

# The Role of the Social Worker in the Treatment of Adolescent Obesity

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# OBJECTIVE:

- To identify ways in which Social Workers can increase the efficacy of care in the treatment of adolescent obesity.

# Generalist Perspective and Systems Theory:

- Problems are multi-determined
- “Systems are mutually interacting and the nature of this interaction at least partially explains a variety of phenomena, including the existence of problems, the nature of behavior, and the course of human development.”
- If we examine each system, we can better understand how each impacts the target problem, how the target problem impacts the system, and what system is most likely to help resolve the problem.

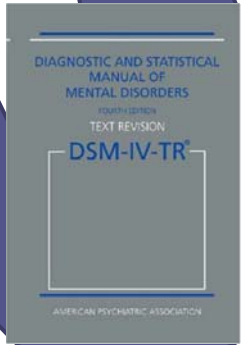
(Tolson et al. 1994:3-8)

# The Ecological Systems Theory



(Tolson et al. 1994:7)

Or....



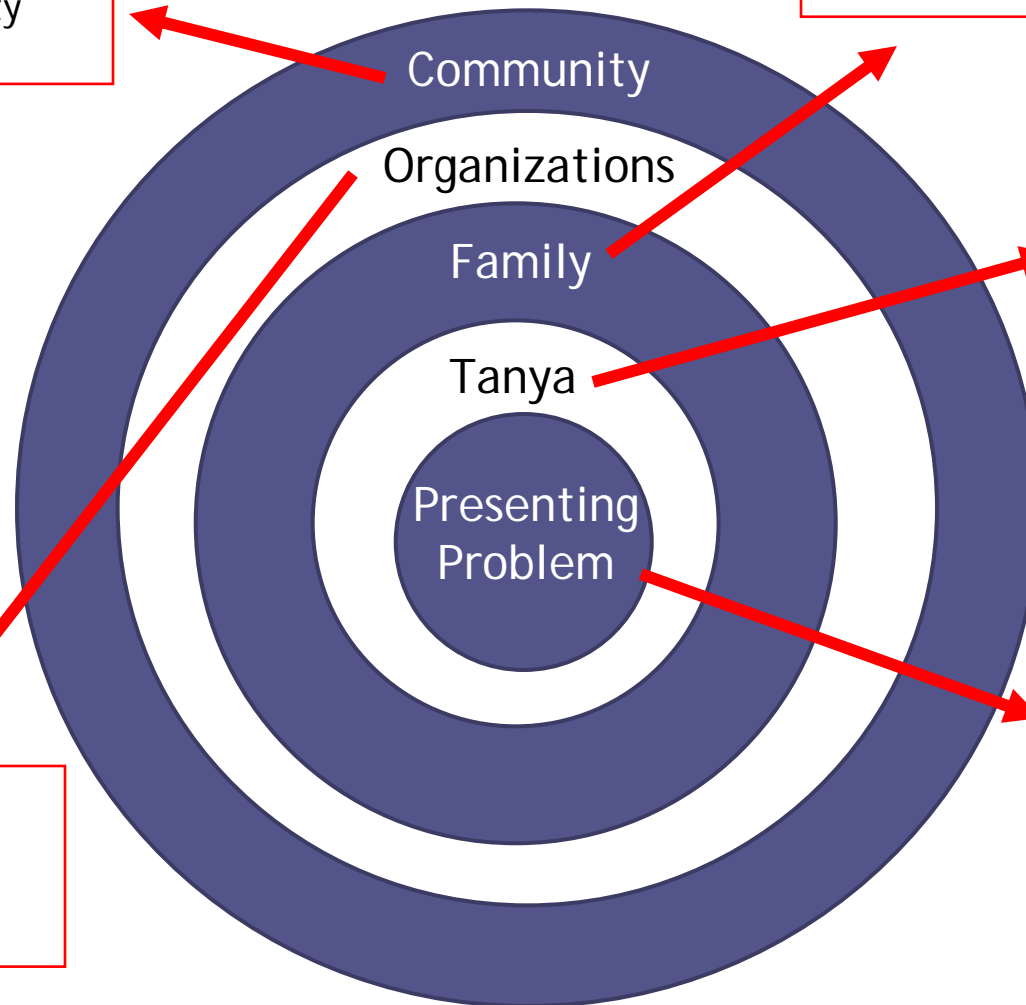
# Psychosocial Assessment:

