

A reminder from Drug-Free Noble County

Tipping the Scale on Potential Drug Use Factors

The saying “It takes a village to raise a child” is definitely true when it comes to drug prevention. Many factors are associated with whether a person will eventually use illegal substances. Risk factors can increase a person’s chances for drug abuse, while protective factors can reduce them.



Risk Factors

Risk factors include characteristics of the environment, or conditions in the family, school, or community that are linked to a child’s likelihood of engaging in delinquency and other problem behaviors. The more risks a child is exposed to, the more likely the child will abuse drugs.

Individual risk factors stem from genetics, moral development, personality traits, negative life events, and attitudes toward delinquency. Genetic risk factors include cognitive deficiencies, conduct disorders, and mental illness. Non-genetic examples include an antisocial personality, and past physical or sexual abuse.

Protective Factors Your Family Can Provide

Children’s earliest interactions occur within the family, which allows time for positive factors to be put in place. These may include:

- Cultivating a strong bond between children and parents.
- Parental involvement in the child’s life.
- Setting clear limits and enforcing consistent discipline when rules are broken.

The Time to Act is Now

National, state, and even local surveys indicate that some children are already abusing drugs at age 12 or 13, which likely means that some begin even earlier. Studies have shown that the use of tobacco, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, and prescription drugs such as sleeping pills and anti-anxiety medicines in late childhood and early adolescence is associated with greater drug involvement.

An important goal of prevention is to change the balance between risk and protective factors, so that protective factors outweigh risk factors. Parents can use information on risk and protection to develop positive preventive actions (e.g., talking about family rules) before problems occur.

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