Activity 4.2  Factors that Influence Contraceptive Decision Making

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to identify and discuss the multiple factors that influence sexual and reproductive health decisions. We will focus on contraceptive decision making, and brainstorm assessment questions that will elicit information about personal values, beliefs, priorities, influences and preferences.

Who should participate?

Appropriate for any staff person who works in a family planning or reproductive health setting.

Especially important for staff who will be offering any contraceptive counseling or education.

Time

30 minutes

Preparation

Review the following:

- Module 4 Preview & Preparation
- Activity 4.2 PowerPoint Presentation
- Activity 4.2 Handouts

Materials

Handouts:

Make one copy for each participant:

- Contraceptive Counseling Process Guide
- How Do I Choose?

Presentation:

Load onto laptop and/or print slides as a handout for participants:

- Factors that Influence Contraceptive Decision-Making

Supplies:

- (if available for presentation) Laptop, projector and screen
- Large paper to stick/tape to the wall or whiteboard
- Markers
Detailed Instructions

1. **Introduce the activity:**

   The purpose of these Module 4 activities is to focus on the interactive nature of a client-centered decision-making process that integrates:

   - Exploring how a client values different method characteristics based on that client’s individual preferences, priorities, and personal circumstances;
   - Helping a client identify a method that best fits their preferences;
   - Working together with the client to establish a plan to use their chosen method; and
   - Providing information in a way that can be easily understood and retained by the client.

   This process, included in the "The Middle" section of the Contraceptive Counseling Process Guide, reminds us to first assess the client’s personal goals and help them identify the important factors in their decision making process.

2. **Review the Key Concepts for Participants.**

   (Optional: Post on large paper or white board.)

   There are three Key Concepts for our activities on interactive client-centered decision making:

   - Our role as professionals is to offer our expertise to support a client-centered decision making process, focused on the goals and preferences of each client.
   - Manually conducting an assessment to explore the many factors that may influence a client’s preference for and satisfaction with a method will help the client make an informed birth control decision.
   - When we use an interactive client-centered decision making process, our clients are much more likely to be satisfied with their chosen method and use it consistently and correctly.

At a Glance

**Introduction**

**Purpose:**
Focus on the interactive nature of a client-centered decision-making process including:
- Exploring how a client values different method characteristics
- Helping a client align preferences with a method
- Working together to establish a plan for use
- Providing easy to understand information

**Key Concepts**

1. Professional role = offer expertise to support client-centered decision making
2. Assessment to explore factors influencing client preferences/satisfaction → informed decision
3. Client-centered process → more satisfied clients, consistent/correct method use
3. **Conduct the PowerPoint Presentation** (or use the slides handout).

   The purpose of this activity is to identify and discuss the multiple factors that influence sexual and reproductive health decisions, and more specifically, contraceptive decision-making.

   Although some clients may come to the clinic with a clear sense of what they need and a clear goal for the current visit, it is still important to conduct an assessment to make sure that they are confident that the method they are choosing is really what’s going to work best for them.

   When clients make an informed decision, that is, they have a clear understanding of their options for birth control and have explored how these options relate to their preferences, they are much more likely to be happy with their method and use it every time they have sex and always the right way.

   So what should be included in our assessment?

   **What do we want to ask about?**

   **How do we learn about these other factors?**

   (Optional: Write responses on large paper or whiteboard.)
These factors will likely have been raised during the brainstorm on the previous slide.

When thinking of all of the different areas of assessment you could explore with a client, it’s helpful to think about where you might start. Here are three key questions to consider at the start of an assessment conversation:

- Does the client have any **health issues and/or safety considerations** that would rule out using any methods?
- What is the client’s **reproductive life plan or pregnancy and parenting intentions**, both now and in the future?
- **What’s important** to your client in a method? This will be different for every client. Some clients don’t want hormones and others just want the most effective method, some need their method to be private, etc. This key question helps you start to identify how your client values different method characteristics.

