

Risk and Protective Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

Extensive research has identified factors that impact youth problem behaviors such as substance use, violence, suicide ideation, and early sexual activity. Studies have found, the more risk factors an adolescent has, the greater the likelihood of problem behavior. Conversely, youth with more protective factors and a resilient personality *are better able to cope* with risk factors and life challenges; they are less likely to be involved in problem behaviors and more likely to do well in school and in life.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Characteristics within the individual or conditions in the family, school or community that help youth cope successfully with life challenges and existing risk factors.

FAMILY

- **Family connectedness** (attachment & bonding)*
- Positive parenting style
- Living in a two parent family
- Higher parent education
- High parental expectations about school

SCHOOL

- **Connected to school***
- Caring school climate
- Student participation in extracurricular activities

COMMUNITY

- **Positive connection to *other* adults***
- Safe, supportive, connected neighborhood
- Strong community infrastructure (services for those in need)
- Local, state policies and practices that support healthy norms and child-youth programs
- Range of opportunities *in the community* for meaningful youth engagement

INDIVIDUAL - PEERS

- **Engagement in meaningful activities**
- **Life skills and social competence***
(*Social Emotional/Employability Skills*)
- **Cultural identity and connection***
- Positive personal qualities
- Positive self concept
- Positive peer role models
- Religious identity
- High grade point average

RISK FACTORS

Characteristics within the individual or conditions in the family, school or community that increase the likelihood youth will engage in problem behavior.

FAMILY

- **Death by suicide of a friend or family member***
- Family history of the problem behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict
- Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in problem behaviors
- Household access to substances or guns

SCHOOL

- Academic failure
- Lack of personal commitment to school

COMMUNITY

- **Availability of alcohol/other drugs***
- **Community norms and laws***
- Availability of firearms
- Transitions and mobility (*moving a lot*)
- Low neighborhood attachment & community disorganization
- Poverty

INDIVIDUAL - PEERS

- **Experienced child abuse (physical, sexual) or other family violence***
- **Early initiation of the problem behavior***
- **Loss of cultural identity and connection***
- Constitutional factors (see definition)
- Childhood media exposure to violence and alcohol
- Early and persistent antisocial behavior
- Friends who engage in the problem behavior
- Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior (low perceived-risk of harm)
- Gang involvement
- Older physical appearance than peers
- Paid work more than 20 hrs/week
- Perceived risk of untimely death

PROTECTIVE Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

DOMAINS	This list is based upon ongoing research demonstrating the impact protective factors have in preventing problem behavior. <i>Items in bold are the priority factors identified by the Behavioral Health Epidemiological workgroup and the Division of Behavioral Health.</i>	Suicide, thoughts and attempts	Substance Use	Violence	Early Sexual Activity and Teen Pregnancy
FAMILY	Connected to Family (attachment/bonding) ^{1,4,6,7,15,25, 46,53,61}	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Positive parenting style ^{6,8,11,15,21,53}		✓	✓	✓
	Living in a two parent family ^{6,21,25}		✓		✓
	Higher parent education ^{2,4,6,8,11,17, 21}		✓	✓	✓
	Higher parental expectations about school ^{1,8,11,18,24}	✓	✓	✓	
SCHOOL	Connected to school (attachment/bonding) ^{1,6,8,9,10,15, 34, 53}	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Caring school climate ^{2,3,8,9,15, 23, 25,53}	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Student participation in extracurricular activities ^{6, 8,9,13b, 15, 28, 29,30}		✓		✓
	Early intervention services ^{2, 6, 31, 32, 42,43}	✓	✓		✓
COMMUNITY Society-Environment	Connected to other positive adults (bonded/attached) ^{1,3,4,5,9,10,11,13a, 21,33,61}	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Safe, supportive, connected neighborhood ^{1, 6,9,11,14,21,34,61}	✓		✓	✓
	Strong community infrastructure (services for those in need) ^{6,12,14,16,61}	✓	✓		✓
	Local, state policies and practices that support healthy norms and child-youth programs ^{8,12,13,14,16,17,33}	✓	✓	✓	
	Range of opportunities <i>in the community</i> for meaningful youth engagement (see below)				
INDIVIDUAL-PEERS	Engagement in positive meaningful activities ^{3,4,6,8,9,11,25, 38,39,40}		✓	✓	✓
	Cultural identity and connection ^{47,48,49,61}	✓	✓		
	Positive personal qualities ^{3,4,5,8,9,19}		✓		✓
	Positive self concept ^{1,6,9,11}	✓	✓		✓
	Positive peer role models ^{6,7,9,17,25,46}		✓		✓
	Religious or spiritual beliefs ^{1,6,9,25, 61}	✓	✓		✓
	High grade point average ^{1,6,7,9}	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Life skills and social competencies (<i>Social Emotional/ Employability Skills</i>) ^{3,4,5,8,9,11,44,45,53,61} <i>While life skills are identified as protective for youth problem behaviors in numerous studies, the research did not identify associations with <u>specific</u> problem behaviors.</i>				

RISK Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

DOMAINS	Risk factors are characteristics within the individual or conditions in the family , school or community that increase the likelihood youth will engage in problem behaviors. <u>NOTE:</u> Items in bold are the priority factors identified by the state Behavioral Health Epidemiological workgroup and the Division of Behavioral Health.	Suicide, thoughts and attempts	Substance Abuse	Violence	Early Sexual Activity Teen Pregnancy
FAMILY	Family history of the problem behavior 2,4,8,11,18, 61	↙	↙	↙	↙
	Family management problems ^{8,18}	↙	↙	↙	↙
	Family conflict ^{8,18}	↙	↙	↙	↙
	Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in problem behaviors ^{8,18}		↙	↙	
	Household access to substances or guns ^{1,11}		↙	↙	
	Death by suicide of a friend or family member, or suicide attempts ^{1,7, 11, 61}	↙		↙	
SCHOOL	Academic failure ^{1, 2, 8,18}	↙	↙	↙	↙
	Lack of personal commitment to school 1, 8,9,11, 18, 61	↙	↙	↙	↙
COMMUNITY Society - Environment	Availability of alcohol/other drugs ^{8,12,18}		↙	↙	
	Availability of firearms ^{8,12,18}	↙		↙	
	Community laws and norms favorable to drug use, firearms, and crime ^{8,11,18, 52}		↙	↙	
	Transitions and mobility (<i>moving a lot</i>) ^{8,18}	↙	↙		
	Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization ^{8,18}		↙	↙	
	Poverty ^{2,8,11,18, 61}		↙	↙	↙
INDIVIDUAL - PEERS	Experienced child abuse (physical, sexual) or other family violence) ^{1,6,11,12,37,61}	↙		↙	↙
	Early initiation of the problem behavior ^{8,18}		↙	↙	↙
	Loss of cultural identity ^{47,48,49,61}	↙	↙		
	Constitutional factors (see definition) ^{8,18, 61}	↙	↙	↙	
	Childhood exposure to media		↙	↙	
	Early and persistent antisocial behavior ^{8,18}	↙	↙	↙	↙
	Friends who engage in the problem behavior ^{8,18}		↙	↙	↙
	Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior (including low perceived-risk of harm) ^{8,18,52}		↙		↙
	Gang involvement ^{8,18}		↙	↙	
	Older physical appearance (than peers) ^{1,6}	↙	↙		↙
	Paid work more than 20 hrs/week ^{1,6}	↙	↙	↙	↙
	Perceived risk of untimely death ^{1,6}	↙	↙	↙	