



edited by

David Capuzzi
Douglas R. Gross

Seventh Edition

Youth at Risk

**A Prevention Resource for
Counselors, Teachers, and Parents**



AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

WILEY



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Youth at Risk

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Counselors, Teachers, and Parents**

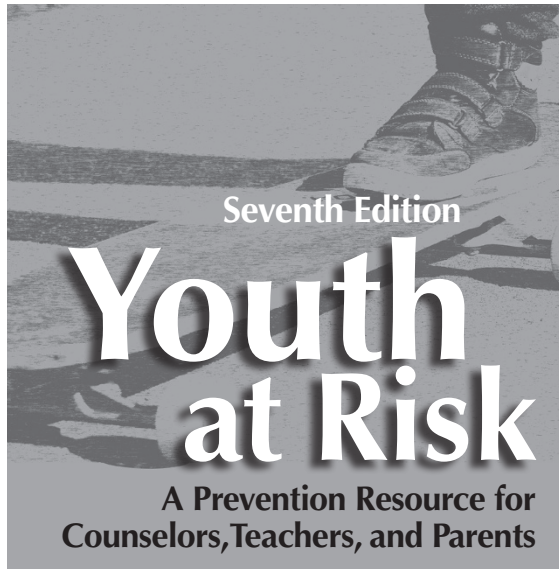
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6101 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 600 • Alexandria, VA 22304
www.counseling.org



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American Counseling Association

6101 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 600
Alexandria, VA 22304

Associate Publisher • Carolyn C. Baker

Digital and Print Development Editor • Nancy Driver

Senior Production Manager • Bonny E. Gaston

Copy Editor • Beth Ciha

Cover and text design by Bonny E. Gaston

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Capuzzi, Dave, editor. | Gross, Douglas R., editor.

Title: Youth at risk : a prevention resource for counselors, teachers, and parents / edited by David Capuzzi and Douglas R. Gross.

Description: Seventh edition. | Alexandria, VA : American Counseling Association [2018] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018047351 | ISBN 9781556203848 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Youth with social disabilities—United States. | Youth—Counseling of—United States. | Deviant behavior. | Adolescent psychopathology—United States. | Adolescent psychotherapy—United States. | Dropout behavior, Prediction of.

Classification: LCC HV1431 .Y68 2018 | DDC 362.74—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018047351>



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Preface

Youth at Risk: A Prevention Resource for Counselors, Teachers, and Parents is a revision of the 2014 sixth edition. The information presented in this seventh edition illustrates both continuing and developing factors that place youth at risk. When one compares this edition with earlier editions, it is obvious that factors such as violence, bullying, enhanced drug use, mental health issues such as stress and mood disorders, sexual orientation, and the positive and negative impacts of social media are emerging as highly significant risk factors for this population. This edition emphasizes these factors not only through the selection of authors knowledgeable in these areas but also through the inclusion of current research supporting such emphasis, case studies, and practical guidelines for successful prevention and intervention from individual, family, school, and community perspectives. In this new edition, major emphasis has again been placed on prevention efforts with at-risk populations as well as practical guidelines for successful prevention and intervention for behaviors most often identified as placing youth at risk. Selected chapters include case studies that explore prevention and intervention efforts from individual, family, school, and community perspectives. Every effort has been made to address the complexities of working with vulnerable youth in a way that provides professionals, as well as parents, with an information base and guidelines for working within the parameters of a prevention–intervention paradigm. This text differs from similar texts because of the attention it places on counseling and systems applications with youth at risk.

The text is developmental in orientation. Part I presents information dealing with identifying and defining the population and with behaviors and causal factors descriptive of youth at risk. Also included is information that serves as a foundation for understanding the prevention–intervention paradigm. Part I also addresses prevention from the point of view of the identification and promotion of resiliency in our youth.

