



Adolescents at Risk: Prevalence and Prevention

Joy G. Dryfoos

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Seven million youngsters--one in four adolescents--have only limited potential for becoming productive adults because they are at high risk for encountering serious problems at home, in school, or in their communities. This is one of the disturbing findings in this unique overview of what is known about young people aged 10 to 17 growing up in the United States today. The book explores four problem areas that are the subject of a great deal of public interest and social concern: delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and school failure. In examining these problem areas, Dryfoos has three objectives: to present a more cogent picture of adolescents who are at risk of problem behaviors and where they fit in society; to synthesize the experience of programs that have been successful in changing various aspects of these behaviors; and to propose strategies for using this knowledge base to implement more effective approaches to helping youngsters succeed. Among the key concepts emerging from this study are the importance of intense individual attention, social skills training, exposure to the world of work, and packaging components in broad, community-wide interventions. Schools are recognized as the focal institution in prevention, not only in regard to helping children achieve academically, but in giving young people access to social support and health programs. The author also proposes comprehensive youth development initiatives at the local, state and national level, based on programs shown to be effective in real practice. This landmark, state-of-the-art study represents an indispensable resource for anyone interested in the welfare and current problems of youth, including psychologists, sociologists, school administrators, state and federal officials, policymakers, and concerned parents.

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