

Couples HIV Counseling and Testing

Module Four: Providing Concordant Negative Results

Module Perspective

This module will review the second session of the Couples HIV Counseling and Testing (CHCT) intervention. Participants will learn how to provide concordant negative results to couples using the CHCT Protocol. Participants will conduct a role play on providing or receiving concordant negative results by continuing from the previous role play (Components V-A: Concordant Negative and Component VI-A: Risk Reduction).

In preparation for the second role play participants will reflect back to previous work on essential counseling skills and will identify skills needed when providing HIV test results.

This module will conclude at the end of the day after the second role play is processed.

Objectives for Module Four:

- Identify the most important counseling skills for providing couples with an HIV-negative test result.
- Understand the two components of the second session of the CHCT intervention that cover providing concordant negative test results and discussing risk reduction.

Advance Preparation

- **Prepare PowerPoint Slides** 4-1 through 4-10

4-2: Couple Results Session—Provide Test Results: Concordant Negative
4-3: Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Test Results
4-4: Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Test Results (Continued)
4-5: Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction
4-6: Being Faithful: Protecting a Couple Relationship from HIV
4-7: Being Faithful: Protecting a Couple Relationship from HIV (Continued)
4-8: Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction (Continued)
4-9: Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction (Continued)
4-10: Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction (Continued)

- **Make Copies of the Handout**

Providing Concordant Negative Results (script)

- **Familiarize Yourself with the Following Briefing Paper: Discussing the Likelihood of an HIV Test Not Detecting Recent HIV Infection— “Window Period”**
- **Provide Blank Newsprint for Brainstorming**

Day Two

Module 4: Topics/Activities Schedule

Start time: 3:35pm

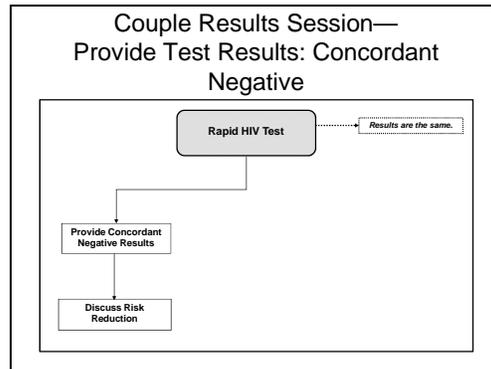
Activity	Time
Second Session—Provide Concordant Negative Test Results (Component V-A: Providing Results)	10 minutes
Second Session—Discuss Risk Reduction (Component VI-A: Risk Reduction)	10 minutes
Afternoon Break	15 minutes
Role Play Preparation	5 minutes
Role Play #2 (Components V-A and VI-A)	25 minutes
Processing of Role Play	15 minutes
Wrap-Up/Adjourn for the Day	5 minutes

End time 5:00pm

Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Results

Welcome participants back from break.

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We will now move on to explore the next part of this intervention. In this section, we will cover informing the couple that both their test results are negative.

This discussion occurs after the couple has had a rapid test performed. You will let the partners know that their results are the same and they are concordant negative.

Display PowerPoint 4-3. Review the five tasks of Component V.

Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Test Results

TASK 1: Inform the couple that the test results are available

TASK 2: Provide a simple summary of the couple's results: both test results are negative, which indicates that neither partner is infected

TASK 3: Ask if the couple understands their results

4-3

Let's go over the five tasks and your objectives for those tasks.

Task 1: Inform the couple that their test results are available

The objective of this task is to transition back into the counseling session and let the partners know that they will be receiving their results.

Task 2: Provide a simple summary of the couple's results: both test results are negative, which indicates that neither partner is infected

Your objective is to state clearly and simply that both test results are negative, indicating that each partner is not infected. If available, show the test results or test strips to the couple.

Task 3: Ask if the couple understands their results

Your objective is to make sure the couple has an accurate understanding of the outcome of the test results and their meaning and implication.

