

How to Use the Adult Sexual & Reproductive Health Services Referral Form:

A Guide for Referring Entities

1. HAVING AN OPEN CONVERSATION¹

Community members may come to you for guidance or information on a variety of sensitive topics: from questions about birth control methods to discussing healthy relationships to asking about sexually transmitted infections. Here are some tips to help guide you in having a meaningful conversation:

- **Make your conversation a judgement-free zone.**

Allow the person you are speaking with to share their feelings without fear of shame or condemnation. Be careful to not communicate through your words or tone that any feelings or practices are bad or immoral. Perceived judgement will prevent them from communicating with you openly and getting access to the information and guidance they need. Keep the lines of communication open by listening actively and communicating respect for their opinions and experiences.

- **De-stigmatize talking about sex, sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health.**

Be confident in your conversations and reinforce that thinking and talking about sex is completely normal. For many people it is an essential part of life and it is important to be able to talk through challenges when they come up. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" when you don't have all the answers and commit to helping them find the information they are looking for. We have suggested trustworthy online resources in the back of this binder where folks can go for accurate information.

- **Acknowledge the validity of their feelings and experiences.**

Many people we speak with have histories of trauma and adversity navigating institutions and systems that have not taken them seriously, overlooked their concerns, or dismissed them altogether. It is important to be mindful of these possible past experiences and not assume trust. We can build trust with community members by actively acknowledging and validating their experiences & feelings by listening openly and reflecting the language they use.

- **Listen actively and ask open-ended questions.**

Your words are important. Equally important is making sure that the person's voice is heard and respected. Here are some things to say to communicate respect and build trust:

- *"That sounds very difficult."*
- *"How does that make you feel?"*
- *"What do you want your partner to understand?"*
- *"I am hearing you say that... [rephrase what they said]... Is that right?"*

¹ Content adapted from resources created by Power to Decide #TalkingIsPower Month 2018: Champion Guide and #TalkingIsPower: Tips for Trusted Adults 13-17. www.PowerToDecide.org

2. REVIEWING THE SAFER SEX CHART

If someone wants more information about how to prevent pregnancy and STIs (sexually transmitted infections), here is an example of how to review the safer sex chart:

"Let's take a look at these methods that can be used to prevent STIs and/or pregnancy. The barrier methods on the left are used to prevent STIs. The middle box shows methods used to prevent pregnancy, and the chart on the right shows how to use two methods to maximize protection against both pregnancy and STIs." What methods a person wants to talk about may depend on the kinds of sex they are having - pregnancy may or may not be a concern for some young people.

- **LEFT BOX: Preventing STIs with Barrier Methods**

"The safest way to prevent STI transmission is to put a physical barrier between you and the genitals/mouth/anus of your partner. This can be an external condom, internal condom, or dental dam. While condoms can also be used to prevent pregnancy, there are other birth control options available that can be more effective and reliable."

- **MIDDLE BOX: Preventing Pregnancy**

Top Row: Implant, Hormonal IUD, Non-hormonal IUD, Sterilization

"These methods are the best at preventing pregnancy and most convenient."

- Less than 1 out of 100 people will have an accidental pregnancy using these methods.
- IUDs and implants require a one-time visit to a medical provider for insertion. They last 3 to 12 years depending on the method you choose. They can also be removed at any time.
- These methods do not prevent STIs. They should be used with a condom for STI protection.

Middle rows: Pill, Patch, Ring, Shot

"These birth control methods are also good at preventing pregnancy but can be less convenient because you have to do something every day, week, month, or few months."

- As many as 9 out of 100 people will have an accidental pregnancy using these methods.
- These methods require the person to take them every day, or use them once a week, month, or 3 months depending on the method.
- These methods do not prevent STIs. They should be used with a condom for STI protection.

Bottom row: Withdrawal (Pulling Out), Fertility Awareness, Diaphragm, Condom, etc.

"These birth control methods are not quite as good at preventing pregnancy and not as convenient because there is something you have to do each time you have sex."

- As many as 25 out of 100 people will have an accidental pregnancy using one of these methods.
- These methods require the person to take an action every time they have sex.

- **RIGHT BOX: Dual Use of Two Methods and Abstinence**

"The safest way to prevent both pregnancy and STIs, apart from abstinence, is to use two methods, such as a condom and an IUD, or a condom and birth control pills. Never use both an internal and an external condom at the same time. Abstinence is 100% effective in preventing both pregnancy and STIs when used correctly and consistently."

3. NEXT STEPS AFTER REVIEWING THE CHART:

- **Offer more details.**

Offer to review the birth control fact sheets within this binder to provide more in-depth information about specific methods.

- *“Would you like to review more information about any of these methods of protection?”*

- **Offer information about cost of birth control.**

The Affordable Care Act mandated that insurance companies, including Medicaid, must cover birth control methods without out-of-pocket costs. Those without insurance may qualify for assistance programs or low-cost or no-cost birth control through PPNNE based upon income and family size. Visit the ppnne.org website for information about cost or assistance programs available at PPNNE or call us at 1-800-230-7526.

- *“Your insurance will most likely cover the cost of the birth control you choose with no co-pays or deductible payments because of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). If you don’t have insurance or don’t want to bill your insurance, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England can most likely provide you with low-cost or free birth control and sexual health care.”*

- **Offer to make a referral.**

- *“Would you like a referral to a sexual health provider to learn more about your health care options?”*

4. MAKING THE REFERRAL

A. IDENTIFY A SEXUAL HEALTH PROVIDER

When selecting a provider for referral it's important to:

- Discuss referral options for sexual healthcare providers with the individual and make a referral to the provider of their choice.
- If the person you are speaking with is requesting birth control, refer them to family planning providers offering the full range of contraception options - including IUDs and implants (known as LARC). Many of these providers can be identified through a search on <https://bedsider.org/clinics>.
- A list of providers who offer HIV, STI, and Hepatitis testing is available online from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://gettested.cdc.gov/>

B. CONTACT CHOSEN PROVIDER

Several options:

- If possible, call the chosen provider with the individual together to schedule an appointment. Write down the appointment information on the referral form and give a copy of the form to the patient, OR
- Write the provider's contact information on the form, give form to patient, and instruct them to contact the identified provider to schedule an appointment.
- If referring to a PPNNE location, you and/or the patient may:
 - call the PPNNE appointment line (1-800-230-7526), or
 - make an appointment online at ppnne.org

Note: Talk to the reproductive health providers in your area to confirm how best to make and receive referrals to support care coordination.

Thank you very much for using the Family Planning Referral Form!