

## **Risk & Protective Factors**

### Adverse Childhood Experiences

[Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs](#), are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example:

- Experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- Witnessing violence in the home or community
- Having a family member attempt or die by suicide
- Growing up in a household with substance use or mental health problems

Exposure to ACEs, without buffering support, can lead to toxic stress. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adolescence and adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential. However, ACEs can be prevented.

### Positive Childhood Experiences

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) can help protect against the poor health outcomes associated with ACEs. Children and families thrive when they have access to safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. A [2019 study](#) measured the PCEs below and found adults who reported higher PCEs had lower odds of depression and poor mental health.

- Felt able to talk to their family about feelings
- Felt their family stood by them during difficult times
- Enjoyed participating in community traditions
- Felt a sense of belonging in high school
- Felt supported by friends
- Had at least 2 nonparent adults who took genuine interest in them
- Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home

[Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences](#) has outlined “Four Building Blocks of Hope”:

- Relationships within the family and with other children and adults through interpersonal activities.
- Safe, stable, and equitable environments for living, playing, and learning at home and in school.
- Social and civic engagement to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Emotional growth through playing and interacting with peers for self-awareness and self-regulation.

## Social Determinants of Health

The World Health Organization defines [social determinants of health \(SDH\)](#) as the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. Examples include income, education, unemployment, food insecurity, early childhood development, and access to affordable, quality health services.

## Communities that Care Risk/Protective Factor Framework

The following are risk/protective factors identified through the work of Dr. J. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard F. Catalano.

| Risk Factors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Domain              | Protective Factors                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Low Neighborhood Attachment<br>Community Disorganization<br>Transitions and Mobility<br>Laws and Norms Favorable to Substance Use<br>Perceived Availability of Substances                                                                                      | Community           | Community Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement<br>Community Rewards for Prosocial Involvement                |
| Poor Academic Performance<br>Low School Commitment                                                                                                                                                                                                             | School              | School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement<br>School Rewards for Prosocial Involvement                      |
| Poor Family Management<br>Family Conflict<br>Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Substance Use<br>Family History of Antisocial Behaviors or Substance Use                                                                              | Family              | Family Attachment<br>Family Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement<br>Family Rewards for Prosocial Involvement |
| Low Perceived Risk of Substance Use<br>Early Initiation of Substance Use<br>Sensation Seeking<br>Rebelliousness<br>Friend's Use of Substances<br>Favorable Attitudes Toward Antisocial Behavior/Substance Use<br>Rewards for Antisocial Behavior/Substance Use | Individual/<br>Peer | Religiosity<br>Social Skills<br>Belief in the Moral Order<br>Interaction with Prosocial Peers                   |

## The Developmental Assets® Framework

“Search Institute has identified 40 positive supports and strengths that young people need to succeed. Half of the assets focus on the relationships and opportunities they need in their families, schools, and communities (external assets). The remaining assets focus on the social-emotional strengths, values, and commitments that are nurtured within young people (internal assets).” The Search Institute research indicates that youth with the most assets are least likely to have problems with alcohol and drug use. Learn more at: <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/developmental-assets-framework/>.

## External Assets

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Support                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li>• Positive family communication—Young person and their parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel.</li> <li>• Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.</li> <li>• Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors.</li> <li>• Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</li> <li>• Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</li> </ul> |
| Empowerment                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.</li> <li>• Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community.</li> <li>• Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.</li> <li>• Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Boundaries and Expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.</li> <li>• School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences.</li> <li>• Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.</li> <li>• Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li>• Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.</li> <li>• High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</li> </ul>                                                  |
| Constructive Use of Time    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.</li> <li>• Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.</li> <li>• Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.</li> <li>• Time at home—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do," two or fewer nights per week.</li> </ul>                                                                                                |

## Internal Assets

|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Commitment to Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school.</li> <li>• School engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning.</li> <li>• Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.</li> <li>• Bonding to school—Young person cares about their school.</li> <li>• Reading for pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        |
| Positive Values        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people.</li> <li>• Equality and social justice—Young person places a high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.</li> <li>• Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for their beliefs.</li> <li>• Honesty—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”</li> <li>• Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</li> <li>• Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.</li> </ul> |
| Social Competencies    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and decision-making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.</li> <li>• Interpersonal competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.</li> <li>• Cultural competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>• Resistance skills— Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</li> <li>• Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</li> </ul>                                           |
| Positive Identity      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal power—Young person feels they have control over “things that happen to me.”</li> <li>• Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.</li> <li>• Sense of purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”</li> <li>• Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about their personal future.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |