

## Introducing the Topic: Family Planning and Sexual Health

While clients may feel comfortable talking with you about their substance use, they may be more hesitant or uncomfortable talking about their sexual health. Here are some tips to make the transition and ask the Essential Sexual Health Questions:

- Note that sexual and reproductive health is an important part of one's overall health and well-being.
- State that you ask all clients these questions to better understand their wellness goals and any potential needs. Say, for example, "You have a lot going on right now with <insert SUD>, I just want to make sure that we're meeting all your health needs while you're here."
- Assess their comfort level. For example, you might say, "If you're ok with it, I'm going to ask you a few questions to assess your sexual and reproductive health needs and if you might benefit from additional family planning services."
- Explain how accessing regular sexual and reproductive services, including contraceptive counseling, counseling about healthy pregnancies, abortion, and STI testing can prevent more serious health problems.

## Initiating a Referral

Here is some suggested language for initiating a referral:

- Can I refer you to a clinic or provider where you can get tested for HIV and other STIs? They can also give you more information about how to protect yourself going forward.
- Do you want to talk about being prepared for a healthy pregnancy? I can refer you to a provider who can talk with you about your preconception health and what you can do to increase the chances of having a healthy pregnancy and baby.
- Would you like to talk about avoiding/preventing pregnancy? I can refer you to educational materials or a provider who can make sure that you have all the information about your birth control options to help you make the best decisions for you.
- If the client says no, leave the door open: "If you ever change your mind, please let me know and I can connect you to resources or refer you to a provider."

## Practice

Take turns practicing:

- Starting the conversation and introducing the topic
- Implementing the screening tool
- Discussing a referral

Be mindful of body language, verbal and non-verbal communication, and person-centered techniques, such as asking open-ended questions, practicing reflective listening, encouraging self-motivation, affirming, and summarizing statements, to have an effective, nonjudgmental conversation.