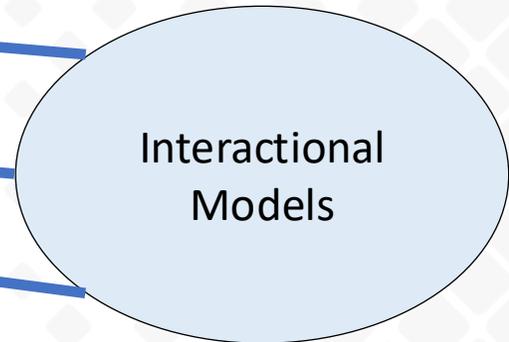
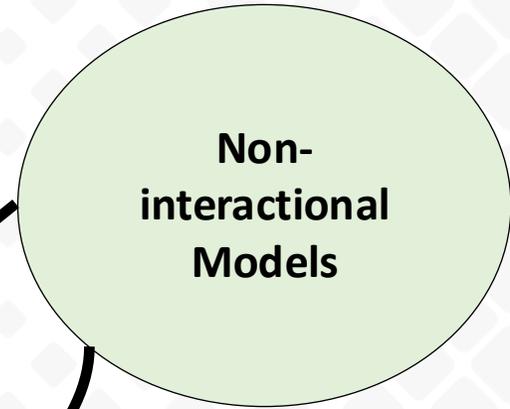


Figure 1. Thematic map; the three primary themes and the bridging theme.

IWD = Individuals with Disabilities

Models of Disability

- What are Models of Disability?
- Largely – there are five models of Disability
 - Religious –Moral Model of Disability
 - Biomedical Model of Disability
 - Environmental Model of Disability
 - Functional Model of Disability
 - Sociopolitical Model of Disability