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**Component V-A: Provide
Concordant Negative Test Results
(Cont.)**

TASK 4: Explore the couple's reaction to their results

TASK 5: Discuss results in the context of any recent risk outside of their relationship

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Task 4: Explore the couple's reaction to their results.

Your objective is to allow the partners to express their own feelings and emotions about the test results they have received.

Task 5: Discuss results in the context of any recent risks outside of their relationship

Counselors should note the possibility that a recent exposure outside of the relationship may indicate a need for a retest, because a recent exposure may not have been detected by the HIV test.

Be prepared to discuss the concept of “window period” as you review this component. It is important to keep discussions regarding the window period brief. Highlight that the window period is the time it takes for the HIV virus to appear in the body.

The window period is generally 3 to 4 weeks from the time of exposure to the time when HIV is detected in tests. Please refer to the window period briefing paper (found at the end of this module) to assist with the discussion.

Overall, the goal of the counselor in the concordant negative post-test session is the same as in the initial session—that is, to ease tension, diffuse blame, and emphasize the importance of the couple’s collaboration and commitment to protecting their relationship from HIV.

The risk potentially posed by partners outside the relationship should be mentioned briefly and in the abstract. The counselor can say, for example, “There is a very small chance that this test did not detect HIV if you were infected very recently. If you are concerned about a recent exposure to HIV, such as from another partner, you should get another test in about 4 weeks.”

The most important point to convey is that the couple’s test results do not reflect the HIV status of any other partners, past or present.

Please turn to your manuals to review the background for providing concordant negative results.

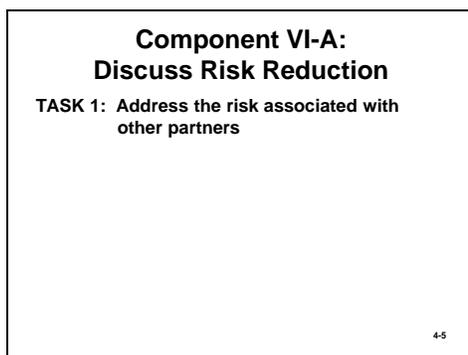
Are there any questions?

Answer or clarify as necessary.

Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction (for Concordant Negative Couples)

Review the eight tasks of Component VI-A.

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In this component, the counselor helps the couple to fully embrace and appreciate the implications of their HIV-negative status. It is worth exploring with the couple how they believe their test results will influence their vision for their future.

We will now go over the tasks in Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction for Concordant Negative Couples.

Task 1: Address the risk associated with other partners

The objective of this task is to reinforce that the best way to protect the couple's status is by remaining faithful to their relationship and that the status of other partners can only be determined through HIV testing.

Being faithful means not having other sexual partners outside the couple's relationship.

How do we help HIV-negative couples commit to being faithful to protect their relationship from HIV?

Acknowledge responses.

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Being Faithful Protecting a Couple Relationship from HIV

- Recognize that both partners being faithful is the best way to protect their relationship and their future from HIV
- Let others know of their commitment to the relationship
- Establish shared goals and priorities
- Demonstrate genuine respect for each other

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The following guidance can be shared with couples to help them protect their relationship from HIV by being faithful. These are some possible steps the couple can take to strengthen their relationship and facilitate being faithful.

- Recognize that both partners being faithful is the best way to protect their relationship and their future from HIV.
- Let others know of their commitment to the relationship.
- Establish shared goals and priorities.
- Demonstrate genuine respect for each other.

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Being Faithful Protecting a Couple Relationship from HIV (Cont.)

- Be supportive of each other
- Maintain open and honest communication, and talk through all problems as they arise
- Recognize that there will be difficult and challenging times for both partners, and commit to working through these times together
- Act as a role model to family, friends, and co-workers in prioritizing your relationship by sharing social occasions and family events together and openly acknowledging your mutual commitment

4-7

- Be supportive of each other.
- Maintain open and honest communication, and talk through all problems as they arise.
- Recognize that there will be difficult and challenging times for both partners and commit to working through these times together.

