

# Family Risk Factors for Youth High-Risk Behavior

FAMILY

*Just as medical research has demonstrated that there are risk factors for heart attacks (such as diets high in fat and smoking), research has defined a set of risk factors for youth drug use and other high risk behaviors. Risks include characteristics of school, community, and family environments, as well as characteristics of students and their peer groups, that predict increased likelihood of these behaviors.*

## FAMILY MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

**Defined:** Parents' use of unusually harsh or severe punishment, failure to provide clear expectations, or failure to monitor children's activities and behaviors

**Behaviors Affected:** Substance Abuse, Delinquency, Teen Pregnancy, School Dropout, Violence

## FAMILY HISTORY OF HIGH RISK BEHAVIOR

**Defined:** Children are raised in a family with a history of certain behaviors

**Behaviors Affected:** Substance Abuse, Delinquency, Teen Pregnancy, School Dropout

## FAMILY CONFLICT

**Defined:** Children being raised where there is conflict present, even if the conflict does not involve the child (Example: conflict between parents)

**Behaviors Affected:** Substance Abuse, Delinquency, Teen Pregnancy, School Dropout, Violence

## FAVORABLE PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND INVOLVEMENT IN PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

**Defined:** Parents use illegal drugs or use alcohol heavily; Parents are tolerant of youth use of alcohol/drugs or engagement in antisocial behavior. Risk is intensified when parents involve youth in their own use (Example: a parent asking a youth to get them a beer from the refrigerator)

**Behaviors Affected:** Substance Abuse, Delinquency, Violence

*Social Development Research Group, University of Washington, as referenced by the Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment, 2008 (The APNA is an annual project of the AR Department of Human Services)*

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# Family Protective Factors for Youth High-Risk Behavior



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*Just as research has identified risk factors related to youth substance abuse and other problem behaviors, it has also identified protective factors. Protective factors are those conditions that help to buffer, or protect, youth from the risk factors to which they are exposed. Protective factors can be found in families, communities, schools, and within the youth themselves and in their interactions with peers. Family protective factors are summarized below.*

## **FAMILY ATTACHMENT**

When youth feel a strong, emotional attachment to their families, this serves as a powerful, positive influence in their lives. Strong, positive attachment to family members can decrease the effects of risk factors which might otherwise lead a child toward involvement in problem behaviors.

## **FAMILY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROSOCIAL INVOLVEMENT**

These are opportunities for positive, rewarding interactions between youth and their families. Examples include family outings and positive holiday rituals, and general positive interaction between the youth and their adult caregivers.

## **FAMILY REWARDS FOR PROSOCIAL INVOLVEMENT**

Rewards for prosocial involvement are those benefits that the youth receives for participating in positive activities with his or her family. Examples are rewarding a youth for helping a younger sibling with homework, completing chores on time, and following family rules. The rewards will reinforce the desired behavior, which will lead to numerous positive benefits.

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