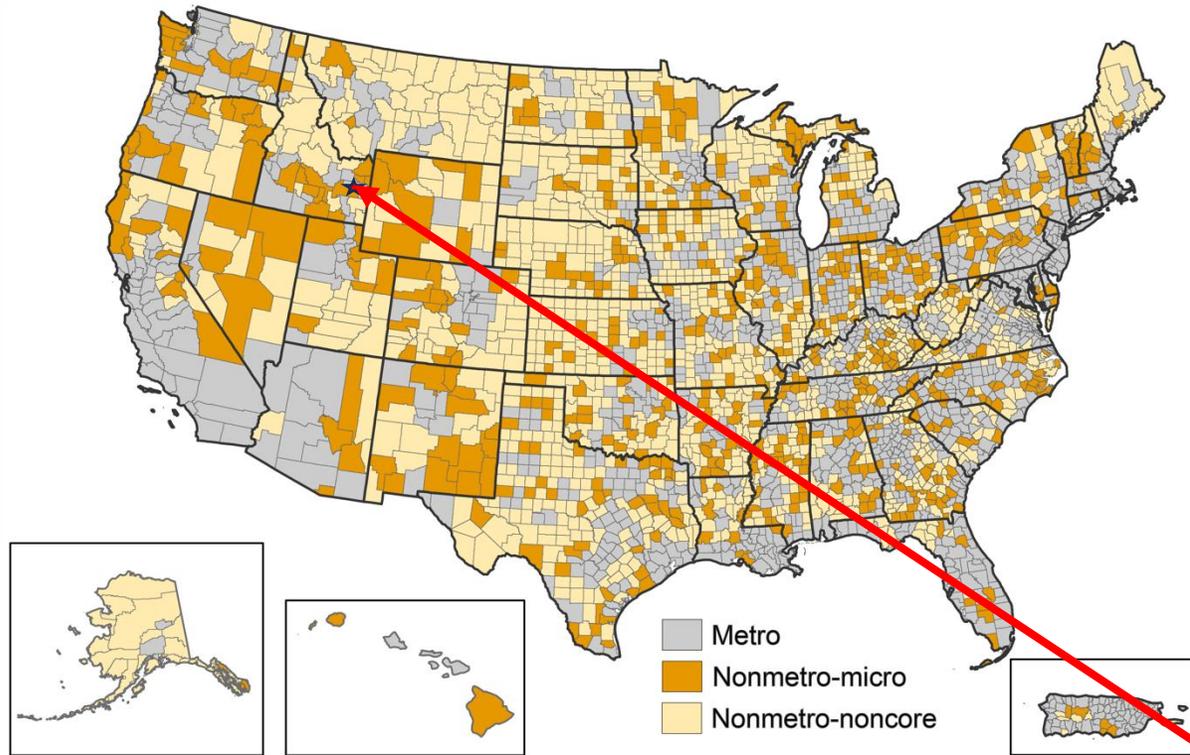


What is Rural?

- The Census Bureau does not actually define “rural.”
- Rather, rural areas include all geographic areas that are not classified as urban.
 - Urbanized areas, which contain 50,000 or more people.
 - Urban clusters, which have at least 5,000 but fewer than 50,000.
- Data suggest that about 61 million people (~19%) live in rural areas of the United States.
- Although less than one-fifth of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, these areas encompass about 97 percent of the total land area in the United States.

What is Rural?

Metropolitan (metro), nonmetropolitan (nonmetro)-micropolitan (micro), and nonmetro-noncore counties, 2023



Note: Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico are not drawn to scale. Metro/nonmetro delineations are not available for other U.S. island territories.

- Continued Growth – Seeing the US become more rural (alternative work options – Remote Options).
- Rural America is Aging Faster.
 - Median Age – Rural: 43 y/o
 - Median Age – Urban: 36 y/o
- Distance Factor - 2.5 miles...

What is Disability?

- A person with a disability is someone who:
 - has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,
 - has a history or record of such an impairment (such as cancer that is in remission), or
 - is perceived by others as having such an impairment (such as a person who has scars from a severe burn).
- Americans With Disabilities Act

Prevalence

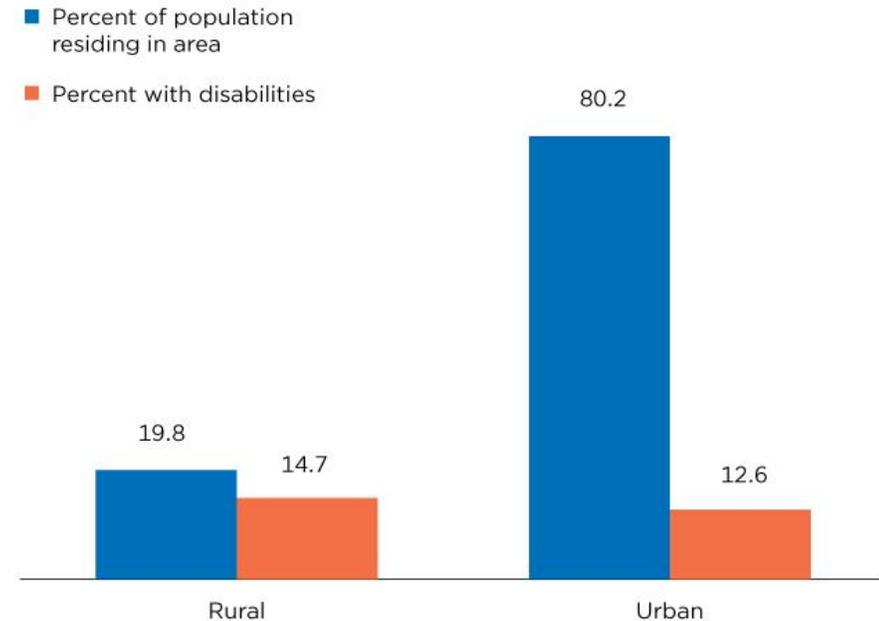
- Approximately 1 in 3 (33%) of adults in rural communities has a disability.
- Compared with adults living in large central metropolitan counties, adults living in noncore counties (rural) were:
 - 9% more likely to report having any disability.
 - 24% more likely to report having three or more disabilities.
 - More likely to report specific disability types (ranging from 7% more likely to report a cognitive disability to 35% more likely to report a hearing disability).