Part II of the text deals with parameters that often serve as causal factors for the development of at-risk behaviors. Included in this section are chapters dealing with the effects of a dysfunctional family, low self-esteem, depression, bipolar disorders, mood disorders, and stress and trauma. Each chapter in this section not

only identifies various aspects of the causal factors but also presents information related to prevention strategies designed to deal with these factors.

Part III of the text deals with issues and behaviors most often identified as placing youth at risk. Chapters 8 through 18 focus on such issues as racial and ethnic identity, eating disorders, suicide, sexuality issues in adolescence, gang membership, counseling sexual minority youth, violence on the school campus, substance abuse, homelessness, school dropout, and bullying. Each chapter in Part III provides definitive information related to the specific issue and/or behavior; includes a case study to illustrate the information presented; and provides approaches to prevention and intervention from individual, family, school, and community perspectives.

New to This Edition

- Chapter 3, “Resilience: Individual, Family, School, and Community Perspectives,” has been heavily revised to further shift perspective so that counselors, educators, and parents see youth as having the developmental resources and self-righting capacities they need to navigate through life if they have adequate support.
- Chapter 5, “‘Will I Ever Measure Up?’ Problems of Self-Esteem,” has been newly written by two experts on issues connected with low self-esteem.
- Chapter 7, “Stress and Trauma: Coping in Today’s Society,” incorporates the suggestions and perspectives of a panel composed of a group of adolescents.
- Chapter 9, “The Secret and All-Consuming Obsessions: Eating Disorders,” written by three authors, one of whom specializes in working with clients with eating disorders, provides up-to-date perspectives on the topic.
- Chapter 12, “I Am Somebody: Gang Membership,” is written by three new contributors who are experts on working with gang members and see them as at-promise youth. Their approach is refreshingly strength based.
- Chapter 14, “Death in the Classroom: Violence in Schools,” is written by two new contributors, is heavily revised, and is of critical importance given recent school shooting incidents and the strong youth movement demanding reform of gun laws.
- Chapter 18, “A Nation at Risk: Bullying Among Children and Adolescents,” is also heavily revised and quite pertinent to a textbook such as ours.
- All chapters in this seventh edition include sidebars designed by the authors to create greater reader self-awareness and to enhance the presentation and understanding of the concepts, skills, roles, and applications provided in the chapter.
- The positive and negative impacts of social media are explored as they pertain to the areas discussed in this edition.
- This seventh edition provides those who adopt our text for use in a community college or university classroom with an instructor’s manual as well as PowerPoint slides. The instructor’s manual contains quiz items and suggestions for exercises and assignments that students can complete or that can be used during a class session.

Every effort has been made by the editors and contributors to provide current and relevant information in each of these areas of focus. We hope that this new edition of *Youth at Risk: A Prevention Resource for Counselors, Teachers, and Parents* will prove to be an invaluable resource for individuals committed to assisting young people in the often difficult transition from adolescence to adulthood.



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the authors, who contributed their expertise, knowledge, and experience to the development of this text. We would also like to thank our families, who provided the freedom and encouragement to make this endeavor possible. Our thanks are also directed to Carolyn Baker and other members of the American Counseling Association staff for their encouragement and assistance with copyediting and ultimately the production of the book.



About the Editors

David Capuzzi, PhD, NCC, LPC, is a counselor educator and a senior core faculty member in community mental health counseling at Walden University and professor emeritus at Portland State University. Previously he served as an affiliate professor in the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and Rehabilitation Services at The Pennsylvania State University and a scholar-in-residence in counselor education at Johns Hopkins University. He is past president of the American Counseling Association (ACA), formerly the American Association for Counseling and Development, and past chair of both the ACA Foundation and the ACA Insurance Trust.

From 1980 to 1984, Dr. Capuzzi was editor of *The School Counselor*. He has authored several textbook chapters and monographs on the topic of preventing adolescent suicide and is coeditor and author with Dr. Larry Golden of *Helping Families Help Children: Family Interventions With School-Related Problems* (1986) and *Preventing Adolescent Suicide* (1988). He coauthored and edited with Douglas R. Gross *Youth at Risk: A Prevention Resource for Counselors, Teachers, and Parents* (1989, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2014, and 2019); *Introduction to the Counseling Profession* (1991, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, and 2013); *Introduction to Group Work* (1992, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010); and *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theories and Interventions* (1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011).

