

IDENTIFYING RISKS AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ADOLESCENT PATIENTS

High-Risk Behaviors

High-risk behaviors are the **primary causes of morbidity and mortality** in adolescent patients (ages 12 to 21):¹

- » **Substance abuse**
- » **Unsafe sexual activity**
- » **Interpersonal violence**
- » **Suicide**



of adolescents receive recommended screening and counseling for high-risk behaviors^{2,3}

Why Confidentiality Matters

- Adolescents are **more likely to discuss high-risk behaviors** if they believe their care is confidential.^{2,4,5}
- Adolescents **answer confidential screenings more honestly**.⁶
- State and national **laws allow minors to receive confidential care** related to sexual health, mental health, and substance abuse.

Example of a Confidential Work Flow

- 1** At check-in, front desk staff gives parent/guardian and patient a letter about confidential time with adolescent patients.
- 2** Medical Assistant (MA) calls patient, explains to parent/guardian, "I'll be bringing your child back to get their vital signs and have them complete a brief health survey. Then I'll bring you to the room."
- 3** MA places patient in an exam room, has them complete the screening tool, brings the results to the provider to review, and then brings back parent/guardian.
- 4** Provider meets with parent/guardian and patient, and then asks the parent/guardian to step out for confidential time. Provider then discusses the risk screen confidentially with the patient.

Barriers to Confidential Care

There is **low knowledge about minor consent laws**.^{7,8,9}



Less than half of adolescents receive a yearly well or preventative exam. **Most do not spend any time alone with their provider** during that visit.¹⁰

Providers have noted a **lack of expertise, insurance issues, and concerns about medical records**.¹¹



Advantages of Screening Tools

- Screening tools **provide a comprehensive picture** of the patient.
- They **increase efficiency and effectiveness of care**, allowing physicians to tailor their conversations with patients.
- When paired with effective counseling and intervention, **they can make a significant impact on adolescent high-risk behaviors**.¹²

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