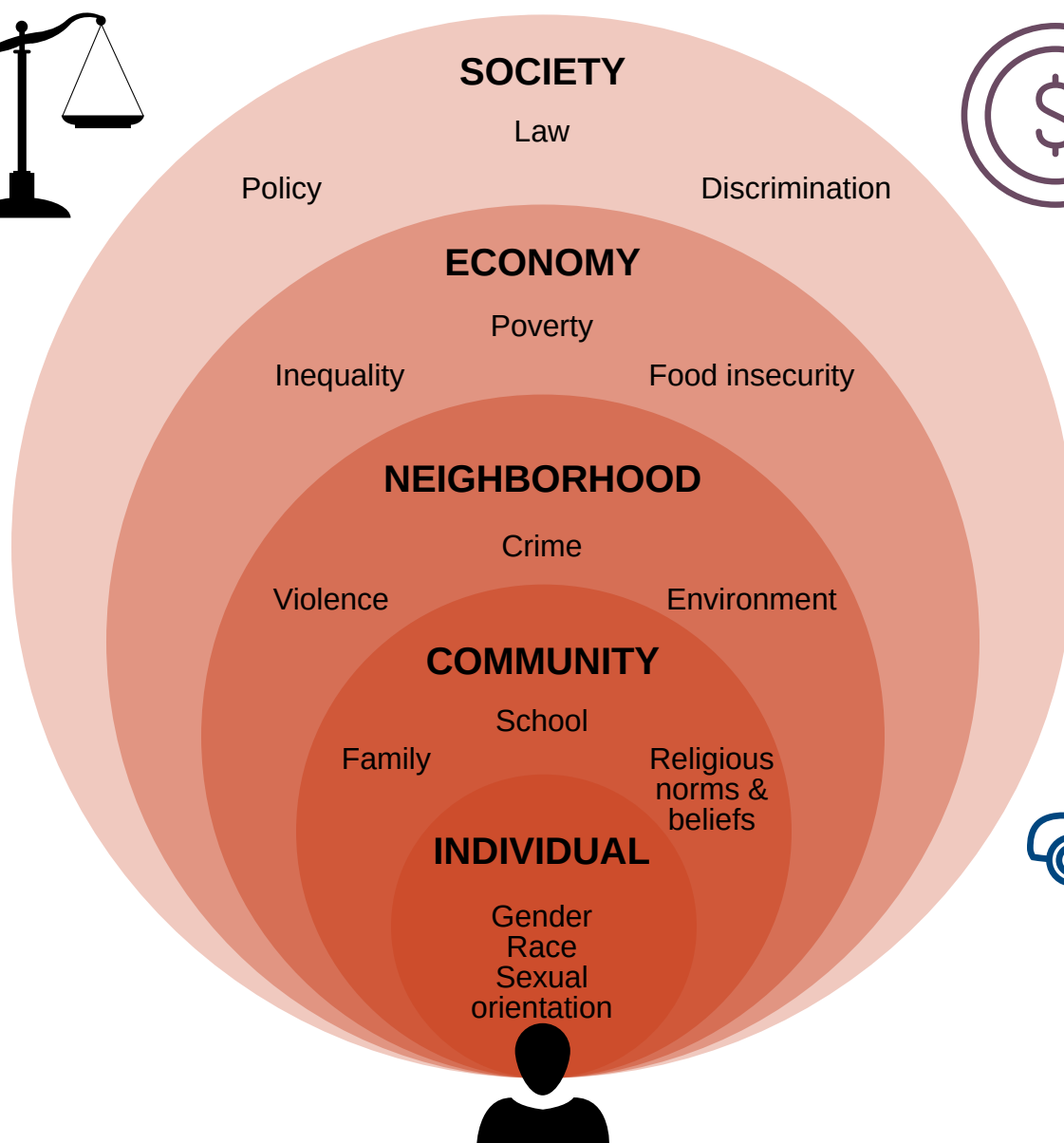
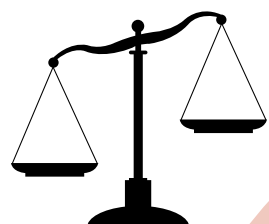




> Social Determinants of Mental Health in the Southeast

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO MENTAL HEALTH?