In addition to *Foundations of Addictions Counseling* (2008, 2012, 2016, 2019) and *Foundations of Group Counseling* (2019) published by Pearson, he and Dr. Mark D. Stauffer have published *Career Counseling: Foundations, Perspectives, and Applications* (2006, 2012, 2019); *Foundations of Couples, Marriage and Family Counseling* (2015); *Human Growth and Development Across the Life Span: Applications for Counselors* (2016); and *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theories and Interventions* (2016).

Other texts are *Approaches to Group Work: A Handbook for Practitioners* (2003), *Suicide Across the Life Span* (2006), and *Sexuality Counseling* (2002), the last coauthored and edited with Larry Burlew. He has authored or coauthored articles in a number of ACA journals.

A frequent speaker and keynoter at professional conferences and institutes, Dr. Capuzzi has also consulted with a variety of school districts and community agencies interested in initiating prevention and intervention strategies for adolescents at risk for suicide. He has facilitated the development of suicide prevention, crisis management, and postvention programs in communities throughout the United States; provides training on the topics of youth at risk and grief and loss; and serves as an invited adjunct faculty member at other universities as time permits.

An ACA Fellow, he was the first recipient of ACA's Kitty Cole Human Rights Award and also a recipient of the Leona Tyler Award in Oregon. In 2010 he received ACA's Gilbert and Kathleen Wrenn Award for a Humanitarian and Caring Person. In 2011 he was named a Distinguished Alumni of the College of Education at Florida State University, and in 2016 he received the Locke/Paisley Mentorship Award from the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. In 2018 he received the Mary Smith Arnold Anti-Oppression Award from Counselors for Social Justice, a division of ACA, as well as the U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award.

• • •

Douglas R. Gross, PhD, is a professor emeritus at Arizona State University, Tempe, where he served as a faculty member in counselor education for 29 years. His professional work history includes public school teaching, counseling, and administration. He is currently retired and living in Michigan. He has been president of the Arizona Counselors Association, president of the Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, chairperson of the Western Regional Branch Assembly of the American Counseling Association (ACA), president of the Association for Humanistic Counseling, and treasurer and parliamentarian of ACA.

Dr. Gross has contributed chapters to seven textbooks: *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theories and Interventions* (1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011); *Youth at Risk: A Prevention Resource for Counselors, Teachers, and Parents* (1989, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2014, and 2019); *Foundations of Mental Health Counseling* (1986, 1996); *Counseling Theory, Process, and Practice* (1977); *The Counselor's Handbook* (1974); *Introduction to the Counseling Profession* (1991, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2013, and 2017); and *Introduction to Group Work* (1992, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010). His research has appeared in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *Journal of Educational Research*, *Counseling and Human Development*, *Arizona Counselor's Journal*, *Texas Counseling Journal*, and *AMHCA Journal*.

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About the Contributors

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Colleen R. Logan, PhD, serves as the program director for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling master's program at Fielding University. Previously she held academic and administrative positions at Walden University, Argosy University, and the University of Houston–Victoria. She served as program director for the Master's in Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling and Addictions Counseling programs and the Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs and vice president of academic affairs and associate dean in the School of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, respectively. In addition, Dr. Logan maintains a small private counseling practice specializing in affirmative and enrichment counseling.

In addition to acting in such academic and administrative positions, Dr. Logan also served as the president of the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2008–2009) and president of the Texas Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (TALGBTIC), a division of the Texas Counseling Association (2009–2010). She was recently elected director-elect representing TALGBTIC on the Texas Counseling Association's board of directors. In 2017 she received a special commendation from the ACA president for her contributions to the field of counseling and affirmative therapy with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and their significant others.

