HOW ADULTS CAN BUILD PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR YOUTH

SUBSTANCE USE OFTEN BEGINS DURING ADOLESCENCE

The earlier substance use begins, the greater the likelihood a person will develop a substance use disorder later in life. Adults play a critical role in preventing youth substance use by building protective factors that enable a child to successfully manage and adapt to various life circumstances.

IT IS CRITICAL FOR ADULTS TO REALIZE THAT THEIR BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES STRONGLY IMPACT CHILDREN

This includes maternal behaviors during pregnancy such as getting proper nutrition and abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN INFANCY

In the early years of development, the family is the critical component in a child’s development. It is important to build a strong foundation with positive family dynamics by:

- Building a strong bond in infancy by being attentive, responsive, supportive, and involved, and continuing these actions throughout the life course.
- Developing strong parental skills through maintaining consistent rules and routines, setting age-appropriate expectations, praising success, and displaying warmth.
- Helping a child develop behavioral control by encouraging positive behaviors and discouraging negative attitudes and behaviors.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN CHILDHOOD

As children transition into school, positive behaviors and behavioral control lead to successful interactions with others and academic success. Be a positive role model and encourage other involved adults to act as positive influences for your child as well.
PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, youth are highly likely to be exposed to drugs and alcohol and can be heavily influenced by peers.

It is vital to establish clear and consistent rules. Youth with parents who are clear on their disapproval of smoking, alcohol, and drug use are less likely to engage in those behaviors.

Adults need to monitor their teen’s activities and know who their friends are. Watch for behavioral changes and signs of bullying.

Keep youth busy in healthy activities such as sports, youth clubs, or volunteering.

Engaging with your teen through active listening, one-on-one time, and keeping them connected to school reduces the likelihood that they will use substances.

ADULTS SHOULD ALSO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE PROVIDED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH PEERS AS BOTH ARE CRITICAL TO HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT.

To help raise drug-free youth, check out the Resources section of our website at: www.dfaf.org