

## Professional Development Activity on Protective Factors

The following activity will help the school counselor–administrator team determine how to alleviate the impact of ACEs for a student by fostering additional protective factors. This activity will challenge team members to think creatively about how to assist and support a student who is struggling at school.

### Time Frame

The team should allow thirty to sixty minutes for this activity.

### Materials

This activity requires that every participant have a copy of the CDC risk factors, a copy of the CDC protective factors, a copy of the scenario, and a pen or pencil.

### Process

The team members, with a facilitator's guidance, should follow these five steps.

1. Each team member individually assesses which risk factors apply to the scenario by circling each CDC risk factor for the perpetration of youth violence.
2. Each team member individually assesses which protective factors could address the scenario. Each will circle a minimum of one protective factor in each section of the CDC protective factors for the perpetration of youth violence handout. The team is challenged to identify as many reasonable potential protective factors as possible. It is easy to focus on the obvious factors. Spending additional time will help the team view the student more accurately.
3. As a team, members discuss their individual assessments of risk factors and protective factors. Of the selected factors, which are the same? More important, which are different and why?
4. The team develops a reasonable list of protective factors to foster with the student. The list will depend on the circumstance and the number of adults supporting the student. If too many factors are identified and the adults cannot support them all, the intervention will not be successful. Developing an action plan will ensure transparency and, hopefully, follow-through. The team discusses the following and makes sure the plan addresses each.
  - Who will be involved?
  - What will happen?
  - When will it happen?
  - Where will it occur?
  - Why are we deciding this? What is the rationale behind our decision?
5. Conclude by comparing the activity's outcomes to the members' own school practices. Does the team have new considerations for how it might approach how it helps protect students?

### Results

Participation in this activity will raise the school counselor–administrator team's awareness of both potential risk factors and protective factors. Individual team members will expand personal knowledge of opportunities to engage students individually and through peer and family supports. Team members will become more self-aware of personal bias based on assumptions related to risk factors.

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### ***Fostering Protective Factors Scenario***

You are a high school counselor. Chris is a ninth-grade student who teachers have brought to your attention. Teachers have shared behavioral concerns as well as academic concerns. Your school has a clear focus on identifying potentially at-risk students early in their high school career. Prior to meeting with Chris, you ask the school nurse if she knows him or his family. She shares that his life has been full of conflict. His parents have a history of drug and alcohol use, and both were incarcerated. She shares that the school has made numerous reports to CPS due to family violence and conflict. Chris and his siblings are unattended at home on a regular basis. He lives in a trailer park in the poorest neighborhood in your district. In reviewing his academic records, you note he has gone to several different elementary schools within your district. His strong academic record throughout elementary and middle school despite his mobility and family life pleasantly surprises you.

When you meet Chris, you find him engaging and very outgoing. He has a funny sense of humor, and it is apparent that he interacts well with others. When asked about his change in grades, he shares that he is spending time with his older brother and his friends. They have a reputation for drug and alcohol use. He says, "Yeah, I have used some, but not on a regular basis." You ask about school, and he states that he is bored in his classes, so he does not complete homework. He does want to graduate so he can "have a regular job and paycheck."