Dr. Logan has presented locally, nationally, and internationally on issues related to counseling gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender clients. In addition, she has authored or coauthored a number of articles and chapters as well as a book regarding how to work effectively with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender clients and their significant others.

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Introducing the Problem

Any person who either works with or lives with youth becomes increasingly aware of the potential that exists for the development of at-risk behaviors. This awareness is enhanced by media coverage, educational reform, mental health programming, governmental mandates, and law enforcement reporting. The ongoing bombardment of the vulnerability of youth is a call to action for all persons involved with this population. Prior to taking such action, however, one must understand not only the demographics of this population but also current definitions, at-risk behaviors, generic causal factors, and prevention and intervention approaches to dealing with youth at risk. Part I of this text provides this foundational information. Chapter 1, "Defining Youth at Risk," introduces the topic of at-riskness by providing foundational information related to definitions, at-risk behaviors, and causal factors that enhance the development of at-risk behaviors. The chapter concludes with an introduction of the concept of resilience and the prevention and crisis management paradigm.

Building on this foundation, Chapter 2, "Prevention: An Overview," lays the groundwork for understanding the various strategies incorporated in the term *prevention*. Information presented in this chapter includes the goals and purposes of prevention; primary, secondary, and tertiary concepts related to prevention; and program examples to illustrate the place of prevention in the broad spectrum of helping. Some discussion of schools' efforts to develop tragedy response plans is also included. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how to plan prevention strategies.

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Chapter 3, “Resilience: Individual, Family, School, and Community Perspectives,” adds dimension to the prevention crisis management paradigm by offering counselors, teachers, and parents an alternative view that sees youth at promise rather than at risk. This chapter provides key research, effective practices, professional possibilities, and definitions. It sets forth ideas for practices promoting resilience and establishes a framework for seeing youth as having innate self-righting capacities for changing their life trajectories. It describes discourses that deal with risks, racism, poverty, and careers in ecosocial contexts rather than in people and promotes an outlook that asks people to slow down enough to listen deeply to the stories embedded in everyday lives.

These first three chapters provide a necessary foundation for all persons wishing to reduce the vulnerability of youth and promote positive coping and the ability to deal with issues and transitions that take place throughout the life span.



Defining Youth at Risk

Douglas R. Gross and David Capuzzi

As John Patron sat down at the large table in the conference room, he hoped that something positive could come from this meeting—perhaps something finally could be done to help some of the students in his classroom. He knew that he had been instrumental in forcing Ms. Callis, his principal, to call this meeting. He hoped that all of his colleagues attending the meeting shared his view on the urgency of taking some positive action.

This was John's third year of teaching, and each day he was confronted with problems in his classroom. The problems were not those of math, his subject area, but problems that he observed and that were reported to him by many of his students. The problems covered a wide range of areas, including pregnancy, gangs, drugs and alcohol, violence, eating disorders, and dropping out of school. Certainly he was not the first to notice these problems or the only teacher in whom students confided. If these problems were so obvious to him, why hadn't something been done to deal with them? Most of his students were now juniors in high school, and he was sure that the problems did not have their origins in attaining junior status.

He did the best he could, but he was not trained to handle these issues. In seeking direction, he talked with the school counselor, the school psychologist, and Ms. Callis. Although all of the people he contacted wanted to help, they were also overwhelmed by the demands on their time. John's questions for the most part went unanswered. If he was correct that these problems had not begun during the students' junior year in high school, why hadn't something been done earlier? Hadn't former school personnel recognized the difficulties these students were having? Hadn't parents asked for help with their children? Why hadn't something been done to prevent these problems from developing? John hoped that answers would be forthcoming at the meeting.

