

How to Start a Low Cost Texting Line:

In Under an Hour!

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Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that our organization, AIDS Community Care Montreal, and the work that we do, take place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka. Tiotia:ke, or as we commonly know it, "Montreal" has historically been known as a site of meeting and exchange among nations. Colonisation has had and continues to have devastating impacts on the lives of countless Indigenous people, their culture, language, families and connection to the land. We also recognize that thousands of Afro-descendants have been enslaved, displaced and policed in the same territory.

As an AIDS Service Organization, we see it happening in communities who are affected with HIV. While Indigenous people account for about 4.9% of the total population in Canada, they represented about 11.3% of new cases of HIV in 2016. We also see higher rates among black, POC, trans and queer folks. Why? Because we live in systems that were constructed through colonisation that help certain groups thrive at the expense of others.

So we ask you: Take the time to learn from the past and be critical. Listen to those around you. Challenge yourself and others. Don't be complicit with the status quo. Understand that so much of what has happened to Indigenous people and many other groups has been erased so that these cycles can continue. Get involved and support organizations that fight against oppression. Be a part of this larger movement so that we can rise together towards positive social change.

Overview

- What is SextEd?
- Why do we need SextEd?
- Setting up a texting helpline
- Demo
- Questions/Comments?



What is SextEd?



SextEd

- Well-researched answers are written by youth volunteers and ACCM staff
- All responses include links to relevant local organizations, credible online resources, or both
- Answers focus on harm reduction and inclusivity



STBBIs on the rise in Canada

- Despite the advancement of HIV care, high rates of STBBIs have been reported across Canada
- From 2014-2019, we saw a 4% increase in HIV diagnoses
- In terms of STBBIs, the rates of infectious syphilis have more than tripled in the past decade and gonorrhoea rates have almost doubled in the past five years



Need for SextEd

There is a need for innovative programs to:

1. Provide rapid and accurate information
2. Ensure equitable access to sexual education
3. Empower individuals through knowledge transmission



of Texts Answered

- Over the past five years, SextEd replied to 2,270 text messages
- In 2021:
 - 4% of texts were from trans identified texters
 - SextEd gave 38 STBBI testing referrals
 - 36% of referrals were to healthcare providers
 - 22% of referrals were for birth control

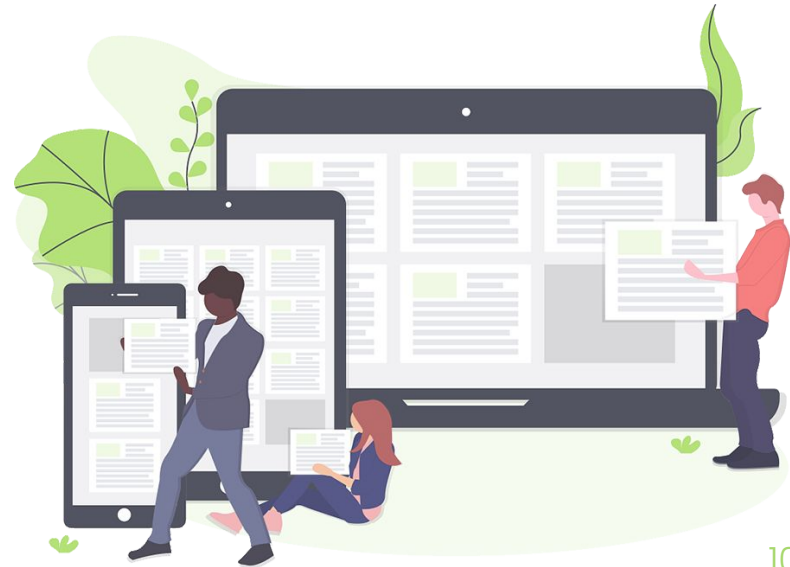
1. What's the set up?

We use three online programs:



Twilio

- An online phone number that accepts texts, calls, and MMS
- Lets you send and receive texts through integrations like Sunshine Conversations
- Reliable, hasn't been down since starting the program
- Lets you export the history of texts that go in and out through Excel (helpful for reporting)



Sunshine Conversations (by Zendesk)

- Redirects texts from Twilio, Facebook Messenger, website messaging, and other places to apps like Slack.
- Lets you answer messages from any of these through email or programs like Slack
- Sign up for an account, then connect to Twilio and Slack



