

## Risk and Protective Factor Framework

Risk and protective factor-focused prevention is based on a simple premise: To prevent a problem from happening, we need to identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risks. Researchers at the University of Washington have identified risk factors that can contribute to five problem behaviors and protective factors that work to buffer children from risk. Risk and protective factors are grouped in 4 domains: community, family, school and peer/individual. In the tables below, the following abbreviations are used:

ATOD stands for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use  
ASB stands for Antisocial Behaviors  
PSI stands for Prosocial Involvement

YOUTH AT RISK		Problem behaviors				
		Substance abuse	Delinquency	Teen pregnancy	School drop-out	Violence
Community	Availability of drugs & firearms	✓				✓
	Community norms & laws favorable toward drug use	✓				
	Transitions & mobility	✓	✓		✓	
	Low neighborhood attachment & commun. disorganization	✓	✓			✓
	Extreme economic & social deprivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family	Family history of high risk behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Family management problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Family conflict	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Favorable parental attitudes & involvement in the problem behavior	✓	✓			✓
School	Early & persistent antisocial behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Academic failure in elementary school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Lack of commitment to school	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Individual/ peer	Alienation & rebelliousness	✓	✓		✓	
	Friends who engage in a problem behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Early initiation of the problem behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

A (✓) indicates that at least two longitudinal studies have found the risk factor to predict the problem behavior.

Community Domain Risk Factors	
Low Neighborhood Attachment	A low level of bonding to the neighborhood is related to higher levels of juvenile crime and drug selling.
Community Disorganization	Research has shown that neighborhoods with high population density, lack of natural surveillance of public places, physical deterioration, and high rates of adult crime also have higher rates of juvenile crime and drug selling.
Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use	Research has shown that legal restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, such as raising the legal drinking age, restricting smoking in public places, and increased taxation have been followed by decreases in consumption. Moreover, national surveys of high school seniors have shown that shifts in normative attitudes toward drug use have preceded changes in prevalence of use.
Perceived Availability of Drugs	The availability of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs has been related to the use of these substances by adolescents.
Perceived Availability of Handguns	The availability of handguns has also been related to the use of these substances by adolescents.
Community Domain Protective Factors	
Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	When opportunities are available in a community for positive participation, children are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	Rewards for positive participation in activities help children bond to the community, thus lowering their risk for substance use.
Family Domain Risk Factors	
Poor Family Management	Parents' use of inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishment with their children places them at higher risk for substance use and other problem behaviors. Also, parents' failure to provide clear expectations and to monitor their children's behavior makes it more likely that they will engage in drug abuse whether or not there are family drug problems.
Family Conflict	Children raised in families high in conflict, whether or not the child is directly involved in the conflict, appear at risk for both delinquency and drug use.
Family History of Antisocial Behavior	When children are raised in a family with a history of problem behaviors (e.g., violence or ATOD use), the children are more likely to engage in these behaviors.

Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Drug Use	In families where parents use illegal drugs, are heavy users of alcohol, or are tolerant of children's use, children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence. The risk is further increased if parents involve children in their own drug (or alcohol) using behavior, for example, asking the child to light the parent's cigarette or get the parent a beer from the refrigerator.
Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior	In families where parents are tolerant of their child's antisocial behavior (i.e. fighting, stealing, defacing property, etc.), children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence.
<b>Family Domain Protective Factors</b>	
Family Attachment	Young people who feel that they are a valued part of their family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.
Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	Young people who are exposed to more opportunities to participate meaningfully in the responsibilities and activities of the family are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	When parents, siblings, and other family members praise, encourage, and attend to things done well by their child, children are less likely to engage in substance use and problem behaviors.
<b>School Domain Risk Factors</b>	
Academic Failure	Beginning in the late elementary grades (grades 4-6) academic failure increases the risk of both drug abuse and delinquency. It appears that the experience of failure itself, for whatever reasons, increases the risk of problem behaviors.
Low Commitment to School	Surveys of high school seniors have shown that the use of hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, and sedatives or non-medically prescribed tranquilizers is significantly lower among students who expect to attend college than among those who do not. Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving the coursework as relevant are also negatively related to drug abuse.
<b>School Domain Protective Factors</b>	
Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement	When young people are given more opportunities to participate meaningfully in important activities at school, they are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors.
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	When young people are recognized and rewarded for their contributions at school, they are less likely to be involved in substance use and other problem behaviors.
<b>Peer-Individual Risk Factors</b>	
Rebelliousness	Young people who do not feel part of society, are not bound by rules, don't believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society, are at higher risk of abusing drugs. In addition, high tolerance for deviance, a strong need for independence and normlessness have all been linked with drug use.

Early Initiation of Drug Use	Early onset of drug use predicts misuse of drugs. The earlier the onset of any drug use, the greater the involvement in other drug use and the greater frequency of use. Onset of drug use prior to the age of 15 is a consistent predictor of drug abuse, and a later age of onset of drug use has been shown to predict lower drug involvement and a greater probability of discontinuation of use.
Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior	Early onset of antisocial behaviors such as being suspended from school, arrests, carrying handguns, fighting, etc. makes young people more likely to be involved in substance abuse.
Attitudes Favorable Toward Drug Use and Antisocial Behavior	During the elementary school years, most children express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes and have difficulty imagining why people use drugs or engage in antisocial behaviors. However, in middle school, as more youth are exposed to others who use drugs and engage in antisocial behavior, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. Youth who express positive attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behavior are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors, including drug use.
Perceived Risk of Drug Use	Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.
Interaction with Antisocial Peers	Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors are at higher risk for engaging in antisocial behavior themselves.
Friends' Use of Drugs	Young people who associate with peers who engage in alcohol or substance abuse are much more likely to engage in the same behavior. Peer drug use has consistently been found to be among the strongest predictors of substance use among youth. Even when young people come from well-managed families and do not experience other risk factors, spending time with friends who use drugs greatly increases the risk of that problem developing.
Depressive Symptoms	Young people who express feelings of sadness for long periods over the past year and who have negative attitudes about them-selves and life in general are more likely to use drugs.
Rewards for Antisocial Behavior	Young people who receive rewards for their antisocial behavior are at higher risk for engaging further in antisocial behavior and substance use.
<b>Peer-Individual Protective Factors</b>	
Religiosity	Young people who regularly attend religious services are less likely to engage in problem behaviors.
Social Skills	Young people who are socially competent and engage in positive interpersonal relations with their peers are less likely to use drugs and engage in other problem behaviors.
Belief in the Moral Order	Young people who have a belief in what is "right" or "wrong" are less likely to use drugs.
Prosocial Involvement	Participation in positive school and community activities helps provide protection for youth.
Rewards for Prosocial Involvement	Young people who are rewarded for working hard in school and volunteering in the community are less likely to engage in problem behavior.