- **Presenting Problem**
  - Age of onset
  - Body image
  - Exercise
  - Who cooks at home
- **Home**
  - Where the patient lives
  - Who the patient lives with
  - Who raised the patient
- **School**
  - Academic performance
  - Attendance record
  - Relationships with teachers and peers
- **Social**
  - Hobbies and leisure
  - Friendships and social interactions
  - Spirituality
- **Mental Health**
  - Mood and behaviors
  - Sleep habits and appetite changes
- **Substance Abuse/Legal History**
  - Drugs or alcohol
  - Trouble with the law

# Tanya

- Chicago's west side
- "too dangerous"
- Multiple shootings
- Limited community resources

- Legal Guardian: Great-Grandmother
- Deceased mother/ father unknown
- Multiple relatives at home
- Limited income



- 11 y/o
- Female
- African-American

- Local CPS School
- DCFS
- New Hope
- Church

- BMI: 58.8
- 358.5 lbs.
- 5' 5"
- H/O Asthma, sleep disturbance, pre-diabetes, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

## Strengths:

- Understands team recommendations, demonstrates changes
- Meets with providers independently
- Supportive and close relationship with great-grandmother
- Contact with father
- Likes school, fair student
- Sings in church choir
- Interested in social activities
- Interested in therapy
- Positive coping skills

## Limitations:

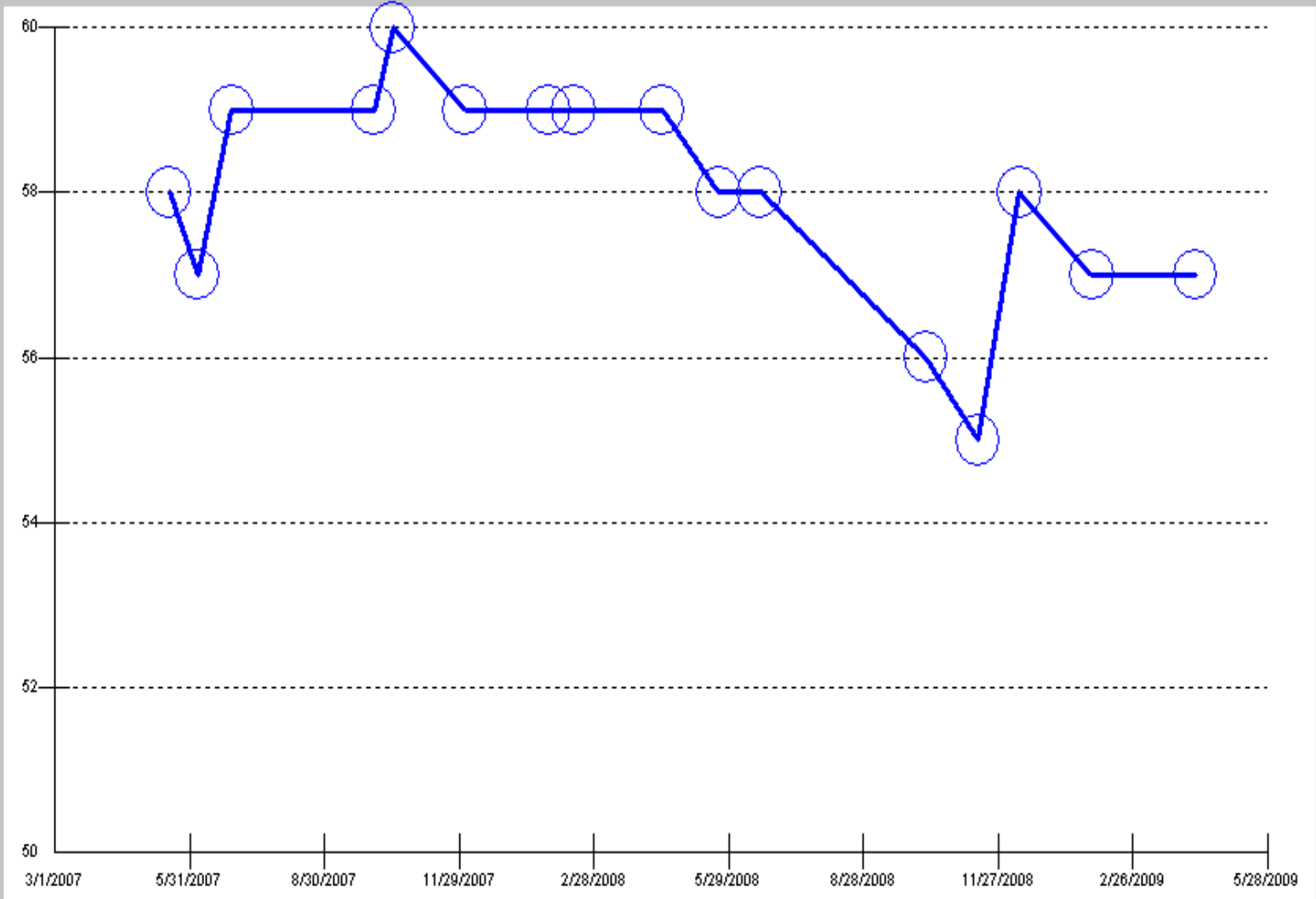
- H/o poor follow-up
- Limited transportation resources
- Other kids in the house with a different diet
- Loss of mother
- Inconsistent contact with father
- H/o learning disability
- Homeschooling 1 hour/5 days/week
- Multiple absences
- Constant teasing at school
- Few friends
- Few resources for activity
- Sad mood
- Crying spells



