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“HELPING ADOLESCENTS AT RISK” – *Facts and Figures on Multiproblem youth*

- Multiproblem youth demonstrate antisocial behaviors (stealing, assault, etc); they smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and misuse drugs; and engage in sexual behavior that risk pregnancy or disease.
- Most typical adolescents engage in some of these behaviors to some extent, but multiproblem youth engage in these activities at serious levels.
- Youth who engage in multiproblem behaviors have more serious levels of each problem and are less likely to improve without intervention.
- Multiproblem youth are less than 20% of the population, but they account 88% of arrests associated with violence, 72% of total arrests, 87% of health problems associated with drug use and 70% of problems associated with alcohol.
- Multiproblem youth’s cost to society is estimated between \$335-350 billion, and an estimated 63,000 to 65,000 lives are lost each year as a result of multiproblem behaviors.
- Cost-effective and proven programs in prevention and treatment can have a major impact on the lives of multiproblem youth.
- Some factors influencing multiproblem behaviors include: prenatal and perinatal development; genetic influences; temperament developed during infancy and early childhood; family relationships; early aggressive behavior during middle childhood; problems with academics, peer relations, childhood trauma; puberty; and neighborhood and community influences.
- Interventions or treatment programs in the prenatal, perinatal, early childhood and preteen years are available and can make a difference. Prevention programs focused on and implemented through the family, school, community and media can also be effective.
- Many communities have already taken some of the steps that will enable them to provide nurturing environments that will reward desirable behaviors and provide programs and interventions that will intervene in the lives of multiproblem youth.