**Trainer Tip**: Characteristics of birth control methods are reviewed in detail in Module 3, Activities 3.1 and 3.2.

Many of these factors will likely have been raised during the brainstorm on the earlier slide.

Often when counseling we move too quickly to the birth control method decision without exploring a person’s sexual activity decisions and other personal considerations.

Click the mouse for each bullet to appear.

- **Religious or cultural considerations** may play a role.
- Clients may have a range of **values and preferences**, that may differ from your own. Remember, personal values are deeply held and must be respected.
- It’s also helpful to talk about **partner involvement**. For example, if a female client with a male partner wants to use male condoms, has the partner agreed to use them all the time, and is he able to use them correctly?
- **Personal life circumstances** may influence decision-making, such as homelessness and income, mental health issues, substance and/or alcohol use, or other life or social situations.
- **Reproductive/contraceptive coercion or intimate partner violence** may have a major impact on decision-making. A partner or another person may influence a client’s access to and/or consistent and correct use of a birth control method.
• It’s important to discuss your client’s needs in terms of protection from STDs and HIV.
• Assess whether your client has concerns based on myths or misinformation that should be clarified.
• Different clients will value or prioritize different characteristics of birth control methods. Some may be looking for the most effective method, while for others, how the method is used, and how often, will be a major factor in their decision making. For others, side effects may be most important.

Looking at this list and the one you all generated, where do you already ask about these factors? Do we cover all of this on our forms or EHR?

Discuss which currently used assessment forms or EHR screens at your site would bring up these issues.

The “Middle” section of the Contraceptive Counseling Process Guide also provides a list of assessment factors to explore.

Now let’s think about HOW you get at this information. What specific questions might you ask?

Some of this information will be readily available from the client’s history form, like the “other health issues.” Try to brainstorm questions to address the list on the previous slide.

Consider when it would be useful to ask open-ended questions and when to ask a closed-ended question.

When do you summarize what your client has been saying?

Write ideas on large paper or whiteboard.
(Distribute copies of the “How Do I Choose?” handout.)

You can use this “How Do I Choose?” job aid to help you think of questions to ask both female and male clients.

What do you think of these questions? Any that stand out?

How do you think you could use this tool?

Which type of staff in our clinic are most likely to be responsible for asking which questions?

Remember to keep your personal values and biases out of the counseling session. There may be things that surface that push your buttons or that you have strong feelings about, but the purpose of exploring these other factors or influences is to help your client determine what method will work best for her.

What if the client’s decision about birth control is different from what you (as the counselor) think is the “best” method for your client (or couple)?

At times, we want very much to make sure a client has a very effective method, such as an IUD or an implant.

But the final choice must be the client’s choice — one that is made freely and with accurate information.

For example, in response to the question, “What is the best method for a teen?” two providers might respond in two very different ways, depending on their own knowledge, interpretation, and values.

(Ask two volunteers to read the italicized statements aloud.)

We know the second statement is inaccurate; IUDs are safe for nearly all women, including teens.

However, the first statement is also false. It assumes the best method for a client based on only one thing — their age.

The best method for a teen — and for any client — is the one the client chooses.
Any other questions or comments about influencing factors?

References & Resources and Contact Information are included at the end of each presentation.

4. **Wrap up the activity.** In your own words, review these key messages:

   - **Ask questions** — Clients may not always be aware of the many factors that could affect their use of and satisfaction with a method until they’re asked the questions we discussed.
   - **Our clients must make the choice.** When clients make an informed decision, fully understand the method and have explored all the possible issues (such as potential side effects) that could affect use, they are much more likely to use their method consistently, correctly and be happy with their choice.
   - **Share your knowledge; not your values.** Provide clients with accurate information and options, but stay clear of letting your personal values and opinions influence your clients’ decisions.
   - **Thank you for helping identify and create the foundation for interactive client-centered decision-making.**

**Trainer Tip:** Activities 4.3 and 4.4 will give participants an opportunity to explore these influences further and practice applying what you’ve learned with case studies and role plays.
## Process

