



Risk Factors for Youth Substance Misuse

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

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Meet the Trainer



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Kristen Gabrielsen, MPH, CPS is the co-director of the Great Lakes PTTC. She has worked in substance misuse prevention for over 30 years. She was the associate director of the Western CAPT, co-author of the SAPST, and co-author of the Substance Abuse Prevention textbook. Kris has delivered trainings across the United States, focusing on bridging the gap between research and practice.



Definition of Prevention

Prevention is the proactive process of empowering individuals and systems to meet the challenges of life events and transitions by creating and reinforcing conditions that promote healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

For Maximum Effectiveness in Your Prevention Work

Implement strategies that both *enhance* protective factors and *reduce* priority risk factors

Risk Factors

Factors that increase the likelihood of substance misuse occurring

Keep in Mind

01

Risk factors are not causal

02

Risk factors exist in multiple contexts

03

Impact of risk factors is exponential

Notes

Risk Factors for Youth Substance Misuse by Domain

Community Domain

Availability of drugs

- The more available drugs are, the greater use
- Perception of availability also has impact
- Two types of availability: Social and retail



Community laws and norms favorable toward drug use

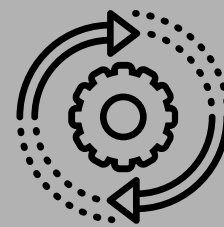
- Laws and policies impact use and consequences of use
- Laws can exist, but community norms must support their enforcement in order to have preventive impact
- Social norms are reflected in laws



Media portrayals of drug use

- Social norms and cognitions appear to at least partially account for the effects of portrayals on youth substance use

Transitions and mobility



School transitions: ¹

- Scheduled: These include transitions from elementary to middle school (grades 5 and 6) and from middle to high school (grades 8 and 9).
- Unscheduled: These include moving frequently from one school to another (e.g., families moving frequently, foster children being moved often) and should be addressed any time they occur in grades K-12.

Communities:

- Includes those communities in transition (many people moving in or out, etc.)
- Includes those communities with high number of commuters (either many people commuting into a community or out of a community)

Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization

- In communities/neighborhoods where people have little attachment, increased drug problems ²
- Not limited to low-income neighborhoods; also found in higher income neighborhoods ²
- Neighborhood disorganization makes it more difficult to promote prosocial values and norms ²

Extreme economic deprivation

- Mixed research results regarding extreme poverty alone being a risk factor for substance misuse; higher income can lead to increased availability of drugs

Risk Factors for Youth Substance Misuse by Domain

Family Domain



Family history of drug use

- When parents model substance use (i.e., using in their child's presence), it increases the likelihood of initiation and increased frequency of substance misuse by their child. This risk increases further if parents involve their child in parental use (e.g. having child get a beer for them from the fridge).
- An older sibling's substance use increases the likelihood that a younger sibling will misuse. Older sibling use has been shown to be a more powerful predictor of younger sibling misuse than parental use. Grades 4-8 appear to be optimal times to address this factor, but it is not clear from the research whether this factor is only salient in those grades, or whether this factor has only been researched in those grades but may be relevant to other grades as well.

Family management problems



- These includes parents'/caregivers' lack of setting clear expectations for children's behavior, lack of supervising and monitoring children, and excessively severe or inconsistent punishment.¹

Family conflict



- This includes high levels of and/or persistent serious conflict (e.g., arguing, fighting) between the parents, and/or between parent(s) and child(ren).¹

Favorable parental attitudes toward drug use

- Permissive parental attitudes toward substance use (e.g. "it's not a big deal, I did it when I was a kid.") increase the risk of their children misusing. Youth perceptions of permissive parental attitudes toward substance use may be of equal or greater importance as actual parental substance misuse in influence youth substance misuse.¹

School Domain

Academic failure beginning in late elementary school

- While young people may experience academic failure for different reasons, the label of "failure" seems to become part of how young people view themselves beyond grade 4. For this reason, the earlier grades are an optimal time to address this factor. For this reason, grades K-3 are optimal times to address this factor.¹

Lack of commitment to school

- Young people with low commitment to school do not have academic-oriented goals, do not expect to attend college, and/or do not like school. They do not consider their role as student to be meaningful and rewarding.¹



Risk Factors for Youth Substance Misuse by Domain

Individual/Peer Domain

Alienation and Rebelliousness



- Youth who feel alienated from the dominant values of society are at greater risk. These include youth who resist traditional authority (e.g. teachers, police officers, parents). This feeling of alienation prevents youth from feeling bonded to the larger community.

Early and persistent anti-social behavior

- Early anti-social behavior shows up in many ways, including aggressive behavior in boys in kindergarten through grade 2, aggressiveness combined with shyness in grade 1 (i.e., shy and withdrawn children who explode in anger), frequent negative moods and withdrawal, and aggression combined with hyperactivity and attention-deficit disorders. Grades K-2 are optimal times to address this factor.
- Persistent aggressive behavior is aggressive behavior that started in childhood and continues into adolescence. Grades 3-12 are optimal times to address this factor.

