adolescent and teen sexual behavior

Understanding, Preventing, and Responding

Coming Soon!

This is a supplemental parent-education module that is designed to help parents and caregivers of adolescents and teens understand sexual development and behavior during the teen years. The module provides information and practical strategies parents can use to help them recognize what constitutes typical sexual behavior; identify behaviors that may be concerning, risky, or problematic; and respond effectively when concerns arise.

The period of adolescence is characterized by rapid growth and development. As youth progress through puberty and move toward adulthood, they experience significant physical changes, evolving emotions, and increasingly advanced thinking skills. During this time, many teens experience increased sexual thoughts, feelings, and interest in exploring relationships and identity. At the same time, adolescents are navigating a world shaped by greater access to technology; evolving social norms; peer influences; and, for some youth, earlier onset of puberty. These factors may create environments where risky or problematic behaviors are more likely to emerge, particularly when guidance and supervision are limited.

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in promoting healthy development and reducing the risk of problematic sexual behavior (PSB). Through early recognition of concerns, open communication, clear expectations, and supportive guidance, parents can help teens develop healthy behaviors, make safer choices, and build respectful relationships. This module can help parents understand how adolescent development is connected to sexual behavior, recognize when a teen's behavior may need additional attention or intervention, and learn effective strategies they can use to respond to typical and risky sexual behavior and reduce or stop PSB in teens.

This supplemental module builds on information and strategies that are discussed in the four universal Thrive parenting programs — *Take Root, Sprout, Grow, or Branch Out* — so it is recommended that you participate in the age-appropriate universal Thrive parenting program prior to using the supplemental module.

In this module, you will learn how to do the following:

- **Identify typical adolescent development and understand how these developmental changes relate to problematic and/or illegal sexual behavior.**
- **Communicate with your teen about sexual development, relationships, boundaries, and sexual health in informative and supportive ways.**
- **Understand the differences between typical, risky, problematic, and illegal sexual behavior, and distinguish fact from common myths.**
- **Recognize risk and protective factors associated with the development and treatment of PSB in teens.**
- **Become familiar with the process that may occur after PSB is discovered, including safety planning and ways to support your teen throughout the process.**
- **Understand the impact that PSB can have on the teen who engaged in the behavior, children who have been affected, and other family members.**
- **Recognize the importance of parental self-care, and learn strategies to support your own well-being while helping your teen and family.**
- **Locate resources to learn more about adolescent sexual development, PSB, treatment, and family support.**

For more information about this supplemental module, visit:
https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental