



# RISK FACTORS

## School Risk Factors

**Academic Failure** - Beginning in the late elementary grades (grades 4 - 6) academic failure increases the risk of both drug abuse and delinquency. It appears that the experience of failure itself, for whatever reasons, increases the risk of problem behaviors.

- Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?
- Are your school grades better than the grades of most students in your class?

**Lack of Commitment to School** - Surveys of high school seniors have shown that the use of hallucinogens, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, and sedatives or non-medically prescribed tranquilizers is significantly lower among students who expect to attend college than among those who do not. Factors such as liking school, spending time on homework, and perceiving the coursework as relevant are also negatively related to drug use.

- How often do you feel that the schoolwork you are assigned is meaningful and important?
- How interesting are most of your classes to you?
- How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?
- During the LAST FOUR WEEKS how many whole days have you missed because you skipped?
- Thinking back over the past 12 months, how often did you:
  - a. enjoy being in school?
  - b. hate being in school?
  - c. try to do your best work in school?

## Peer/Individual Risk Factors

**Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior** - Young people who associate with peers who engage in alcohol or substance abuse are much more likely to engage in the same behavior. Peer drug use has consistently been found to be among the strongest predictors of substance use among youth. Regardless of other risk and protective levels in the family domain, spending time with friends who use drugs greatly increases the risk of that problem developing.

### Friends Who Engage in Substance Use (Peer Drug Use)

- Think of your four best friends. In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how many of your best friends have:
  - a. smoked cigarettes?
  - b. tried alcohol when the adult(s) they live with don't know about it?
  - c. used marijuana?
  - d. vaped? (this item is not included in the scale)

### **Interactions with Antisocial Peers**

- Think of your four best friends. In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how many of your best friends have:
  - a. been suspended from school?
  - b. sold illegal drugs?
  - c. stolen or tried to steal a car or other vehicle?
  - d. been arrested?
  - e. dropped out of school?

**Favorable Attitudes Toward the Problem Behavior** - Young people who accept or condone a behavior are more likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors, including substance use.

### **Attitudes Favorable Toward Substance Use**

- How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to:
  - a. drink alcohol regularly, at least once or twice a month?
  - b. smoke cigarettes?
  - c. use marijuana?

### **Rewards for Antisocial Behavior (Antisocial Involvement)**

- Would you be seen as cool if you:
  - a. smoked cigarettes?
  - b. began drinking alcohol regularly, at least once or twice a month)?
  - c. used marijuana?
  - d. carried a gun without permission or supervision?

### **Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior**

- How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to:
  - a. steal anything worth more than \$5?
  - b. start a fight with someone?
  - c. attack someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?
  - d. skip school all day when the adults they live with think they are at school?

**Early Initiation of Problem Behavior** - Early onset of drug use predicts misuse of drugs. The earlier the onset of any drug use, the greater the involvement in other drug use and the greater frequency of use. Onset of drug use prior to the age of 15 is a consistent predictor of drug abuse, and a later age of onset of drug use has been shown to predict lower drug involvement and greater probability of discontinuation of use.

### **Early Initiation of Drug Use**

- How old were you when you first:
  - a. used marijuana?
  - b. smoked a cigarette, even just a puff?
  - c. had more than a sip or two of alcohol?
  - d. began drinking alcohol regularly, that is, at least once or twice a month?

**Perceived Risks of Drug Use** - Young people who do not perceive drug use to be risky are far more likely to engage in drug use.

- How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways if they:
  - a. Smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?
  - b. Try marijuana once or twice?
  - c. Smoke marijuana once or twice a week.
  - d. Take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, liquor) nearly every day?

## Community Risk Factors

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**Perceived Availability of Drugs and Alcohol** - The availability of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs has been related to use of these substances by adolescents.

- If you wanted to, how easy would it be for you to get cigarettes?
- If you wanted to, how easy would it be for you to get alcohol?
- If you wanted to, how easy would it be for you to get marijuana?
- If you wanted to, how easy would it be for you to get vaping products? (not included in scaled score)
- If you wanted to, how easy would it be for you to get prescription drugs not prescribed for you? (not included in scaled score)

**Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use** - Research has shown that legal restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, such as raising the legal drinking age, restricting smoking in public places, and increased taxation have been followed by decreases in consumption. Moreover, national surveys of high school seniors have shown that shifts in normative attitudes toward drug use have preceded changes in prevalence of use.