- Act as a role model to family, friends, and co-workers by prioritizing relationship; sharing social occasions and family events together; and openly acknowledging mutual commitment.

The last three bullets directly relate to a couple maintaining an open line of communication, which will allow them to discuss issues that may place either or both of them at risk. Couples who act as role models within their circle of family and friends make others aware of their commitment to each other and their willingness to work through issues together. As couples share social occasions and events together, they reduce the chances of placing themselves at risk with other partners and also openly acknowledge their mutual commitment within their relationship. These steps, therefore, facilitate risk reduction.

Does anyone have any thoughts or comments about the points we have made on being faithful?

Acknowledge responses.

This information can be found in your manuals.

Let's continue with Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction. We finished discussing the first task, which is to address the risk associated with other partners.

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**Component VI-A:
Discuss Risk Reduction (Cont.)**

TASK 2: Discuss couple's specific HIV concerns or risks based on pre-test discussion (if applicable)

TASK 3: Emphasize that condoms must always be used if either partner has sex outside the relationship

4-8

Task 2: Discuss couple’s specific HIV concerns or risks based on pre-test discussion (if applicable)

The objective of this task is to remind the partners of the concerns that brought them to CHCT and that they discussed in the session.

Task 3: Emphasize that condoms must always be used if either partner has sex outside the relationship

The objective of this task is to prevent assumptions about the status of other partners, convey that action must be taken to reduce or eliminate the risk posed by other partners, and assure referral of other partners to CHCT services.

It is important that the counselor underscore the importance of the couple preserving their negative HIV status and protecting their relationship from HIV. Please remember that outside partners or relationships should be discussed in a sensitive way if no outside partners have been mentioned by the couple.

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**Component VI-A:
Discuss Risk Reduction (Cont.)**

TASK 4: Explore skills required to reduce risk, such as open communication and commitment to protect relationship from HIV

TASK 5: Encourage the couple to communicate openly with each other about risk reduction

Task 6: Convey confidence in the couple's ability to complete the plan and to protect each other

4-9

Task 4: Explore skills required to reduce risk, such as:

- **Open communication**
- **Commitment to protect relationship from HIV**

Task 5: Encourage the couple to communicate openly with each other about risk reduction and to stay faithful

The counselor will need to help the couple anticipate the possibility of unplanned risks and the responsibility to protect the other partner and to stay faithful.

Task 6: Convey confidence in the couple’s ability to complete the plan and to protect each other

Through this task, you will provide positive reinforcement.

Depending on the openness of the couple, they may want to commit to a plan should a potential risk situation occur.

Can anyone suggest an example of a plan a couple might come up with for dealing with a risk situation?

Acknowledge correct responses or provide examples given to help clarify what is meant by a plan for dealing with a risk situation.

Listen for:

- ***Remaining faithful, but if one or both partners are tempted to go outside of the relationship, both agree to use condoms.***
- ***Asking other partners (for example, other wife) to be tested.***

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Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction (Cont.)

TASK 7: Encourage the couple to become ambassadors for testing, particularly for couple services

TASK 8: Provide needed referrals for services regarding STIs, family planning, care during pregnancy, or support.

4-10

Task 7: Encourage the couple to become ambassadors for testing, particularly for couple services

The counselor should empower the partners to support others to receive CHCT, while affirming their commitment to remain uninfected.

Task 8: Provide needed referrals for services regarding STIs, family planning, care during pregnancy, or support

Please turn to page ___ in your manuals. We will take a few minutes for you to review the material.

Allow a minute for their review.

Are there any questions about this last component?

Answer or clarify as needed.

Break

Let participants know that they can take a 15-minute break. Be sure to let them know what time to return.

