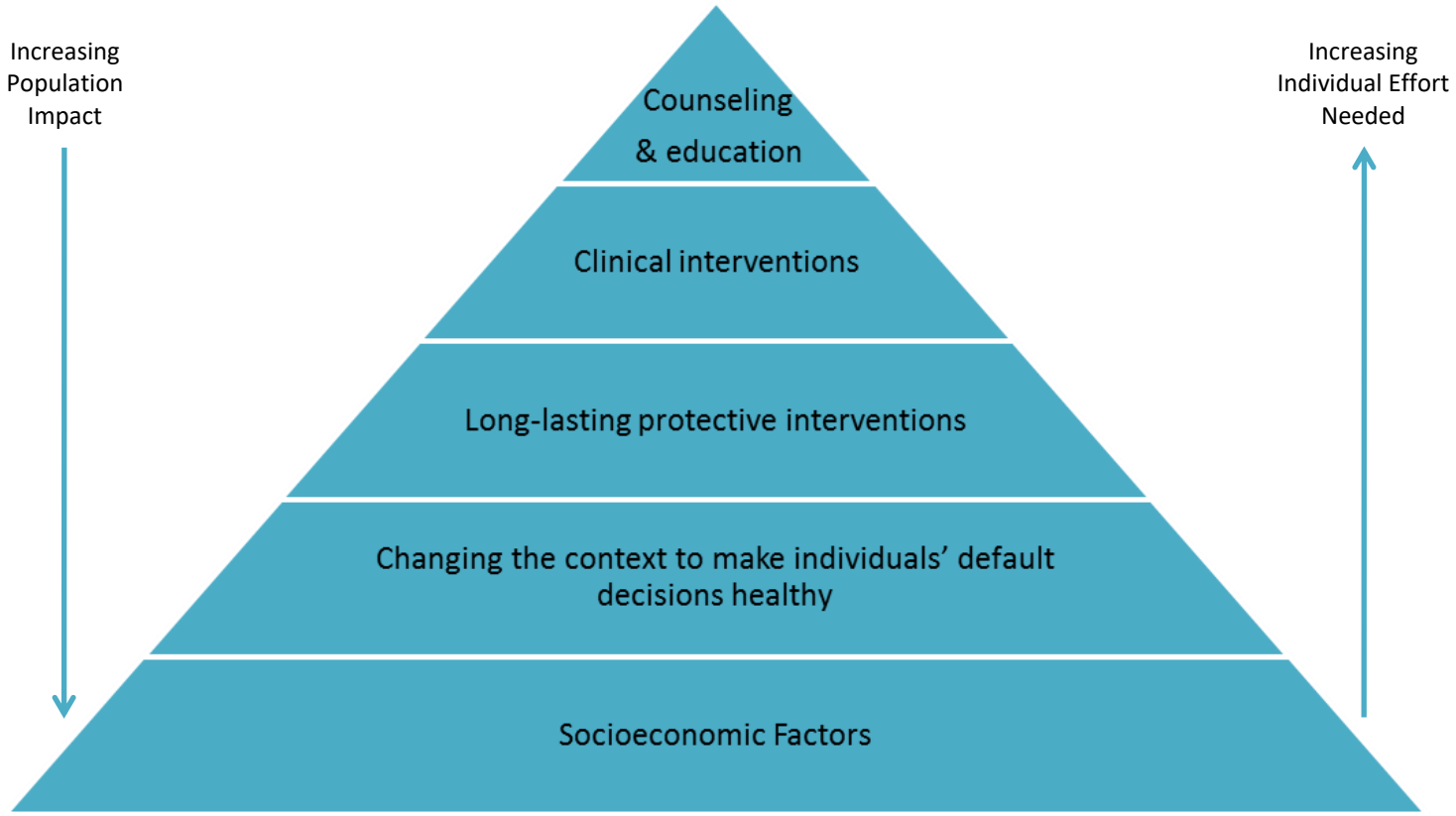
A Framework for Public Health Action

What efforts have the greatest impact for improving health? A framework for public health action[1] can be depicted by a five-tier pyramid. At the base with the greatest impact are efforts to address socio-economic determinants of health, factors such as education, childcare, income, housing, race/ethnicity and neighborhood conditions. In ascending order are interventions that change the context to make individuals' default decisions healthy, clinical interventions that confer long-term protection, ongoing direct clinical care, and health education and counseling. Interventions focusing on lower levels of the pyramid tend to be more effective because they reach broader segments of society and require less individual effort. Implementing interventions at each of the levels can achieve the maximum possible sustained public benefit.



[1] Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH. A Framework for Public Health Action: The Health Impact Pyramid. Am J Public Health.2010; 100: p. 590-595.

Recommended Reading: Cohen L., Swift S. The Spectrum of Prevention: Developing a Comprehensive Approach to Injury Prevention. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1730534/pdf/v005p00203.pdf
This article by Larry Cohen and Susan Swift provides a workable tool for moving beyond an educational approach to achieve goals through strategies that include policy development.