- Would a kid be caught by the police in the neighborhood or area around where you live if they:
  - a. Drank alcohol?
  - b. Used marijuana?
  - c. Smoke cigarettes?
  - d. Carried a gun without permission or supervision?
- How wrong would most adults in your neighborhood, or the area around where you live, think it was for kids your age:
  - a. to use marijuana?
  - b. to drink alcohol?
  - c. to smoke cigarettes?

**Low Neighborhood Attachment and Community Disorganization** - Low levels of bonding to the neighborhood are related to higher levels of juvenile crime and drug selling. Neighborhoods with high population density, physical deterioration, and high rates of adult crime also have higher rates of juvenile crime and drug use.

### Low Neighborhood Attachment

- If I had to move, I would miss my neighborhood or the area around where I live.
- I like my neighborhood or the area around where I live.
- I would like to get out of my neighborhood or the area around where I live.

### Community Disorganization

- I feel safe in my neighborhood or the area around where I live.

- How much does each of the following statements describe your neighborhood or the area around where you live?
  - a. crime and/or drug selling
  - b. fights
  - c. lots of empty or abandoned buildings
  - d. lots of graffiti

## Family Risk Factors

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**Family History of Antisocial Behavior** - When children are raised in a family with a history of problem behaviors (e.g., violence or substance use), the children are more likely to engage in these behaviors. Children raised in families high in conflict, whether or not the children are directly involved in the conflict, appear at risk for both delinquency and drug use.

- Has anyone in your family ever had a severe alcohol or drug problem?
- Have any of your siblings or youth you live with ever:
  - a. drank alcohol?
  - b. used marijuana?
  - c. smoked cigarettes?
  - d. taken a gun to school?
  - e. been suspended or expelled from school?
- About how many adults have you known personally who in the PAST 12 MONTHS have:
  - a. used marijuana, crack, cocaine, or other drugs?
  - b. sold or dealt drugs?
  - c. done things to get them in trouble with the police like stealing, selling stolen goods, mugging or assaulting others, etc.?
  - d. gotten drunk or high?

**Family Management Problems** - When adult caregivers fail to provide clear expectations and monitor their children's behavior, it is more likely that the children will engage in drug abuse. Similarly, when adult caregivers use inconsistent and/or unusually harsh or severe punishment, the children are also more likely to engage in substance abuse. These family management practices impact behaviors, whether or not substance abuse problems exist in the family.

### Poor Family Management

- The rules in my family are clear.
- The adults I live with ask if I've gotten my homework done.
- When I am not at home, the adults I live with know where I am and who I am with.
- Would the adults you live with know if you did not come home on time?
- My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.
- If you carried a gun without permission or supervision, would you be caught by the adults you live with?
- If you skipped school without permission, would you be caught by the adults you live with?
- If you drank alcohol without permission, would you be caught by the adults you live with?

**Family Conflict** - Young people who feel they are a valued part of their family are less likely to engage in substance use and other problem behaviors.

- People in my family often insult or yell at each other.
- People in my family have serious arguments.
- We argue about the same things in my family over and over.

**Favorable Parental Attitudes and Involvement in the Problem Behavior** - In families where parents use illegal drugs, are heavy users of alcohol, or are tolerant of children's use, children are more likely to become drug abusers during adolescence. The risk is further increased if parents involve children in their own drug (or alcohol) using behavior, for example, asking the child to light the parent's cigarette or get the parent a beer from the refrigerator.

**Favorable Parental Attitudes Toward Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use**

- How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to:
  - a. drink alcohol at least once or twice a month?
  - b. smoke cigarettes?
  - c. smoke marijuana?

**Favorable Parental Attitudes Toward Antisocial Behavior**

- How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to:
  - a. steal anything worth more than \$5?
  - b. spray graffiti, tag, write or draw on other's property without the owner's permission?
  - c. pick a fight with someone?

**For More Information**

To learn more, review the [KCTC Student Survey Overview and FAQ](#). If you have questions about the survey, visit [www.kctcdata.org](http://www.kctcdata.org), contact the KCTC Team at Greenbush at [kctc@greenbush.org](mailto:kctc@greenbush.org) or call 620-724-6281 ext. 366