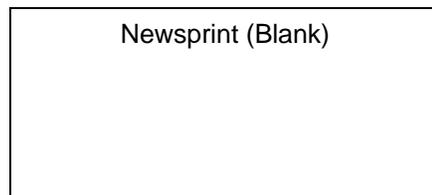
We will now take a 15-minute break. Please return to this room at (state time).

When we return from break, we will conduct our final role play for the day, which will be providing a couple with concordant negative results.

Role Play: Post-Test Session, Concordant Negative Couple

Welcome the participants back from break.

Post blank newsprint for brainstorm.



You may find it helpful to use PowerPoints 2-2, 2-7, and 2-8 for this review or you may refer participants to their manuals.

I hope all of you had a pleasant break.

Earlier we:

- Conducted the first role play in which you practiced the initial session material
- Processed the first role play
- Reviewed Components V-A and VI-A, which cover providing test results for concordant negative couples

In a few minutes you will go back to your previous role play groups. Everyone will assume the same role as they had earlier this afternoon.

But first, let's take a moment to think about the couple counseling skills and attributes we discussed on the first day of this training.

As you reflect on the skills we discussed and the earlier role play, what skills do you think are most important for counselors to remember as they provide the couple with their HIV test results?

List skills that are mentioned on blank newsprint. Briefly discuss.

Listen or prompt for the following:

- **Counselor self-awareness**
- **Capacity to tolerate intensity**
- **Ability both to validate and challenge**
- **Recognition that relationships are full of contradictions**
- **Understand relationships in the context of cultural values and norms**
- **Demonstrate neutrality and non-biased concern for both members of the couple**
- **Convey respect for the couple's relationship**
- **Facilitate balanced participation of both partners**
- **Model appropriate listening and communication skills**
- **Facilitate dialogue between the couple**
- **Raise the difficult issues that the couple may need to address**
- **Ease tension and diffuse blame**

Thank participants for taking part in the brainstorm/review.

We will now pick up from where we left off in our last role play. Everyone will play the same role as before.

This time counselors will provide the couple with their concordant negative results.

Counselors will have approximately 15 minutes to provide their clients with their HIV-negative results following Components VI-A and VII-A of the CHCT intervention.

You will have approximately 15 minutes to do the role play. Then we will take a few more minutes for the couples to provide the counselors with feedback on the session and their effectiveness with counseling them as couples. Are there any questions?

Answer or clarify as needed. Distribute concordant negative scripts.

Please get into your role play groups as before.

Allow a moment for participants to return to their previous groups, and tell the counselors to begin. Call time in 15 minutes.

Your time is up. Couples, please give your counselors feedback on how they provided counseling to you about your results.

Allow no more than 5 minutes for feedback.

Call time in 5 minutes.

All couples should have provided feedback individually to their counselors. Now, let's take your regular seats and talk together about providing concordant negative results.

When the group has reassembled, facilitate a brief discussion about how the counselors and couples felt about providing or receiving concordant negative results.

For counselors, how did it feel to conduct a concordant negative session?

For the couples, how did you feel receiving your concordant negative results? How did it feel to discuss risk reduction and being faithful?

It's important to remember that couples will be excited to receive a concordant negative result. However, it is critical that you do not rush through the session. It is very important that you help them understand that being faithful in a monogamous, concordant negative relationship is the best way for couples to protect their relationship from HIV infection.

Are there any comments, thoughts, or questions?

Address or clarify as necessary.

Wrap-Up

We are finished with today's work, and I thank all of you for your attention and your input.

Tomorrow morning we will begin at (state time).

Tomorrow we will cover providing concordant positive results and related issues.

Adjourn for the day.

Handouts and Briefing Paper

Module Four: Providing Concordant Negative Results

Discussing the Likelihood of an HIV Test Not Detecting Recent HIV Infection— “Window Period”

It is possible during Module 4: Concordant Negative or during Module 6: Discordant that the issue of the “window period” will come up. The window period describes the period when an HIV test does not detect HIV infection because the body has not yet produced antibodies to a very recent infection. This briefing paper should assist the trainer in facilitating discussion on this issue and dispelling myths.

