

Investing In Our Youth
Risk and Protective Factors Identified by the Communities That Care
Youth Survey

Community Risk Factors

Low neighbourhood attachment
Community disorganisation
Personal transitions and mobility
Community transitions and mobility
Laws and norms favourable to drugs
Perceived availability of drugs

Family Risk Factors

Poor family management
Poor discipline
Family conflict
Family history of substance use
Parental attitudes favourable towards drug use
Parental attitudes favourable towards anti-social behaviour

School Risk Factors

Academic failure
Low commitment to school

Peer/Individual Risk Factors

Rebelliousness
Early initiation of problem behaviour
Anti-social behaviour
Favourable attitudes toward anti-social behaviour
Favourable attitudes toward drug use
Perceived risks of drug use
Interaction with anti-social peers
Friends' use of drugs
Sensation seeking
Rewards for anti-social involvement
Peer gang involvement

Community Protective Factors

Opportunities for pro-social behaviour
Rewards for pro-social behaviour

Family Protective Factors

Attachment
Opportunities for pro-social behaviour
Rewards for pro-social involvement

School Protective Factors

Opportunities for pro-social involvement
Rewards for pro-social involvement

Peer/Individual Protective Factors

Religiosity
Social skills
Belief in the moral order

Investing In Our Youth Communities That Care Risk and Protective Factors Explained Compiled by Beth Jackson

A protective factor is defined as something positive in a young person's environment that helps an individual deal with challenges more effectively. An example would be high family involvement and healthy peer group relationships (Developmental Research and Programs Inc, 2000); (Farrington, 2000); (Hawkins et al., 1999). Protective factors, such as supportive family, school competence, participation in community activities and healthy peer behaviours, are proposed as facilitators of healthy behaviours ((Farrington, 2000); (National Crime Prevention, 1998).

A risk factor is something negative in a young person's environment that increases the likelihood of health or behaviour problems. For example, availability of drugs, poor parental supervision, or low achievement. (Developmental Research and Programs Inc, 2000); (Farrington, 2000); (Hawkins et al., 1999). Research indicates that the greater the number of risk factors to which an individual is exposed, the greater that individual's risk is of developing problems (Barton et al., 1997); (Smith and Carlson, 1997). There is evidence that delinquent behaviour and drug abuse may be predicted by a common set of risk factors observable in childhood (Barton et al., 1997); (Smith and Carlson, 1997).

Research indicates that protective factors reduce the impact of negative risk factors by providing positive ways for an individual to respond to those risks. Research indicates that antisocial behaviours are more likely in adolescents exposed to multiple risk factors (Pollard et al., 1997). Therefore, intervention for one factor can realise gains in multiple areas, highlighting the need for collaboration between individuals, families, schools and community services (McDonald and Hayes, 2001).

Identifying what influences adolescents to make negative choices and engage in risky behaviours is necessary in order to effectively target prevention and early intervention strategies that build on the moderating effects of protective factors, whilst maximising effective use of available community resources.

References

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