

Adolescent Counseling Technologies (ACT) – Sexual Health Module

ACT for Sexual Health: TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE

The ACT Sexual Health module provides adolescents with interactive, evidence based sexual health assessment, and counseling, using technology. In real-world practice, the quality and delivery of sexual health risk-reduction counseling for youth varies widely and is highly dependent on the experience of the individual healthcare provider or professional, his or her knowledge of clinical guidelines, communication skills and training, subconscious biases and personal comfort level. In a 2014 study published in JAMA Pediatrics, one in three adolescents were not asked about sexual health during their health maintenance visits, and for those that were, the discussion lasted an average of 36 seconds.

A FOUNDATION OF SCIENCE:

→ The ACT module was developed using theories proven effective in adolescent sexual health behavior change: Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & DiClemente) and Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick).

→ Tailoring and stage-based interventions have been shown to dramatically increase successful recruitment, retention, and completion of interventions, and promote movement towards positive change.

→ Additional research has found that tailored information is more likely to be read, understood, perceived as personally relevant, and remembered.

A PROVEN SYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE:

The ACT Sexual Health module works both independently and seamlessly within the existing Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services (RAAPS) system. RAAPS is a web-based comprehensive system developed in 2009 at the University of Michigan that has been proven to identify the risk behaviors that contribute most to adolescent morbidity and mortality.

Currently, over 250 agencies are using the RAAPS system with over 80,000 adolescents. In a published evaluation of RAAPS: **98% of providers indicated that they would recommend RAAPS system to other providers.** The most common reasons cited:

- RAAPS ability to provide comprehensive screening.
- RAAPS effect on improved communication between providers and patients.
- And RAAPS influence on increasing patient understanding of their risk behaviors.

ADVANTAGES OF TECHNOLOGY:

Employing technology provides obvious benefits, such as **ensuring a standardized, evidence-based approach to assessment and messaging**, as well as a number of additional benefits, such as:

- **Comfort and confidentiality:** youth can feel uncomfortable responding to face-to-face questions about their sexual behaviors, and may interpret a professional's body language as "judgement". Numerous studies confirm – youth are more honest about their behaviors when using technology.
- **Engagement:** Technology offers interactivity, and individualization that increase engagement. In addition, tailored content bypasses irrelevant information, reduces intervention time, and enhances retention.
- **Ongoing support and text communication:** Teens have high cell phone ownership and a preference for text communication. Studies confirm the effectiveness of text messaging to support identified behavior changes.
- **Real-time, prioritized insights:** At-a-glance data dashboards allow more focused and effective discussions, as well as ease of tracking and documentation to support ongoing behavior change.

The ACT Sexual Health module enhances the current RAAPS system by providing the next step for health care providers and professionals - evidence based counseling for sexual health risk reduction, delivered to teens in a user friendly (technology based) format.

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ACT for Sexual Health: INTERVENTION