- 1) Explain to participants that as counselors they should try to avoid using the term “window period” when explaining HIV test results to clients. The phrase is misleading, poorly understood, and essentially jargon. Instead, counselors should tell couples that a recent exposure to HIV may not be detected by the HIV antibody test. If either partner has had a recent exposure that they are concerned about then they should consider re-testing **3-4 weeks** or more after the last risk exposure to an HIV-infected person or someone with unknown status.
- 2) Explain to participants that they should be careful when explaining the likelihood of being in the window period to couples. The actual likelihood of being in the window period is quite low. The counselor therefore has an ethical responsibility to mention the risk but should also emphasize their confidence in the negative test result(s) and convey this to the couple.
- 3) Some participants may believe that discordant couples are actually concordant positive, and that one partner is in the window period. If so, explain to the participants that this is not likely. Remind them that discordance is not only possible, but that it is also fairly common in Africa, occurring in about 13%-30% of couples, whereas the risk of being in the window period is very small (**<3%**).

Counselor's Script: Providing Concordant Negative Results

Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Test Results	
<i>Task</i>	<i>Script</i>
1. Inform couple that their test results are available.	Your HIV test results are ready now.
2. Provide a simple summary of the couple's results: both test results are negative, which indicates that neither partner is infected.	Both of your test results are negative. This means that neither of you has HIV. (If available, show the test results or test strips to the couple.)
3. Ask if the couple understands their results.	Do you understand your test results? What do these results mean to you? Do you have any questions?
4. Explore the couple's reaction to their results.	How does it feel to hear you are both HIV-negative?
5. Discuss results in the context of any recent risks outside of their relationship.	There is an extremely small chance that this test did not detect HIV if you were infected very recently. If one of you had sex with someone else whose HIV status is unknown in the last 2 to 3 weeks and you did not use a condom, you should get another test in about 3 to 4 weeks.

Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction

<i>Task</i>	<i>Script</i>
<p>1. Address the risk associated with other partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the couple to have sex with each other only. • Remind the couple that their results do not indicate the status of other partners (past or present). • Discuss risk reduction by being faithful. Problem-solve obstacles to being faithful, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Travel ○ Use of alcohol ○ Other issues 	<p>Now let's talk about how to make sure you both stay HIV-negative.</p> <p>The most effective way to stay HIV-negative and to protect each other from HIV is by being faithful to each other. This means you will only have sex with each other.</p> <p>If you have other partners or a co-wife, these test results do not mean that they are also HIV-negative just because you are both HIV-negative. If either of you has sex with a person whose HIV status is not known and you do not use a condom, you are at very high risk of getting HIV and bringing it into your relationship. The most effective way to assure that you both stay negative is to have sex only with each other.</p> <p>Do you anticipate any problems being faithful to each other?</p> <p>Would traveling or working away from home be cause for concern?</p> <p>Do you think that the use of alcohol will influence your ability to be faithful?</p> <p>Are there other circumstances that would make being faithful difficult for you?</p>
<p>2. Discuss couple's specific HIV concerns or risks, based on pre-test discussion (if applicable).</p>	<p>During the pre-test session we talked about some of your specific HIV concerns. Now that we know you are both HIV-negative, let's talk some more about why you thought you were at risk for HIV and what you will do as a couple to stay HIV-negative.</p> <p>What are some steps you would like to take protect your relationship from HIV?</p>
<p>3. Emphasize that condoms must always be used if either partner has sex outside the relationship.</p>	<p>If either of you do choose to have sex outside this relationship with another partner, you should ALWAYS USE A CONDOM to protect yourself and to keep from spreading HIV to your family. If you do not use a condom, you are putting yourself and your family at risk for HIV.</p> <p>Here is some information on proper use of condoms, but again, I want to emphasize that the most effective way to remain negative is to only have sex with each other.</p>

