

RAAPS Survey Gets ‘Inside the Heads’ of Teens Who Don’t Discuss Risk on Their Own

The Center for Family Health is a federally qualified health center that operates three school-based health centers at the elementary, middle and high school levels in Jackson, MI.

The Teen Center at Parkside Middle School has used RAAPS for three years. The Jackson High Health Center has been open just over one year and sees about 16 teens per day. Every teen takes the online Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services (RAAPS) survey as part of a routine physical exam.

The centers use RAAPS to gather the same risk behavior information about each teen and to ensure consistency among health professionals. This allows standardization of the screening so staff are alerted to risks and can give appropriate counseling.

Michelle McCormick, a 10-year veteran of the health center, became its manager last year. Amanda Topper, a physician assistant, is the primary user of the RAAPS system at the high school center.

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Teens are More Honest with an Electronic Assessment

Topper reviews every RAAPS survey at the high school, from about 300 of its 1,200 students each year. The center also serves teens from the community and overflow from other school districts. Nutrition and safety issues are most common. Depression, anxiety, and abuse are the most troubling.

“Teens don’t bring up issues of risk on their own; the RAAPS allows us to get inside the heads of our teens,” Topper said. “I have filed Child Protective Services reports from incidents of abuse that were identified on RAAPS, that teens had never shared with anyone before.”

McCormick adds that “Kids sometimes will answer questions positively in the assessment and then may shut down when the counselor tries to explore the issue. RAAPS helps us identify risks that they may not have been able to share verbally.”

Topper and McCormick said the browser-based assessment not only uncovers health-related issues, it also addresses security, data management, teen history and reporting — without needing to do anything extra.

RAAPS Helps Integrate Clinic’s Services; Provides Consistency in Reporting

When a student enters the center, the Medical Assistant checks them in. If they have not taken RAAPS within the past year, the teen uses a computer to sign in and take the survey.

The Center for Family Health also has a mental health therapist who uses the RAAPS to identify behavioral health issues. She has used the survey to assist in identifying teens who need medication and referred these youth back to Topper. RAAPS facilitates this integration of physical and mental health services for teens.

Topper said if the RAAPS tool weren’t available, counselors, in spite of their training, might not always ask the same, complete battery of questions. RAAPS provides consistency every time and captures the data electronically. **McCormick said the reporting is a must-have, saving time and reducing manual effort to prepare reports by age group for the school, clinic administration, and advisory committees.**

McCormick said RAAPS training was simple for the staff, and Topper says teens like its privacy and almost expect an electronic format to answer questions. Overall, the RAAPS system has become a “must-have application” for the center — a critical factor in achieving its goals and objectives.