Gang involvement

- More likely to use alcohol and/or other drugs and to engage in delinquent or violent behavior if involved with gangs



Peer use

- This is among the strongest predictors of youth substance misuse. Youths' perceptions of their peers' use are more strongly associated with their own substance misuse behavior than actual peer use. Having friends who misuse prescription drugs increases risk for substance use. Grades 5-12 are optimal times to address peer substance use.¹

Favorable attitudes toward drug use



- During the elementary school years, children usually express anti-drug, anti-crime, and pro-social attitudes. They have difficulty imagining why people use drugs. By middle school, as their peers start misusing drugs, attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. Perception of minimal harm or risk increase the likelihood of substance misuse.¹

Early initiation of drug use

- The earlier the onset of any substance misuse, the greater the involvement youth have in other substance misuse and the greater their frequency of use. Onset before age 15 was a consistent predictor of substance misuse; onset after 19 predicted lower involvement with and discontinuation of misuse. Grades K-8 are optimal times to address early first use.¹

Constitutional factors

- Physical, physiological, and biological factors
- Examples: Brain trauma (e.g., FAS, accident), low basal rate, ADHD, low impulse control, high sensation seeking, low harm avoidance

¹ Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Connecticut State Education Resource Center. (2021). Universal Opioid and Other Substance Misuse Prevention Planning in Schools: Guidance for Connecticut K-12 Educators and their Prevention Partners. <https://files.serc.co/documents/20210405-SERC%20Guidance%20EDC%20DMHAS.pdf>

² Hogan, Gabrielsen, Luna, & Grothaus. (2003). Substance abuse prevention: The intersection of science and practice. Pearson Education, Inc.

Don't be Fooled!

These are NOT Risk Factors:



Boredom



Divorce



Low
Self-Esteem

Take Action

- Important to strive to both reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors
- Use research-based risk factors when implementing the Strategic Prevention Framework or other strategic planning processes
- Address prevalent risk factors at the appropriate developmental stage(s)
- Strive to address multiple risk factors with multiple strategies that are designed to increase multiple factors
- Implement strategies with evidence of reducing your prioritized risk factor(s)

Possible Next Steps

- Have a “water cooler” chat with a colleague for 15 minutes to share what you learned during the webinar
- Examine the list of risk factors your organization/coalition uses to identify if they are solidly research-based
- Review your needs assessment to identify what data shows to be the most prevalent risk factors in your community
- Explore at least one prevention strategy your community is implementing to see if it is addressing one or more risk factors identified as prevalent
- Watch the recording of the [Building Protective Factors webinar](#)
- Take 15 minutes to explore an [online registry of evidence-based strategies](#) to see how searches can be done by risk factor

Your Commitment to Action

What action(s) will you commit to doing within 24 hours to put the information from this webinar into action?



Risk Factors for Adolescent Problem Behavior	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Dropout	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
Community						
Availability of Drugs	•				•	
Availability of Firearms		•			•	
Community Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use, Firearms, and Crime	•	•			•	
Media Portrayals of the Behavior	•				•	
Transitions and Mobility	•	•		•		•
Low Neighborhood Attachment and Community Disorganization	•	•			•	
Extreme Economic Deprivation	•	•	•	•	•	
Family						
Family History of the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	•
Family Management Problems	•	•	•	•	•	•
Family Conflict	•	•	•	•	•	•
Favorable Parental Attitudes and Involvement in the Problem Behavior	•	•			•	
School						
Academic Failure Beginning in Late Elementary School	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lack of Commitment to School	•	•	•	•	•	
Individual/Peer						
Early and Persistent Antisocial Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	•
Rebelliousness	•	•		•	•	
Gang Involvement	•	•			•	
Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	
Favorable Attitudes Toward the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	
Early Initiation of the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	
Constitutional Factors	•	•			•	•



Videos

The Science of Risk Factors



Straight to Vape: While You Were Streaming
2020 by Truth Initiative



Guide to Online Registries for Substance Misuse Prevention Evidence-based Programs and Practices

This [document from the Pacific Southwest PTTC](#) summarizes many available federal registries and online databases where prevention practitioners can begin their search for the “best fit” evidence-based prevention program, policy, or practice.

Resources for Risk Factors for Other Populations

Adolescent and Young Adults

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, [Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health](#). Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016. [Chapter 3]

Young Adults

Drug Enforcement Administration. (2020). [Prevention with purpose: A strategic planning guide for preventing drug misuse among college students.](#)

Girls/Women

Great Lakes PTTC. (2022). [Resources for substance misuse trends and prevention strategies for girls and women.](#)

Older Adults

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Treating Substance Use Disorder in Older Adults](#). Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series No. 26, SAMHSA Publication No. PEP20-02-01-011. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020.



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<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/substance-use/index.htm>

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<https://files.serc.co/documents/20210405-SERC%20Guidance%20EDC%20DMHAS.pdf>

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6208350/>

National Institute on Drug Abuse. Drug misuse and Addiction. 2020.

<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drug-misuse-addiction>

Nawi, A.M., Ismail, R., Ibrahim, F. et al. Risk and protective factors of drug abuse among adolescents: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health* 21, 2088 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11906-2>.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Risk and protective factors.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190718-samhsa-risk-protective-factors.pdf>

University of Kansas's Center for Community Health and Development. Community Tool Box: Understanding Risk and Protective Factors. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/choose-and-adapt-community-interventions/risk-and-protective-factors/main>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016. <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/chapter-3-prevention.pdf>



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