

Reproductive Life Planning (RLP) Methods and Resources

Public health experts encourage all health care providers to ask all women (and men) of reproductive age about their reproductive goals to improve maternal and infant health. Many beneficiaries, however, never get asked about their reproductive goals. This may be because of time constraints or lack of provider comfort or skill. It may also reflect bias about who should or shouldn't have children or assumptions based on the beneficiary's ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, gender, or relationships. If reproductive goals are brought up, it is often in the context of "making a plan." Unfortunately, this approach may not address or respect the complex feelings our beneficiaries have about their own reproduction and many providers don't know beneficiaries well enough or have the time to explore these feelings and needs.

Home visitors are ideal counselors and supporters to ask these questions and explore the needs. These tools are intended to support home visitors working with beneficiaries about reproductive goals and contraceptive and preconception health counseling. They use the PATH approach. PATH tools are deliberately worded in a way that allows the patient to interpret the questions within their own lives, allowing, often for the first time, the opportunity to consider their reproductive goals. It allows for honest, shared decision-making discussion between beneficiary and counselor. They promote active listening on the part of the counselor, which is central to patient-centered care and ensures that beneficiaries voices are heard. They help beneficiaries gain clarity about their reproductive goals and support them in realizing those goals.

These three tools help counselors ask questions about a beneficiary's desire for children; timing of a desired pregnancy; counseling tips on contraceptive preferences and choices if a beneficiary wants to postpone or prevent pregnancy; and helping beneficiaries plan for a healthy pregnancy if they desire pregnancy or are ambivalent. The tools can be downloaded and printed from the website or can be ordered:

https://www.fpntc.org/sites/default/files/resources/fpntc_path_clnt_cntrd_cnslng_2019-03.pdf
https://www.fpntc.org/sites/default/files/resources/fpntc_eff_qs_path_card_2019-03.pdf
https://www.fpntc.org/sites/default/files/resources/fpntc_preconcpn_counsel_chklist_2019-06.pdf

Here are two visual aids for talking with beneficiaries about contraceptive preferences and choosing a birth control method:

1. Beyond the Pill: <https://beyondthepill.ucsf.edu/educational-materials>
Beyond-the-Pill partners with Bedsider to make their materials easily available. They can be downloaded and printed or ordered online for free.
2. Contraceptive Technology: <http://www.contraceptivetechnology.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Contraception-Effectiveness.pdf>
Contraceptive Technology has an easy to follow chart that can be downloaded and printed.

Here are four additional websites with further resources:

1. <https://www.envisionsrh.com/> Family Planning and Reproductive Justice resources: counseling skills, visual aids, job aids, videos, online resources
2. <https://www.fpntc.org/> Training modules, online courses on family planning counseling and services. It is the national training resource for Title X family planning programs

3. <https://beforeandbeyond.org/resources/> Resources and training modules on Preconception Health as well as useful screening tools
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/preconception/index.html> The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)'s Preconception Health website has guidance for planning for a healthy pregnancy.