<p>4. Explore skills required to reduce risk, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open communication • Commitment to protect relationship from HIV 	<p>All couples have stressful and challenging times. It is best to work through these times together. How can you ensure open communication about your HIV issues and concerns?</p> <p>Can we all agree on your plan for protecting your relationship from HIV? How will you remain committed to this plan?</p>
<p>5. Encourage the couple to openly communicate with each other about risk reduction and to stay faithful.</p>	<p>I encourage you to always talk to each other about protecting your relationship and your family from HIV and to remain faithful.</p>
<p>6. Convey confidence in the ability of the couple to complete the plan and to protect each other.</p>	<p>You have taken a big step today by receiving HIV counseling and testing as a couple.</p>
<p>7. Encourage the couple to become ambassadors for testing, particularly for couple services.</p>	<p>I hope you will encourage other couples in your community to learn their HIV status together.</p>
<p>8. Provide needed referrals for services such as those for STIs, family planning, care during pregnancy, or support.</p>	<p><i>Give couple referral information.</i></p>

PowerPoint Slides

Module Four: Providing Concordant Negative Results

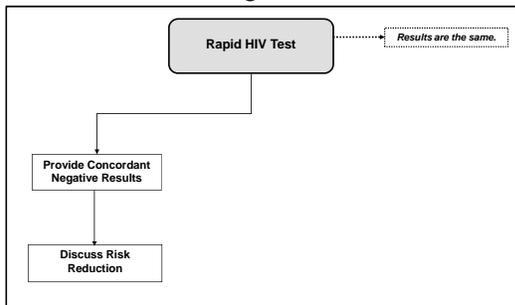
Couples HIV Counseling and Testing (CHCT)



Module 4: Providing Concordant Negative Results

4-1

Couple Results Session— Provide Test Results: Concordant Negative



Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Test Results

TASK 1: Inform the couple that the test results are available

TASK 2: Provide a simple summary of the couple's results: both test results are negative, which indicates that neither partner is infected

TASK 3: Ask if the couple understands their results

4-3

**Component V-A: Provide
Concordant Negative Test Results
(Cont.)**

TASK 4: Explore the couple's reaction to their results

TASK 5: Discuss results in the context of any recent risk outside of their relationship

4-4

**Component VI-A:
Discuss Risk Reduction**

TASK 1: Address the risk associated with other partners

4-5

**Being Faithful Protecting a
Couple Relationship from HIV**

- Recognize that both partners being faithful is the best way to protect their relationship and their future from HIV
- Let others know of their commitment to the relationship
- Establish shared goals and priorities
- Demonstrate genuine respect for each other

4-6

Being Faithful Protecting a Couple Relationship from HIV (Cont.)

- Be supportive of each other
- Maintain open and honest communication, and talk through all problems as they arise
- Recognize that there will be difficult and challenging times for both partners, and commit to working through these times together
- Act as a role model to family, friends, and co-workers in prioritizing your relationship by sharing social occasions and family events together and openly acknowledging your mutual commitment

4-7

**Component VI-A:
Discuss Risk Reduction (Cont.)**

TASK 2: Discuss couple's specific HIV concerns or risks based on pre-test discussion (if applicable)

TASK 3: Emphasize that condoms must always be used if either partner has sex outside the relationship

4-8

**Component VI-A:
Discuss Risk Reduction (Cont.)**

TASK 4: Explore skills required to reduce risk, such as open communication and commitment to protect relationship from HIV

TASK 5: Encourage the couple to communicate openly with each other about risk reduction

Task 6: Convey confidence in the couple's ability to complete the plan and to protect each other

4-9

Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction (Cont.)

TASK 7: Encourage the couple to become ambassadors for testing, particularly for couple services

TASK 8: Provide needed referrals for services regarding STIs, family planning, care during pregnancy, or support.

4-10