### Beginning (and throughout)

**Establish and maintain rapport with the client**
- Warmly greet the client by name and introduce yourself
- Be genuine, showing respect and empathy
- Ask about the client's reason(s) for today's visit, plan and prioritize visit
- Explain private and confidential services
- Ask open-ended questions
- Respectfully affirm what you see and hear (showing interest, support and cultural awareness)
- Show that you care by listening (verbally and non-verbally)
- Reflect on what you observe and hear, to gain a deeper understanding
- Summarize key points throughout with a focus on the client's goals
- If using EMR, position the monitor to keep eye contact

---

**Middle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assess the client’s needs and personalize discussions accordingly</th>
<th>Work with the client interactively to establish a birth control method plan</th>
<th>Provide information that can be understood and retained by the client</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review and update the medical, sexual and social history</td>
<td>Ask open-ended questions about concerns or possible barriers relevant to method choice</td>
<td>Provide balanced, unbiased, tailored information about method characteristics in an interactive conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore client preferences regarding method characteristics: frequency of use, effectiveness, how to use, menstrual changes, side effects, and benefits</td>
<td>Explore the client's method preferences, and if appropriate, offer additional information about the most effective methods</td>
<td>Provide accurate information (correct use, effectiveness, benefits, side effects, potential risks, STD/HIV protection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask about client knowledge and experience with birth control methods</td>
<td>Help the client to optimize method choice by assisting the client in aligning their preferences with their method selection</td>
<td>Use clear, understandable words, images, materials, models and/or sample methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address pregnancy and parenting intention/ambivalence along with STD/HIV protection</td>
<td>Reflect back important thoughts or feelings you hear from the client and/or feelings you sense from the discussion</td>
<td>Use numbers and comparisons that are easy to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectfully explore client beliefs and feelings, including ethnic, cultural, and/or individual factors that may be relevant to their birth control method decisions and method use</td>
<td>Clarify partner involvement and the role of others who may be important to the client’s decision making and method use</td>
<td>Assess and address myths and misinformation in a respectful and affirming way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affirm and support the decision making process with a respectful, nonjudgmental approach in helping the client make a plan</td>
<td>Include information about STD protection and emergency contraception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Closing

**Confirm client understanding**
- Ask the client to tell and show what was learned (teach-back) and provide additional information, as needed
- Address any possible barriers to a successful plan and method use
- Confirm the client's plan for correct method use and follow-up, including what to do if dissatisfied with the method, back-up method, and emergency contraception, as needed
- Provide contact information and future opportunities for follow up, other methods or services
- Summarize with key points and provide a friendly close

---

**FPNTC** is supported by the Office of Population Affairs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The information presented does not necessarily represent the views of OPA, DHHS, or FPNTC member organizations.

April 2016
How Do I Choose?
Things to think about when choosing a birth control method

- What is important to me in a birth control method for me and my partner?
- How would I support my partner to take a pill every day?
- Would I consider sterilization?
- Do I need protection from STDs?
- How would I support my partner to get a shot every 3 months?
- Would I (could I) stop during sex to use a condom?
- How could I support my partner to get a shot every 3 months?
- Will I use a condom every time?
- What would it be like to talk to my partner about birth control?
- How would I feel if my partner got pregnant?
- Would I consider sterilization?
How Do I Choose?
Things to think about when choosing a birth control method

- What is really important to me in a birth control method?
- How will I do at taking a pill every day?
- How do I feel about putting something inside me?
- How would I feel if I got pregnant?
- How would I feel if my period changed? If I had spotting between periods, or no periods at all?
- What would it be like to talk to my partner about this?
- Would I (could I) stop during sex to use a condom?
- How would I feel if I got pregnant?
- How would I feel if my period changed? If I had spotting between periods, or no periods at all?
- How would I manage to get my shot every 3 months?
- Are there people in my life whose opinions I need to think about?
- Is it okay if other people know I’m on birth control?
- Do I need protection from STDs?
- Would I consider sterilization?