

Parental and peer attitudes toward antisocial behavior

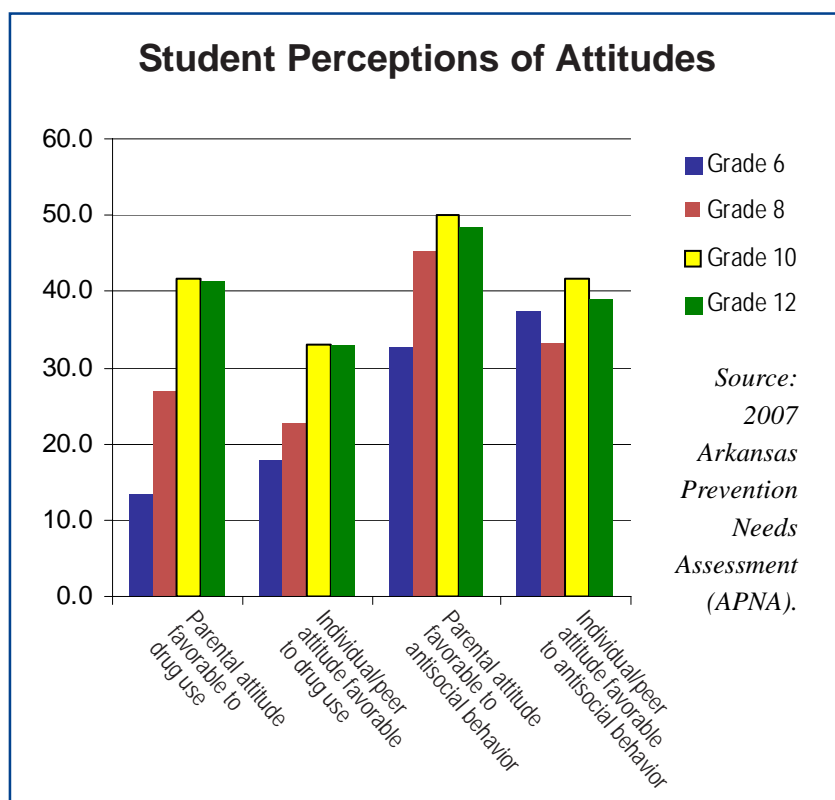
Social scientists developed a risk and protective approach to prevention as a result of investigating the relationships between various antisocial behaviors and the characteristics of schools, communities, families, and individuals and their peers. Risk factors are those characteristics known to increase the likelihood of antisocial behavior. Protective factors are those characteristics that act as buffers to the risks of antisocial behavior.

Parental and peer attitudes toward antisocial behaviors, research shows, influence the likelihood of youth engaging in antisocial behaviors, including substance use. Numerous studies confirm that favorable parental and peer attitudes toward substance use are indicators of increased risk of substance use in youth.

According to the 2007 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA), a majority of Arkansas youth, in all grades, reported that their parents did not have favorable attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behaviors.

Still, in the 2007 APNA, approximately four in ten 10th and 12th graders reported favorable parental attitudes toward drug use and approximately one-half of these same 10th and 12th graders reported parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behaviors. These rates are noticeably higher than those for 6th and 8th graders.

In the same APNA survey, approximately four in ten 10th



and 12th graders reported peer attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior, while slightly more than three in ten reported peer attitudes favorable to drug use. Comparing parental and peer attitudes, Arkansas 10th and 12th graders reported that, in general, parental attitudes are more favorable than peer attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behaviors.

A relationship appears to exist between student reports of greater favorable parental attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behaviors and older student age. This relationship is most strongly seen in attitudes toward drug use. Three times the number of 12th graders as 6th graders reported favorable parental attitudes toward drug use. Likewise, almost twice as

many 12th graders, compared to 6th graders, reported favorable peer attitudes toward drug use. Student reports of parental and peer approval of antisocial behaviors also increased with age but not as dramatically.

It is important to remember that these data reflect a youth's perception of parental and peer attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behavior. Concerned parents should be alert about how their actions and communications may be perceived by their children and how those perceptions can affect choices their child may make.

Coming next month:
Drug Courts