Disability as an Identity

- The American Community Survey (ACS) considers people to have a disability if they have difficulty with one or more of the following:
 - Seeing.
 - Hearing.
 - Concentrating or remembering (ages 5 and above).
 - Walking or climbing stairs (ages 5 and above).
 - Dressing or bathing (ages 5 and above).
 - Doing errands alone such as buying groceries or going to the doctor (ages 15 and above).
- Does the person identify as having a disability?

Figure 1.

Share of Total Population and Population With a Disability in U.S. Rural and Urban Areas: 2021



Note: Includes civilian noninstitutionalized population. For more information, visit www.census.gov/acs.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates
www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs.

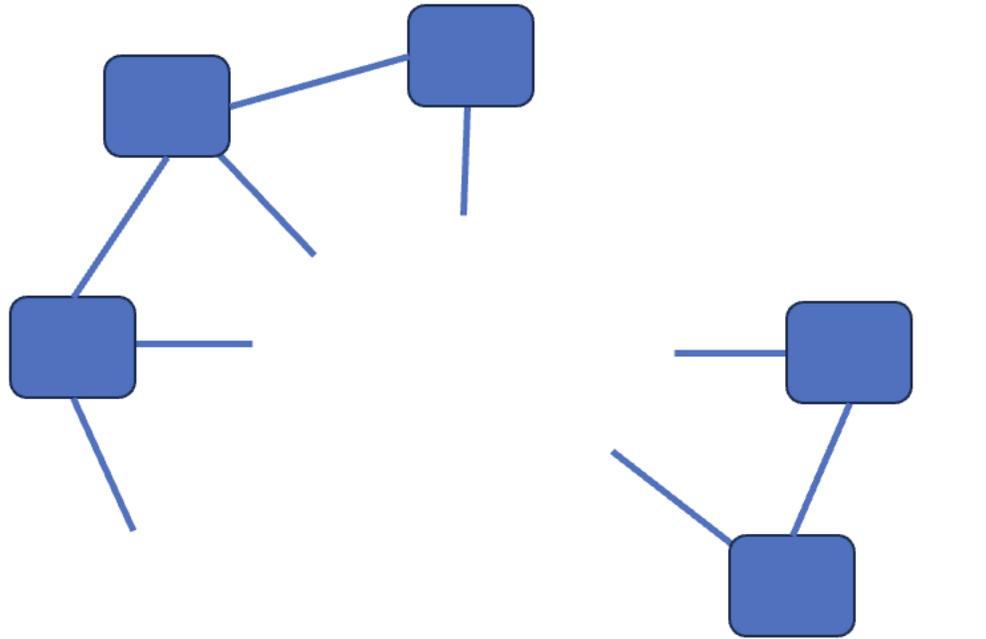
Mentality & Mindset

- I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help.
 - Ronald Reagan (1986)
- Outsider vs. Insider
 - Perception of Urban vs Rural (and associated values).
- Are you one of us?
- Do you understand what life is like here?
- Strong sense of independence and self—reliance.
- What am I doing to “embed” myself within the community and the people?
 - How are you demonstrating reliability/dependability?

Resilience and Strengths of Rural Communities

- Pride in Their Community
- Value of Hard Work
 - Belief that if you want to achieve something, you need to work hard.
- Social Capital (Sheef et al., 2023)
 - Family & Relationships
 - Family expectations...
 - Many jobs do not get formally advertised.
- Who you know can be very important.
- What you know – less so: At least until they trust you.

