

# Protective Factors That Build Resilience



Protective factors reduce the likelihood of adolescent problem behavior and can buffer the effects of risk. They are not simply the absence of risk. They are active strengths that can be intentionally built in individuals, families, schools, and communities. Everyone has a role to play.

## INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY

- Safe, stable, and nurturing family relationships
- Positive friendships and peer networks
- Academic success and school connectedness
- Consistent parental monitoring, supervision, and clear rules
- Caregivers who resolve conflict peacefully
- Caregivers who help children work through problems
- Caring adult mentors and role models outside the family
- Families that engage in positive activities together, such as game nights or eating dinner together
- Caregivers with steady employment and higher education

## SCHOOL

- Strong connections between students and caring adults at school
- Schools that support social-emotional learning
- Encouragement of school attendance and academic engagement
- After-school programs and structured youth activities

## COMMUNITY

- Access to mental health and medical care
- Safe and stable housing for families
- Economic opportunity and financial support resources
- Nurturing and safe childcare options
- Strong community-health-government partnerships
- Residents who feel connected and civically involved
- Communities where violence is not tolerated or accepted
- Access to high-quality early childhood programs

Need guidance? PARS works with youth, families, and communities to reduce risk factors and strengthen the protective factors that lead to healthy futures.



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# Risk Factors for Adolescent Problem Behavior



“Problem behavior” refers to patterns that harm a young person’s health, development, or future. This can include but isn’t limited to substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop-out, violence, and depression. Research shows that certain conditions in our communities, families, schools, and peer groups increase the likelihood that these behaviors will occur. The more risk factors present, the greater the risk. Understanding them is the first step towards prevention.

## COMMUNITY

- Availability of drugs and firearms
- Laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms, and crime
- Media portrayals of violence
- Frequent living transitions and mobility
- Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization
- Extreme economic deprivation

## FAMILY

- Family history of problem behavior
- Dysfunctional family management and communication problems
- Family conflict
- Favorable parental attitudes towards problem behavior
- Caregivers with history of abuse or neglect
- High parenting stress and family isolation
- Inconsistent discipline or low supervision

## INDIVIDUAL/PEER

- Early and persistent antisocial behavior
- Rebelliousness
- Friends who engage in problem behavior
- Favorable attitudes towards problem behavior
- Early initiation of problem behavior
- Constitutional and biological risk factors

## SCHOOL

- Academic failure beginning in late elementary school
- Lack of commitment to school
- Low sense of belonging or school connectedness

Source: CDC Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Risk and Protective Factors  
[cdc.gov/aces/risk-factors/index.html](https://cdc.gov/aces/risk-factors/index.html)