

# Risk and Protective Factors

**RISK FACTORS** – Negative conditions that have been identified by researchers as being correlated with societal problems such as illegal gang activity, crime, violence, and substance abuse. Risk factors are characteristics that have occurred statistically more often for those who have developed lifestyles of violence, crime, and substance abuse problems, either as adolescents or as adults. The risk factors can be present in the different life domains, including individual, family, community and school. Examples of Risk Factors for youth would be:

## **COMMUNITY**

- Availability of drugs and firearms
- Laws & norms favor drug use and crime
- Transitions and mobility
- Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization
- Extreme economic and social deprivation

## **FAMILY**

- Family history of high risk behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict
- Parental attitudes and involvement in problem behaviors
- Inconsistent parenting pattern

## **SCHOOL**

- Early and persistent antisocial behavior
- Academic failure in elementary school
- Lack of commitment to school
  
- Low expectations for success

## **INDIVIDUAL/PEER**

- Alienation & rebelliousness
- Friends who engage in problem behavior
- Favorable attitude toward problem behavior
- Early initiation of the problem behavior

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS** – Positive conditions, identified by researchers, that can protect people from developing negative social outcomes and turning to or leading lives that are filled with violence, drug and alcohol use, and crime. Examples of Protective Factors for youth would be:

## **COMMUNITY**

- Opportunities for community activities
- Opportunities for spiritual development
- Availability of family resources and support
- Low tolerance for drug use and crime

## **FAMILY**

- Caring and support
- High expectations
- Parent involvement in child activities
- Encourage child's participation in family

## **SCHOOL**

- Consistency in enforcing rules
- Opportunities for positive recognition
- High expectations
- Youth participation and involvement

## **INDIVIDUAL/PEER**

- Social competence
- Problem solving skills
- Sense of purpose and future
- High availability of positive peer role models