



TAKING A YOUTH-CENTERED SEXUAL HISTORY

At a teen's first visit or by 12 years of age, it is important to initiate discussion about sexuality. Teens want their health care providers to ask these questions in a supportive and non-judgmental manner. Providers **must establish trust through dialogue and body language**. Refer to "*Do's and Don'ts When Talking to Youth About Sexual Health*" document for details.

GENERAL TIPS

- **Remember!** State the **parameters of confidentiality** before you take a sexual history.
- **Use a developmentally oriented** approach.
- **Use open ended questions** that start with "who", "what," "how," "where", "when," or "tell me". Refer to the "*Sexual Health Counseling Tool*" document for examples.
- **Be aware of judgmental questions** (ex. You don't have unprotected sex, do you?) and behaviors (ex. shaking your head as you ask questions). Using "why" may also be viewed as judgmental.
- **It may help to frame questions** in the third person. (ex What have you heard about your peers/friends having sex?)
- **Use understandable language** - avoid clinical terms
- **Ask adolescents to clarify** what they mean, if they are using language you don't understand, to make sure you are both talking about the same thing.
- **Use reflective listening.** Paraphrase what the young person has said and repeat it back to him/her.
- **Do not make any assumptions**, particularly about initiation of sexual activity, type of activity or sexual orientation and/or sexual preference.
- **Educate teens about their options** so they are in a position to make informed choices.
- **Present clear information** and educational materials.
- **Refer teens to other resources** based on their individual needs.
- **Summarize your discussion** at the end of the visit (ex: We talked about a lot of things today. I heard you say...).