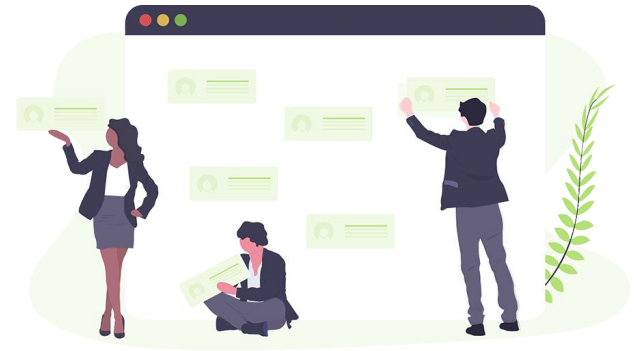
sunshine
conversations



Slack



- Messaging system
- Built-in co-worker messaging, which we use to share and edit drafts
- Easy to customize with JavaScript integrations
- Lets you save and search past answers



Messaging Costs

- \$1 per month for a number
- \$0.0075 for each text
- That's it! Up to 500 users a month!
- \$4.75 buys you about 100 exchanges per month.



Messaging Costs

- Twilio gives a \$500 credit and 25% discount for registered charities
- That can be over 100 months free!

*Sunshine Conversations costs \$60 if you reach 5,000 users a month



Step 1: Sign up for Twilio and get a phone number

Buy a Number ×

Country

 Canada (+1) ▼

Location ▼

Montreal|

begins with term ▼



Capabilities

Voice

SMS

MMS

Different numbers have different communications capabilities. Select the ones your phone number needs.

[Advanced Search](#)

Cancel

Search

Step 2: Sign up for Sunshine Conversations and enable Twilio SMS integration



Twilio is a developer-friendly way to programmatically send and receive text messages as well as voice calls using web service APIs.

This integration allows users to have two-way conversations with your team through SMS. [Learn more.](#)

STEP 1

Twilio Account SID

Visit the [Twilio Account page](#), then copy the value of the **Account SID** and paste it here.

API Credentials	
Live	AccountSID Used to exercise the REST API <input type="text"/>
	AuthToken (Request a Secondary Token)
Test	Test Ac Used to ex AC70K Test Au

Paste Account SID here

Step 3: Connect Sunshine Conversations to Slack



Slack is a team communication tool that groups together all the messages, files and discussions that your team collaborates on in one single, searchable place.

This integration allows your team to have two-way conversations with your users directly from Slack. [Learn more](#)

STEP 1

Connect

To use this integration, connect Smooch to your Slack account

[Connect to Slack](#)

Step 4: You're Done! Start Texting!



- Really, that's it!
- Promote the number that you registered
- Any texts that come in will be sent through Slack and you can reply back right away



☰ All unreads

🔍 Threads

🗨️ All DMs

@ Mentions & reactions

📄 Drafts 6

🔖 Saved items

📱 Slack Connect

⋮ More

▾ Channels

answers

common

general

sk-sunny-lion

social

suggest

texts

+ Add channels



+ Add a bookmark

Thanks!

Today

Show more

Here's all the information we have on this user. [Add custom data](#)

App

SextEd to Slack texting

Device Info

- SMS over Twilio

from MONTREAL, QC, CA



Gorgeous Finch APP 18:44

Test

Use `/sk [text]` to reply

How long do I need to wait before getting an HIV test after having sex?

Use `/sk [text]` to reply

B I U Link List Bulleted List Code Copy

Message #sk-sunny-lion

+ Attachments Emojis Mentions Text Formatting



sk-sunny-lion 1

+ Add a bookmark


Thanks! Today
[Show more](#)

Here's all the information we have on this user. [Add custom data](#)

App
SextEd to Slack texting

Device Info







- SMS over Twilio
from MONTREAL, QC, CA

 **Gorgeous Finch** APP 18:44
Test





Use `/sk [text]` to reply 👤 🗨️ ↶ 📌 ⋮

18:46 How long do I need to wait before getting an HIV test after having sex?

Use `/sk [text]` to reply


B *I*      

Message #sk-sunny-lion

+     Aa ▶ ▼

Files

Sam SextEd Coord (you) 📄 ↶ ⋮
June 8th, 2018 at 16:10

 **When can I get tested for ...**
Post

Tests for HIV work well about a month and a half after sex or sharing needles. So if someone gets tested earlier, there's more chance the test will say they don't have HIV when they do. People can always go again, though!

In Canada, HIV tests are 95% accurate 34 days after sex and 99% after one and a half months. Many clinics ask people to come in after 3 months because tests are even more accurate then.