Employment Issues



- Major Employers
 - Mining
 - Forestry
 - Hospitality/Tourism
 - Agriculture
 - Service Industries
- Loss of a major employer will have a ripple effect across the remaining sectors.
- Rise of Self-Employment and Distance Work (Telecommuting)

Lack of Insurance

- Many work options in rural areas do not carry benefits.
 - Many are self-employed.
 - Current changes to Medicaid and Medicare will impact PWDs
 - Clinics closing due to limited billing options.
 - Telehealth: An option for many
 - Requires reliable computer and internet access.
 - Many individuals with disabilities have specialized healthcare needs. The remote nature of rural communities may make access to these services difficult, thus impacting the extent to which an individual can maintain regular employment (W. A. Erickson et al., 2018).
- (Roylance & Kwiatek, 2026)

Lack of Service Providers

- If services are available, is there “disposable” income that can be applied to those services.
- Medical and Dental Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Community Rehab Services
 - Turnover of service providers*
 - Geographical Distance and Isolated Communities
- Social Services Generally
 - Women’s Shelters, Domestic Violence Support, Counseling Services
- Mental Health Services.
- Stigma towards Mental Health and Social Services
 - Nordic Stoicism – Tough it Out, Pull Yourself Up by Your Bootstraps
 - Women: 2x more likely to have depression (social isolation)

Suicide Awareness and Prevention



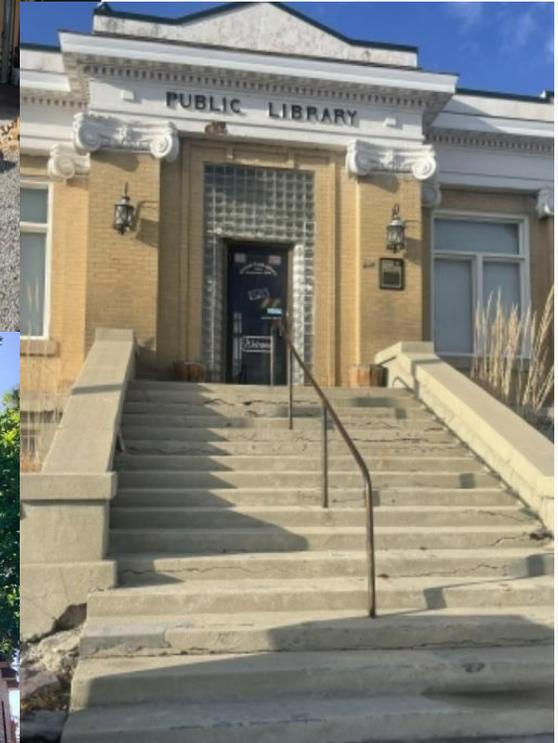
Lack of Reliable Transportation

- Longer distances to travel to access:
 - Service Providers
 - Employment
 - School
- Additional Barriers:
 - Unpaved roads
 - Weather
 - Few (if any) Public Transportation Options
 - Limited Routes and Times