After the meeting John sat in his classroom and reflected on what had happened. He was very pleased that he was not alone in his concern about the students and that his colleagues had raised many of the same questions that

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plagued him. He was also pleased that many of his colleagues saw a need for adding trained personnel to work with teachers, students, and parents in developing strategies to intervene in the disrupted lives of many of the students before it was too late. John felt that several helpful outcomes had resulted from the meeting. The first of these was exploring the development of prevention strategies aimed at early identification of problem behaviors and establishing programs directed at impeding their development. This outcome generated much discussion centering around such questions as "What constitutes prevention?" "How does prevention differ from crisis management?" "What have other schools tried, and what has worked?" "Do we need to go beyond the school to build a prevention program?" and "What part will the community and parents play in the prevention program?"

The second outcome dealt with identifying other risk issues, such as low self-esteem, issues in the family, suicide, increased sexual activity, bullying, the impact of homelessness, and excessive dependence on social media. This outcome had led to a discussion of the questions "Are there community resources we can use to aid us in better dealing with these identified problems?" and "What do we need to do to effectively utilize these resources?"

A third outcome dealt with the concept of resilience and the related questions "What makes some young people resilient to high-risk environments while others succumb to these same environments?" and "What are the characteristics of both the individual and his or her environment that make him or her resistant to these high risks?" John had not thought much about resilience and was excited about finding answers to these questions. He sensed that the questions had come more easily than the answers would.

The major directives that came from the meeting were (a) the establishment of a committee to investigate what was currently being done by other schools to develop an approach to prevention, (b) the development of a list of community mental health services that could be utilized by the school to supplement the work currently being done by the school staff, and (c) the collection of data relating to the concept of resilience and how these data would affect the development of a prevention program. John had volunteered to serve as chairperson of the committee investigating current programs and to assist in gaining more information about the issue of resilience. He looked forward to the next meeting that was scheduled in 2 weeks.

• • •

This hypothetical situation is repeated over and over in school districts across the United States as teachers, counselors, administrators, community leaders, and parents attempt to better understand what needs to be done to provide effective programs to help with the growing numbers of young people who are labeled *at risk* because of their involvement in certain destructive behaviors and to help prevent the development of these destructive behavioral patterns. The question these concerned professionals are striving to answer is "Do we continue to deal with the problem behaviors of young people from a crisis management perspective, or do we take a preventive approach to attempt to stop these problem behaviors from developing?"

The answer to both parts of this complex question is yes. With the growing numbers of young people entering educational systems identified as at risk, it is not possible to say no to continuing crisis management strategies. Because of these increasing numbers, however, most educational systems are not equipped to address this problem from a purely crisis management perspective. Therefore, steps must be taken to attempt to stop its development. Such steps are usually described

in terms of prevention modalities aimed at providing programs that will identify young people with the highest potential for developing at-risk behaviors, prevent these destructive behaviors from developing, and work to identify individual and environmental characteristics that enhance the resilience of the individual and his or her environment. Thus, we must continue to intervene at the points of crisis and at the same time set into place prevention programs that will eventually reduce the need for crisis intervention.

This chapter first provides a foundational perspective on at-risk youth by presenting definitions, identifying the population, and describing the population's behavioral and causal characteristics. It then introduces the concept of resilience and concludes with a discussion of a prevention and crisis management paradigm (see Sidebar 1.1).

A Foundational Perspective

Many problems are encountered in attempting to understand the concepts and issues that surround the term *at-risk youth*. Such problems center on defining cause and effect, calculating and determining the population, and developing and implementing both prevention and crisis management programs that have an impact on the various destructive behaviors that place youth at risk. According to Conrath (1988), "Principals and teachers have known at risk youth for a long time. They have recently been discovered by policy makers and budget sculptors" (p. 36). Simple answers and agreed-on definitions do not currently exist. The best we have at this time are experimental programs; a host of opinions, definitions, and population descriptors; and a high motivation to find workable solutions. The concepts that surround students at risk and the most effective ways to deal with this at-riskness are complex, filled with frustration for those who attempt to understand them, filled with despair for those who attempt to affect them, and often filled with tragedy for the individuals so labeled.