You might see that you need to wait 6 months online because older tests took that long to be accurate. In Canada, all clinics use newer tests that are accurate sooner. For more on HIV testing in Canada: <https://bit.ly/2sevZ3t>

"HIV testing, testing window,

Search results for "hiv test"

Messages 7 Files 8 Channels 0 People 0

answers - May 27th, 2018 View in channel

Sam SextEd Coord 10:58

When can I get **tested** for **HIV**? What's the **testing** window?
Open file

answers - May 26th, 2018



file Is rapid **HIV testing** as accurate as regular **HIV testing**?: 5/5

answers - May 26th, 2018



Is rapid **HIV testing** as accurate as regular **HIV testing**?
Shared by Anne-Marie on Jan 16th

answers - Aug 22nd, 2016

Sam SextEd Coord 12:09

Can I get an at-home **test** for **HIV**?
Shared by Sam SextEd Coord on Aug 22nd, 2016

Sam SextEd Coord (you)

June 8th, 2018 at 16:10



When can I get tested for HIV? What's the testing window?

Post

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"HIV, testing, testing window, accuracy"

Characters **634** Words **117** Lines **8**

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In Canada, HIV tests are 95% accurate 34 days after sex and 99% after 1.5 months. Many clinics ask people to come in after 3 months because tests are even more accurate then. Rapid HIV tests are 99% accurate after 12 weeks.

You might see online that you need to wait 6 months because older tests took that long to be accurate. In Canada, all clinics use newer tests that are accurate sooner. For more on HIV testing: <https://bit.ly/3yNiJa5>

+ Add a bookmark

Dorothy Apedaile - 3 years ago

Today

How helpful was our answer? Text us a rating from 1-5, 1/5 being not helpful and 5/5 being very helpful. Thanks!

Show more

Here's all the information we have on this user. [Add custom data](#)

App

SextEd to Slack texting

< sk|

/sk [message] (sends message) !profile (...)
Sunshine Conversations - Send a command t...

View keyboard shortcuts

-HIV test after having sex?

sk-sunny-lion



Get Notifications for @ Mentions



Start a Call

About

Members 1

Integrations

Settings

Huddles

Edit

Members can start and join huddles in this channel. [Learn more](#)



Change to a private channel

Copy member names

Copy member email addresses

You don't have permission to see the email addresses for all the channel members, so this is disabled.



Archive channel for everyone



Delete this channel

+ Add a bookmark

Device Info

Today

- SMS over Twilio
from MONTREAL, QC, CA



Gorgeous Finch APP 18:44

Test

Use /sk [text] to reply

How long do I need to wait before getting an HIV test after having sex?

Use /sk [text] to reply

B I

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+ @ Aa



+ Add a bookmark

Use `/sk [text]` to reply

Today

How long do I need to wait before getting an HIV test after having sex?

Use `/sk [text]` to reply



sextedcoord replied APP 18:56

Tests for HIV work well about a month and a half after sex. If someone gets tested earlier, there's more chance the test will say they don't have HIV when they do. You can always go again, though!

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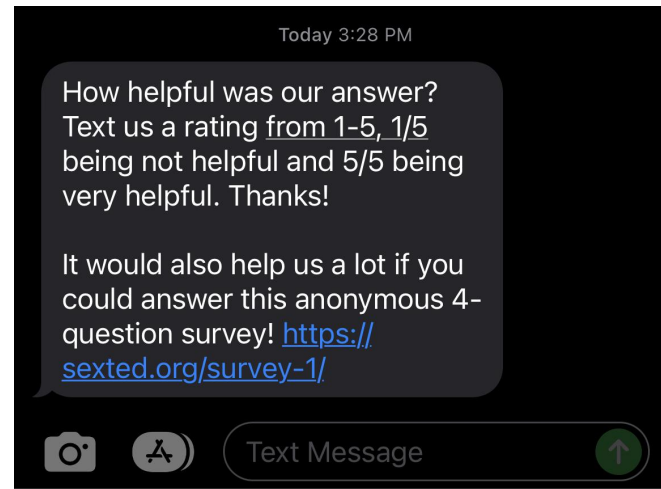
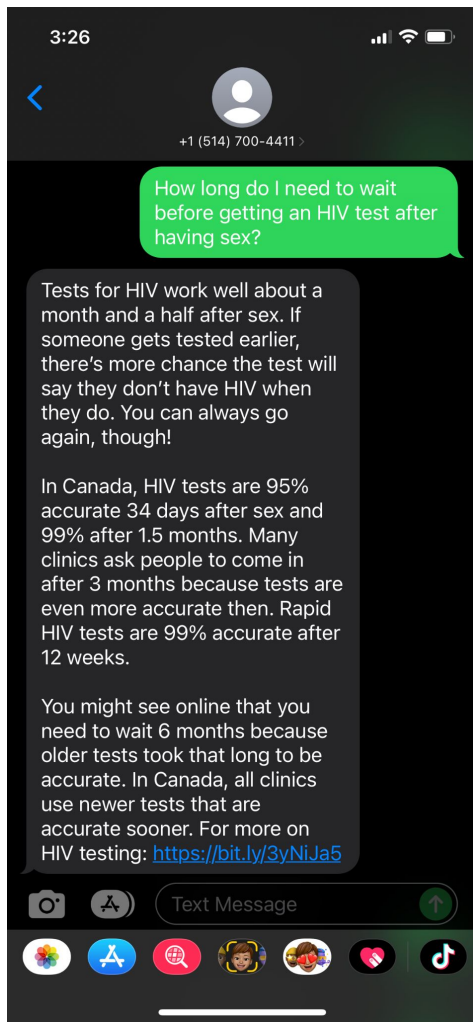
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<https://bit.ly/3yNiJa5> (edited)

