



# School Risk Factors for Youth High-Risk Behavior



SCHOOL

*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.*

## **POOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**Defined:** Academic failure, beginning in late elementary school (grades 4-6). The experience of failure itself is associated with higher risk of problem behaviors.

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

## **LOW COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL**

**Defined:** Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving coursework as relevant.

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

Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Division of Behavioral Health Services  
305 South Palm Street • Little Rock, AR 72205 • (501) 686-9030

*Created July 2009*





# School Protective Factors for Youth High-Risk



**SCHOOL**

*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. School protective factors are summarized below.*

## **SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROSOCIAL INVOLVEMENT**

When young people are given opportunities to participate meaningfully in important activities at school, they are less likely to engage in drug use and other problem behaviors. The student's ability to engage in appealing activities within the school setting keeps them interested and involved in school, which leads to many other positive consequences in the student's life.

## **SCHOOL 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. Examples of pro-social behavior include following dress codes, interacting with peers in a positive manner, and demonstrating appropriate conduct.

*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)*