Overwhelming statistics place the concepts and issues surrounding at-risk youth high on the priority lists of educators, mental health workers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, parents, community leaders, and governmental programs (Capuzzi & Gross, 2014; Davis, 2017; Finn, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). According to the Children's Defense Fund (2012), each day in America



Sidebar 1.1

Taking a Stand on Crisis Management Versus Prevention

As in the hypothetical situation presented at the beginning of this chapter, we are often called on to take a position regarding how best to handle difficult situations. Where do you stand on crisis management versus a preventive approach? Place yourself at John Patron's meeting and identify questions and concerns you would raise. What advice would you give John as he seeks workable solutions to what he sees as insurmountable problems? Are the outcomes and directives from the meeting sufficient to address the identified problems? If not, what outcomes and directives would you add?

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- 4 children are killed by abuse and/or neglect.
- 5 children or teens commit suicide.
- 7 children or teens are killed by firearms.
- 24 children or teens die from accidents.
- 187 children are arrested for violent accidents.
- 408 children are arrested for drug offenses.
- 1,837 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
- 2,857 high school students drop out of school.
- 4,029 children are arrested.
- 16,244 school students are suspended.

It is important to keep in mind that each day steps are being taken to reduce these staggering numbers. Educational, psychological, sociological, governmental, and community-based entities are developing and applying prevention and crisis management strategies directed toward a society at risk. The major purpose of this book is to provide these entities with information and direction in meeting their difficult tasks.

The Definition

Tracing the exact origins of the term *at risk* as it applies to education and youth is difficult. The term seems to have come into use after the 1983 publication of the article “A Nation at Risk” by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Placier, 1993). Over the past 35 years, the term has appeared frequently in the educational literature, federal reports, and legislative mandates from individual states. In 1988, *Education Week* reported that 3 out of 4 states either had adopted or were preparing a definition of their populations determined to be at risk (Minga, 1988); it is assumed that all states have by now established legislative parameters for their at-risk populations. A review of the known definitions reveals not only a lack of clarity and consensus but also the fact that the term is explained most often from an educational perspective and indicates individuals at risk for dropping out of the educational system. The characteristics of at-risk youth presented in these definitions include the well-known risk factors of being chronically tardy, earning poor grades, having low math and reading scores, and failing one or more grades (Flowers & Robinson-McDonald, 2014; Knight, 2017).

A more interesting listing of characteristics was adopted by the Montana State Board of Education in April 1988. This definition is as follows:

At-risk youths are children who are not likely to finish high school or who are apt to graduate considerably below potential. At-risk factors include chemical dependence, teenage pregnancy, poverty, disaffection with school and society, high-mobility families, emotional and physical abuse, physical and emotional disabilities and learning disabilities that do not qualify students for special education but nevertheless impede their progress. (Minga, 1988, p. 14)

This definition speaks directly to the confusion that surrounds the issue of being at risk and somewhat indirectly addresses concerns regarding cause versus effect. From this definition, it could be concluded that behaviors such as being tardy, being truant, and earning low grades are the effects of identified causal factors,

for example, chemical dependency, teenage pregnancy, and poverty (Bazargan & West, 2006; Brook, Brook, & Phal, 2006; Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015).

If programs dealing with at-risk youth first attempt to deal with factors such as tardiness, truancy, and low grades, they may be placing the proverbial cart before the horse. If the desired effects are to reduce tardiness and truancy and to improve grades, with the ultimate aim of reducing the dropout rate, perhaps more attention needs to be directed toward such identified causal issues as those listed by the Montana State Board of Education.

Underlying much of the confusion surrounding at-risk youth is the amount of emphasis placed on either cause or effect (behavior) or both. Whichever position is selected often determines both the definition and strategies to operate within that definition. For example, if we approach this area from an effect (behavior) point of view, then what we need to do is identify the behaviors that place the individual at risk and develop strategies to change those behaviors. Or if we approach this area from a causal perspective, then we must try to determine what caused the development of the effect (behavior) and attempt to develop strategies that eliminate the causal factors, thereby stopping the development of the effect (behavior). If we approach from both cause and effect perspectives, then we must develop strategies to identify and eliminate the causal factors and at the same time put into motion programs that will change the effect (behavior).