B I

`/sk` How helpful was our answer? Text us a rating from 1-5, 1/5 being not helpful and 5/5 being very helpful. Thanks!

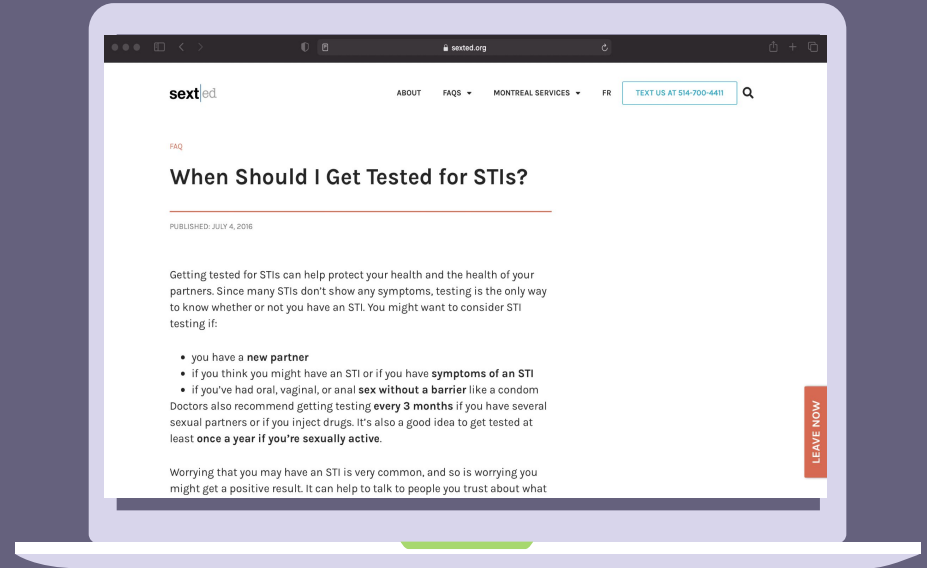
It would also help us a lot if you could answer this anonymous 4-question survey! <https://sexted.org/survey-1/>



Links?



- We try to include a link in every text response - either from our own SextEd website or a reliable resource!
- You can use bit.ly to shorten long URLs!





FAQ

When Should I Get Tested for STIs?

PUBLISHED: JULY 4, 2016

Getting tested for STIs can help protect your health and the health of your partners. Since many STIs don't show any symptoms, testing is the only way to know whether or not you have an STI. You might want to consider STI testing if:

- you have a **new partner**
- if you think you might have an STI or if you have **symptoms of an STI**
- if you've had oral, vaginal, or anal **sex without a barrier** like a condom

Doctors also recommend getting testing **every 3 months** if you have several sexual partners or if you inject drugs. It's also a good idea to get tested at least **once a year if you're sexually active**.

Worrying that you may have an STI is very common, and so is worrying you might get a positive result. It can help to talk to people you trust about what

Key Considerations

- When answering a text:
 - What is the person asking for? What topics might help?
 - Am I making assumptions about: gender, orientation, age, experience, etc.?
 - Am I answering the question?
 - Readability and youth-friendly language
 - Referrals, online and local
- Check out our Resource Kit!

Take Home Messages

Setting up a text-based program is...

- Inexpensive
- Fast
- Easy to add to other organization programs

Take Home Messages

Texting-based programming is great because it...

- Increases accessibility
- Makes it easy to connect people to resources
- Automatically collects data

Thank You!

- Leave us your contact info for digital copies of our resource materials!
- You can also find them on our website:
- sexted.org/how-to-start-a-low-cost-texting-line-aids-2022/

Contact Info

Sam Davin | sexted@accmontreal.org

Kimberly Wong | pdm@accmontreal.org

Saina Beitari | saina.beitari@gmail.com

AIDS Community Care Montreal

514 527-0928

sexted.org



Questions?

Text them into 514-418-0563 !

- We'll answer them live! You can see firsthand how easy a texting line can be!
- We'll answer as many as possible - any we don't get to we'll text back an answer in the next 24 hours (after which the line will close)!
 - And we'll add any frequently answered questions to our Resource Sheet!