

Module 4: Interactive Client-Centered Decision Making

Module Preview and Preparation

Key Concepts for Participants

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

About This Module

This module focuses on the interactive nature of a client-centered decision making process by integrating concepts from the first four **QFP Quality Counseling Principles**. The training activities in this module will help participants explore the complexities of contraceptive decision making and the various influences and priorities that individuals have when considering family planning method choices.

This module addresses the following **Quality Counseling Principles** included in the *middle* section of the **Contraceptive Counseling Process Guide**:

Principle: Assess the client's needs and personalize discussions accordingly

Principle: Work with the client interactively to establish a birth control method plan

Middle		
<p>Assess the client's needs and personalize discussions accordingly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review and update the medical, sexual and social history ▶ Explore client preferences regarding method characteristics: frequency of use, effectiveness, how to use, menstrual changes, side effects, and benefits ▶ Ask about client knowledge and experience with birth control methods ▶ Address pregnancy and parenting intention/ambivalence along with STD/HIV protection ▶ 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 	<p>Work with the client interactively to establish a birth control method plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ask open-ended questions about concerns or possible barriers relevant to method choice ▶ Explore the client's method preferences, and if appropriate, offer additional information about the most effective methods ▶ Help the client to optimize method choice by assisting the client in aligning their preferences with their method selection ▶ Reflect back important thoughts or feelings you hear from the client and/or feelings you sense from the discussion ▶ Clarify partner involvement and the role of others who may be important to the client's decision making and method use ▶ Affirm and support the decision making process with a respectful, nonjudgmental approach in helping the client make a plan 	<p>Provide information that can be understood and retained by the client</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide balanced, unbiased, tailored information about method characteristics in an interactive conversation ▶ Provide accurate information (correct use, effectiveness, benefits, side effects, potential risks, STD/HIV protection) ▶ Use clear, understandable words, images, materials, models and/or sample methods ▶ Use numbers and comparisons that are easy to understand ▶ Assess and address myths and misinformation in a respectful and affirming way ▶ Include information about STD protection and emergency contraception

These principles highlight key elements of an interactive, client-centered assessment and decision making process. This process is supported by the principles and skills discussed in earlier modules related to rapport-building, communication, and effective education.

Why This Module Matters

When clients make an informed birth control decision — meaning, they have a clear understanding of all of their options for birth control, have explored how these options relate to their preferences, and have chosen freely — they are much more likely to be satisfied with their method and use it consistently and correctly.



Important Terms

As you prepare to deliver this module, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

Client-centered decision making involves:

- Exploring the client's preferences for method characteristics, including assessing knowledge and preferences around method effectiveness.
- Using client-centered interpersonal skills, including building rapport through such techniques as asking open ended questions, providing affirmations, and reflecting the client's experiences. (Module 2);
- Providing tailored education that can be understood and retained by the client (Module 3);
- Providing support for clients in identifying which methods are the best match for their preferences; and
- Respecting how the client wishes to make decisions about their birth control method.

Influences that a client may consider related to choosing a contraceptive method may include the client's pregnancy intentions or reproductive life plan, past contraceptive experiences, preferences around method type and use, desired effectiveness, concerns about side effects, and STD risk factors, as well as the attitudes of a partner or parent, among other factors.

Reproductive life planning includes discussing one's life goals as they relate to childbearing. It helps both women and men think about if and when they would like to have children.

Trainer Tip: See the special "Trainer Notes" section of this module for additional background as you prepare to discuss the important topic of client-centered decision making with staff.



Training Activities in this Module

Activity 4.1 A “Perfect” Birth Control Method? (30 minutes)

Purpose: Participants will be able to recognize factors that influence client preferences around birth control during various life stages, and will be aware of their own personal preferences in order to prevent bias.

In this activity, you will:

- Invite participants to brainstorm criteria a person would look for in a “perfect” method.
- Review the results of the “criteria” brainstorm, exploring the various considerations and influences that are a part of a client’s contraceptive decision making process.

Activity 4.2 Factors that Influence Contraceptive Decision Making (30 minutes)

Purpose: Participants will be able to identify assessment questions to elicit information about a client’s personal values, beliefs, priorities, influences and preferences related to sexual and reproductive health and contraceptive decision making.

In this activity, you will:

- Lead participants in a brainstorm of factors that influence contraceptive decision making.
- Discuss assessment approaches participants could use to explore these factors with a client, briefly reviewing the “Middle” of the **Contraceptive Counseling Process Guide**.

Activity 4.3 Personalized and Interactive Client Assessment (30-45 minutes)

Purpose: Participants will be able to intentionally tailor the interactive assessment process and educational messages based on a client’s values, goals and preferences.

In this activity, you will:

- Guide participants through a case study of an interactive assessment process.
- Solicit suggestions throughout the case study of possible assessment questions.

Activity 4.4 Client-Centered Decision Making (60-90 minutes)

Purpose: Participants will be able to engage clients in an interactive, client-centered decision making process through which a client determines her or his preferred birth control method.

In this activity, you will:

- Instruct participants to form groups to work through role play situations, rotating through the roles of a “counselor,” “client” and “observer.”
- Distribute role play scenarios, observer checklists, handouts, and tools to facilitate the practice.