This last approach—that considers both cause and effect perspectives—forms the basis of our definition of at risk. In this book, the term *at risk* encompasses a set of causal/effect (behavioral) dynamics that have the potential to place an individual in danger of a negative future event. This definition not only considers the effect (behavior) that may lead to a negative future event but also attempts to trace the causal factors that led to the development of the effect (behavior). For example, with school-age persons, one of these negative future events may be dropping out of school. The causal/behavioral approach identifies not only the behaviors that led to this event but also the myriad causal factors that aided in the development of this behavior. This definition speaks directly to the need for programs to change existing negative behaviors and for prevention programs to tackle the precipitating events that serve as causal factors in the development of the negative behavior. When viewed from the causal/effect (behavioral) perspective, the concept of being at risk broadens, and dropping out is only one of many possible outcomes. Other risks include, but are not limited to, graduating without an education, without goals and objectives, without direction for what comes next, without an understanding of potentials and possibilities, without appreciation of self, or without knowledge of one's place in the larger society.

When viewed from this causal/effect (behavioral) perspective, the concept of being at risk takes on new dimensions and places the emphasis on individual and systemic dynamics that may or may not lead to a wide range of destructive outcomes. Such a viewpoint emphasizes the vulnerability of all youth to being at risk and provides a strong rationale for the development of prevention programs directed toward stemming the negative impact of certain individual and systemic dynamics. This viewpoint directs attention to a set of causal issues and resultant behaviors that often have proved to be significantly related to the development of many personal

and educational dilemmas faced by today's youth. Any one of these dilemmas could result in personal and educational impairment. In combination, the results could be both personally and educationally fatal. This book uses the causal/effect (behavioral) definition of being at risk and presents both information and strategies to deal with at-riskness from a preventive perspective (see Sidebar 1.2).

The Population

One of the basic issues confronting those wishing to work in the area of at-risk youth focuses on identifying the population. Who are these youth identified as being at risk? Is it possible to identify young people who, by behavior or circumstance, are more at risk than others? On the basis of behaviors, environments, and developmental patterns, are not all young people at risk? Specific answers to these questions are not readily available. The research literature in this area is replete with more opinion and supposition than fact. Identifying the population may be possible only after the fact, as exemplified by the studies that deal with placing the label of *at-risk youth* on those who drop out of school, abuse alcohol and/or drugs, become involved in gangs, and attempt and/or complete suicide. In such studies, the population is identified by the specific behaviors manifested. Such an approach to identification, although interesting, limits the process of identifying at-riskness to those who currently manifest the specified behaviors.

Another factor that may hinder gaining a comprehensive perspective on the population of at-risk youth is the fact that the terms *at-risk youth* and *adolescent* are used somewhat interchangeably. It seems that to be at risk is to be between the ages of 13 and 18. Such parameters are understandable when we realize that most of the behaviors that are used to describe at-risk youth coincide with the turbulent and exploratory developmental period of adolescence. Factors such as sexual experimentation, first-time drug and alcohol use, ego and self-concept development, bullying, and peer inclusion or exclusion are descriptive of both adolescents and the population labeled *at-risk youth*. Such age-specific parameters, however, are limiting and often rule out a large segment of youth, namely, those younger than 13, who also need to be a focus in any discussion of at-risk youth.

According to Stevens and Griffin (2001), it is alarming to realize the age at which youth begin to engage in risk behaviors. Large numbers of children ages



Sidebar 1.2

The Case of Ann

Ann is a junior in high school. She is above average in intelligence and until 2 months ago she was active in school functions and maintained a high grade point average. Teachers report that over the past 2 months Ann has missed several days of school, has stopped participating in school activities, and has had declining grades. Using the causal/effect definitions found in the preceding paragraphs, what steps would you take to better understand and perhaps change Ann's current behavioral patterns?