

Risk and Protective Factors
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Risk Factors defined: 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 risk.

Protective Factors defined: Identify the factors that buffer individuals from the risk factors present in their environments and then find ways to increase the protection.

Predictors of problem behaviors and positive youth outcomes:

Risk factors exist in four domains: **Community, Family, School, and Peer/Individual.**

*Risk factors are predictive of higher levels of adolescent substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence.

Community Risk Factors: availability of alcohol, availability of firearms, community norms favorable to drug use, firearms, and crime, media portrayals of violence, transitions and mobility, low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization, extreme economic development.

Family Risk Factors: family history of the problem behavior, family management problems, family conflict, favorable attitudes about, and involvement in, the problem behavior.

School Risk Factors: academic failure beginning in late elementary school, lack of commitment to school.

Peer and Individual Risk Factors: early and persistent anti-social behavior, rebelliousness, friends who engage in problem behavior, gang involvement, favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior, early initiation of the problem behavior, constitutional factors.

Research-based predictors of problem behaviors and positive youth outcomes — risk and protective factors.

Protective Factors are:

- Individual
- Bonding
- Healthy Beliefs and Clear Standards

Protective factors are Research-based, present in all areas of influence, measurable, predictive of positive youth development, present throughout development and buffer effects of risk exposure

Examples of protective factors: Individual factors, High intelligence, Youth resilient temperament, Pro-social orientation, Competencies and skills, Pro-social opportunities, Reinforcement for pro-social involvement, Bonding, Healthy beliefs and clear standards.

Research has shown:

- Risk and protective factors exist in all areas of children's lives.
- The more risk factors present, the greater the chances of problem behavior.
- Risk and protective factors can be present throughout development.
- Risk factors are buffered by protective factors.
- Common risk and protective factors predict diverse behavior problems.
- Risk and protective factors work similarly across racial lines.
- Both risk and protective factors should be used in prevention efforts.