General Guidance for All Activities:

- Suggested language for the trainer to say out loud is in italics and shaded. We encourage you to cover these points in your own words and add additional comments relevant to your site.

Example:

This activity is to help us step back and think about what “client-centered” really means and how it’s demonstrated when a person is making a very personal and important life decision.

- We encourage you to be creative with how you present the content within the activities. Have fun, and make it your own! While the content is evidence-based and should be delivered with fidelity, there are many training approaches you could use to help your participants engage with this content. See *Effective Teaching Methods* for ideas, or incorporate your own favorite training strategies!



Trainer Notes

Module 4 focuses on the interactive nature of a client-centered decision making process by integrating concepts from the first four **QFP Quality Counseling Principles**. Due to the importance of this topic, both for trainers preparing to teach these skills and staff preparing to implement them, we've included a special section for this module that offers additional background information and key considerations.

Foundational Assessment

A client-centered decision making process begins with an assessment of the client's needs in order to personalize discussions accordingly. The assessment may include:

1. **Reviewing and updating the medical, sexual and social history** to clarify potential health issues, cultural and personal life considerations, psychological concerns, and a client's values and preferences.
2. **Exploring pregnancy and parenting intention along with STD protection.**
3. **Asking about client knowledge and experience with birth control methods.**
4. **Respectfully exploring client beliefs and feelings, including ethnic, cultural, and/or individual factors that may be relevant to their birth control method decisions and method use.**
5. Asking, if relevant, about a partner's involvement in the selected method of choice.
6. **Assessing myths and addressing misinformation in an assuring way.**
7. Based on the assessment, **tailoring information to the client's needs and knowledge gaps** to ensure client understanding.

While the above items offer a foundational framework for assessment, there may be a need to consider other decision making factors in a client's life:

- **Personal life circumstances** may influence decision making such as homelessness and income, substance and/or alcohol use, or other life or social situations.
- **Reproductive/contraceptive coercion** may play a role in decision making. A partner or another person may have a major influence on a client's access to and/or consistent and correct use of a birth control method. Sexual coercion and sexual violence may also play a role, if a client is being coerced or forced into sexual contact against their will.
- Asking about the **opinions of other people in the client's life (e.g., partner, parent)** or any other influence(s) on family planning decisions should be considered and explored, as indicated.

An interactive client-centered decision making process involves assessing and being guided by the client's preferences, while also making sure the client has complete and accurate information about all available methods including the method effectiveness, potential side effects and how clients might manage them, and other considerations in method choice that relate to each client's life and lifestyle.

Decision Making and the Impact of Ambivalence

Decision making related to sexual activity and/or the use of contraception can be very complex and filled with conflicting feelings that result in ambivalence, or thoughts or statements such as "I'm just not sure" or "I have no idea what I want to do." A client may experience ambivalence when struggling with factors related to birth control decision making but not yet specifically related to a method choice. These decisions may be related to their personal values, relationships, and other life circumstances.



Example: A young woman is beginning to think about her advancing age and wondering if she is ready to plan a pregnancy even if she has no steady partner. This might be a time to explore reproductive life planning and pregnancy goals before deciding on a birth control method.

Example: A teen client is still not certain about becoming sexually active. Some days he may want to have sex; other days he remembers his parent has strongly advised against having sex at an early age.

Use your assessment to clarify these three questions related to contraceptive decision making:

1. *Is your client clear about being sexually active now?*
(yes; no; not sure; maybe not with this partner; etc.)
2. *Is your client comfortable deciding to use birth control?*
(yes; no; not sure; yes, but it's against my parent's choice/my partner's choice/my culture/etc.)

If “yes” to using birth control:

3. *What's important to your client in a birth control method?*

Provider Influence on Client Decision Making:

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 complete and accurate information.

A common example of this challenge is when a question is asked: *What is the best method for a teen?*

- Some professionals who provide contraceptive counseling will answer — *An IUD is best for a teen because it's one of the most effective methods.*

- But another professional may be relying on outdated information and say — *Teens should not have an IUD because IUDs are too much of a health risk.*

In fact, neither of these hypothetical professionals would be right. The evidence shows that an IUD is safe for nearly all women, including teens. However, it is also wrong to assume that a given method is best for a client based just on observable client characteristics (like age) and method effectiveness. We must always share accurate, balanced, and complete information about all birth control options.

What is the best method of birth control? The one the client chooses. Evidence continues to show that clients are more likely to be satisfied and to continue to practice family planning when they have adequate information about contraceptive options, have their concerns heard and addressed, and make a decision about their method without pressure or coercion.

We must also remind clients that it is okay for them to change their minds about birth control. Their choice about a method may be different in different circumstances, with different partners, at different stages of the life course, or if their chosen method simply doesn't meet their needs as well as they thought it would.

To facilitate these very important (and sometimes complex) decision making conversations with clients it is important to remember our commitment to a client-centered, culturally aware approach to prevent unintentional bias in an attempt to “help” your client.

Our professional goal for contraceptive counseling and education is to engage in a shared (client — provider) decision making process. The focus is on the client's preferences, needs and goals, while the provider ensures that the client has accurate information, is considering birth control options that are safe and effective, and has access to additional referrals and resources as needed.