

## Social and Emotional Learning and Prevention

Lions Quest programs are often categorized as prevention and as social and emotional learning programs because they teach both the skills to choose healthy and productive behaviors and to resist unhealthy, negative behaviors. The logic model in **Figure 2** shows how evidence-based social and emotional learning programs such as Lions Quest help prevent risky behaviors through a coordinated strategy of explicit and focused SEL skill building supported by instructional strategies that promote SEL, which are integrated throughout the academic curriculum with ongoing opportunities to practice and receive positive feedback. This constellation of conditions has been linked to decreases in drug use, bullying and violence, early sexual activity, adolescent pregnancy, and suicide. They also increase the likelihood of students feeling a greater commitment to themselves and school, thus engaging in less risky behaviors and more time on positive pursuits.<sup>12</sup>

Lions Quest programs offer a comprehensive and coordinated approach to prevention that creates the conditions and teaches the skills to prevent risky behaviors while cultivating positive social behaviors. The programs' emphasis on social and emotional learning as the foundation for learning provides that coherent framework for a coordinated school-based prevention program.

## Risk and Protective Factors: Promoting Strengths-Based Prevention

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), in its landmark guide, *Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide*, states that "prevention programs should enhance protective factors and reverse or reduce risk factors."<sup>13</sup> Programs such as Lions Quest are designed to put into place, in the school and community, interventions to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors in the lives of young people.

### School-Related Risk Factors

Research shows that young people's behaviors are shaped by powerful factors related to the family, peer group, school, and community. Factors that increase the risk of harmful behaviors, such as drug use, are known as *risk factors*. School-related risk factors include:

- Chaotic home environments, particularly those in which parents abuse substances or suffer from mental illness
- Ineffective parenting, especially with students with difficult temperaments or conduct disorders
- Lack of parent-child attachment
- Inappropriately shy or aggressive behavior in the classroom
- Failure in school performance
- Poor social coping skills
- Affiliations with peers displaying deviant behaviors
- Perceptions of approval of drug-using behaviors in family, work, school, and community environments<sup>14</sup>

### School-Related Protective Factors

Those factors that help to protect young people from harmful behaviors by either reducing the impact of the risks or by changing the way they respond to the risks are known as *protective factors*. School-related protective factors include:

- Strong and positive family bonds
- Parental monitoring of their children's activities and peers
- Clear rules of conduct that are consistently enforced within the family
- Involvement of parents in the lives of their children
- Success in school performance
- Strong bonds with institutions, such as school and religious organizations
- Adoption of conventional norms about drug use<sup>15</sup>

In addition to promoting protective factors and reducing risk factors, Lions Quest programs also build developmental assets and resiliency in young people.