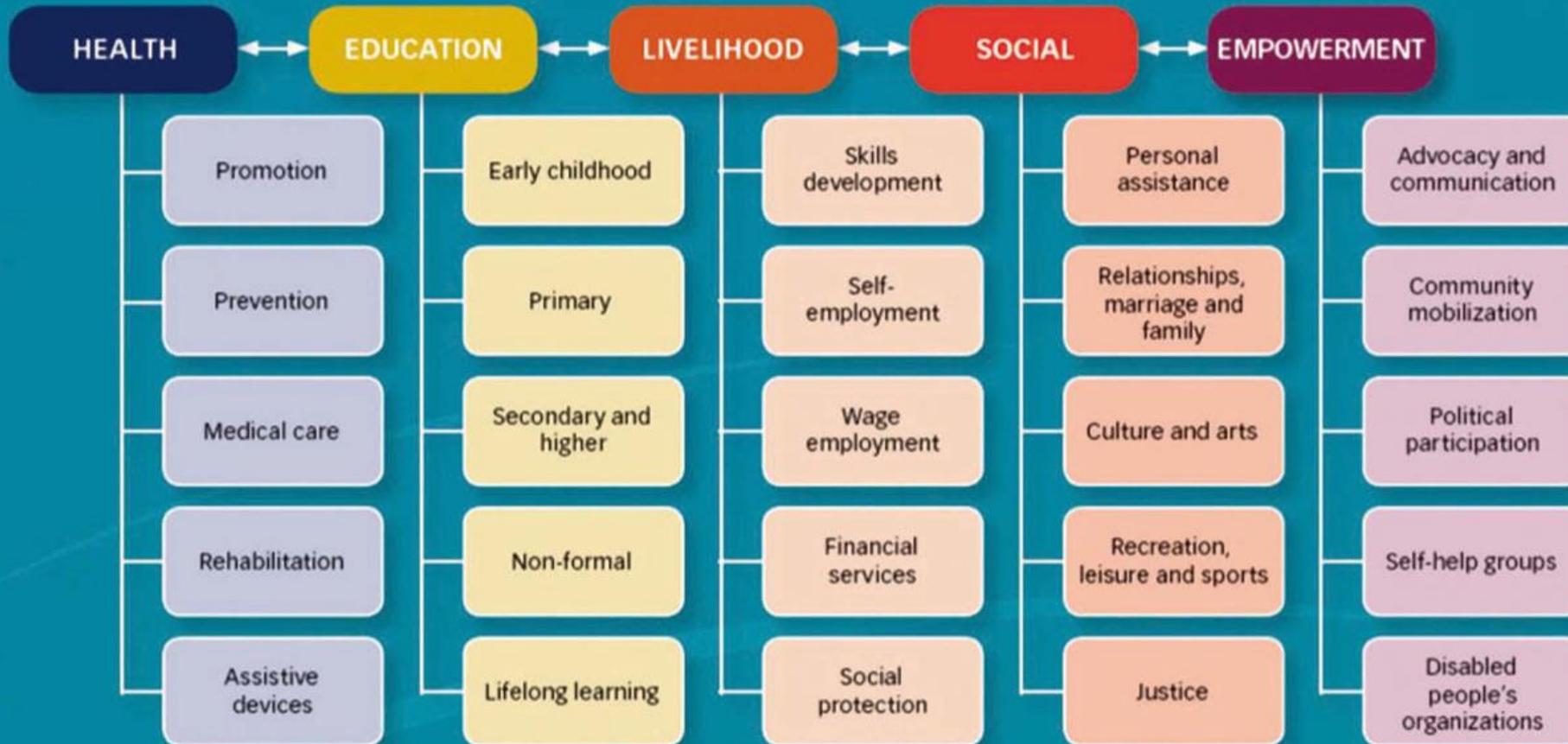
General Lack of Accessibility

- Rural Communities tend to have outdated infrastructure.
- Lack of accessible:
 - Buildings
 - Sidewalks
 - Churches
 - Housing
 - Playgrounds
 - Sporting Venues
 - Recreational Options



Holistic Service Planning

CBR MATRIX



- Community Based Rehabilitation Matrix
- World Health Organization
- Framework for Rural Service Delivery

Recommendations

- Anonymity as a Government Agency/Community Service Provider is Not Good 😊
 - Marketing Campaign
- Establish a Community Presence
- Community Involvement
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Civic Groups
 - Disability Advisory Board
- Start Early – Student and Youth with Disabilities and Partnering with the School District.
 - Leverage Families.
 - Social Capital is important.

Resources

- Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings (Harley et al, 2018)
- Healthcare Access in Rural Communities
 - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/healthcare-access>
- Rural Health Information Hub:
 - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org>
- Rural Community Health Toolkit:
 - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/rural-toolkit>
- Am I rural? – Tool:
 - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/am-i-rural#/>
- Rural Transportation Toolkit:
 - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/transportation>

Thank you!

- Questions – Comments – Concerns – Complaints
- Trent Landon
- trent.landon@usu.edu

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