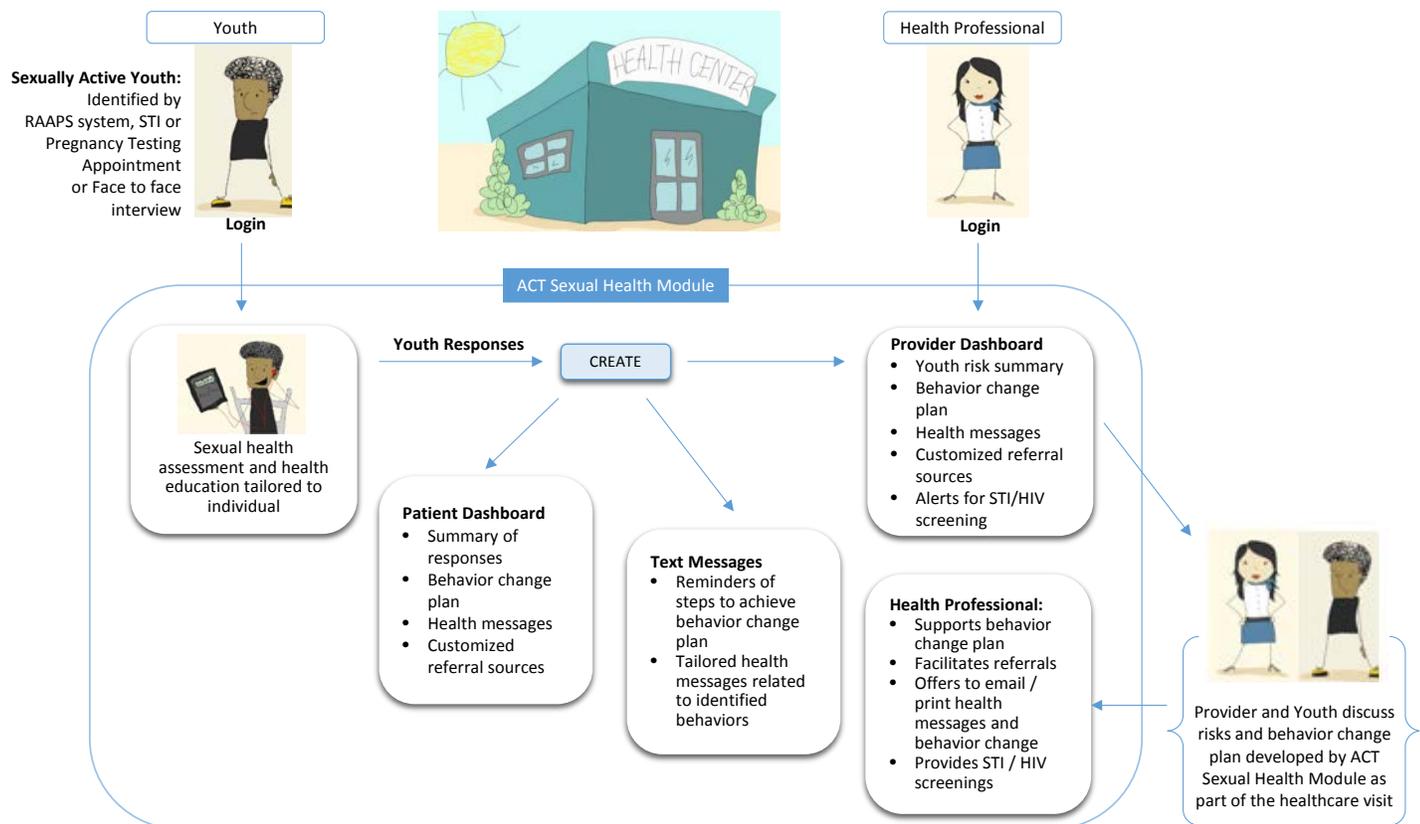
Today's adolescents are engaging in risky sexual behaviors at earlier ages than ever before resulting in nearly 250,000 teen births in 2013 and 10 million new sexually transmitted infections annually. With this earlier onset of sexual activity comes an increased incidence of high-risk behaviors such as:

- Multiple sexual partners (history of 4+ partners)
- Inconsistent condom and contraceptive use
- Drug or alcohol use prior to sex

Adolescents who engage in these types of high-risk behaviors, and underserved youth who are disproportionately affected with unaddressed disparities, have higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy among these populations.

The ACT Sexual Health module provides adolescents with interactive, evidence based sexual health assessment and counseling using technology. Developed in 2014 in part through funding from the National Institutes of Health, ACT was created to provide a “safe” environment for teens to disclose behaviors and create a proactive plan for reproductive health and safer sex, with the goal of: reducing *individual* STI and pregnancy risk – and *population* rates of STI and unplanned teen pregnancy.

HOW IT WORKS: Through the use of technology, teens respond to an evidence-based set of questions that identify risk behaviors that negatively impact sexual decision-making, and participate in interactive, tailored, evidence based counseling for safer sexual behaviors.



The ACT Sexual Health module standardizes sexual health care for adolescents, ensures consistent implementation of national screening guidelines and counseling recommendations, and mitigates traditional barriers of provider time, specialized expertise and comfort-level.