# Social Work Interventions:

- Presenting Problem
  - Arranged transportation services to New Hope, UIC Sleep Clinic, Orthopedic follow-up appointments
  - Facilitated contact with patient's father
- Home
  - Referred patient and family to DCFS Post-Adoption Unit and Older Caregivers Project
- School
  - Facilitated and maintained contact with school liaison
- Social
  - Referred patient to Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Mental Health
  - Referred patient for individual therapy

# BMI





## Tanya at New Hope in April 2009:

- The patient denies depression and sadness and reports improved mood since starting at New Hope.
- “I guess because I am getting better grades, like everything is getting better, like with my weight and talking to my dad and going to school everyday.”

# More of our patients:

Referred for individual therapy

Referred to a sleep clinic in Bloomington, IL

Referred for financial case management

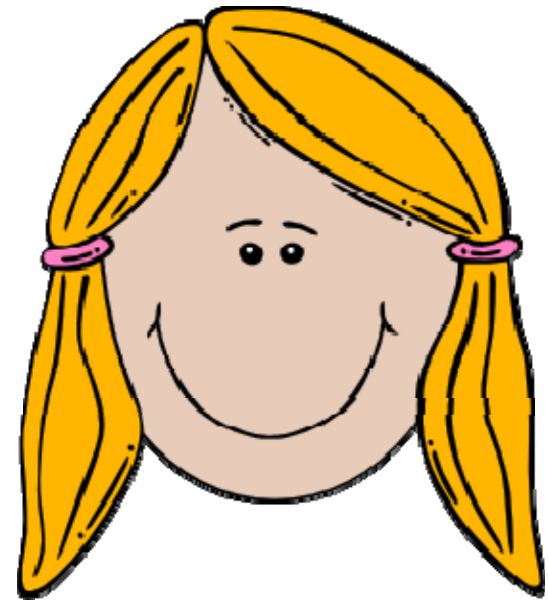


Referred to the Ronald McDonald House

Referred for home-bound schooling

# Even More Interventions:

- Child care assistance
- Inpatient admission to Schwab
- Substance abuse treatment
- Contact with school liaisons
- Contact with DCFS Caseworkers





## Recommendations:

- Find your clinic a good Social Worker!