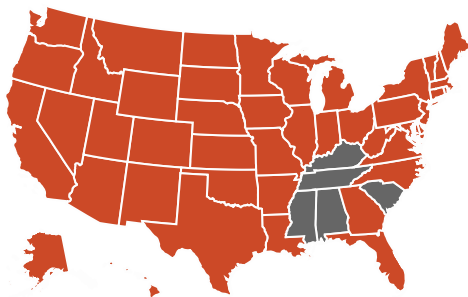
- The foundation of good mental health is built not merely on traditional services or on access to providers but on the various social conditions impacting daily life.
- Interconnected social structures provide the framework for both good and adverse mental health outcomes.
- The unique social constructs in the Southeastern United States create both challenges and opportunities for promoting and ensuring good mental health.



SOCIAL FACTORS RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH

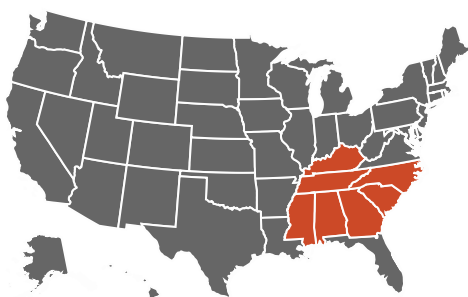
- People must be able to live, work, learn and play in their surrounding community in order to have optimal health. The inability to participate in society due to a lack of finances, services, access, or personal agency is to be in poverty.
- Poverty is bi-directionally linked to increased mental health problems, acting as both a cause and a consequence of mental illness (Figure 1).¹ Poverty is related not only to financial instability, but to other elements such as lower levels of education (Figure 2), food insecurity (Figure 3), an unsafe built environment, and lack of community services.
- All of these social factors taken together create systemic mental health challenges throughout the region.
- Individual factors considered within a social context can also be linked to mental health outcomes. A person's gender, race, sexual orientation or citizenship status all contribute to one's mental health. People who experience discrimination based on their gender, sexual orientation, and/or race will often under-utilize mental health services.⁵

FIGURE 1



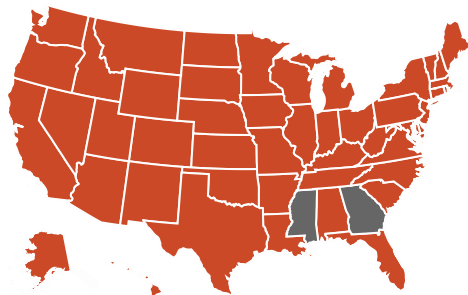
Of the ten states with the highest percentage of people living below the federal poverty line in 2018, five of them were Region IV states (Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, Kentucky and Mississippi).²

FIGURE 2



At a national level, the United States has a high school graduation rate of **87.3%**. All of the Region IV states, with the exception of Florida, have a high school graduation rate lower than the national rate.³

FIGURE 3



Of the 5 states with the highest levels of food insecurity in the nation, Georgia and Mississippi are number 4 and number 2, respectively.⁴



PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH

- The social determinants of health in the Southeast can be improved.
- It is important to remember that mental health is public health, and that a public health approach can be used to address the social factors that influence mental health outcomes.⁶
- One way to accomplish this is through “upstream” practices: a progressive model that affects communities at large through interventions, policy change, economic incentives, and increased access.
- When advocating for public health change, mental health issues must be considered and included in the conversation around physical health policy and practice.
- It is important for governmental sectors including housing, education, transportation, public works, parks and recreation, and criminal justice to work collaboratively when considering the impact of policies on public mental health.

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