



**Comprehensive
Counseling for
Reproductive Health:
An Integrated
Curriculum**

Participant's Handbook



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Reproductive Health:
An Integrated
Curriculum**

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ENGENDERHEALTH

Improving Women's Health Worldwide

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Preface

Since the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the international development and public health communities have embraced a more comprehensive reproductive health agenda and have sought to provide an expanded range of services in a more integrated fashion. This shift to integrated reproductive health has included heightened attention to the rights of clients, the quality of care, informed choice, and gender sensitivity.

Equally important, the shift has brought increased recognition of clients' broad, interrelated sexual and reproductive health needs and of the changes required throughout the health care system to meet them. If service programs are to seize all opportunities to identify and meet clients' reproductive health needs more holistically, they must take a client-centered approach, link services so as to offer comprehensive care that covers clients' interrelated needs, and ensure that their providers are sensitive to medical, behavioral, and social issues that may underlie the expressed reasons for the client's visit.

Providers require training and institutional support to develop the skills, knowledge, and comfort they need to communicate effectively with their clients about health care that relates to the function of reproduction, the anatomy that supports that function, and the behaviors related to sexuality and reproduction. This includes, for example, family planning, maternal health, sexually transmitted infections, and related sexual practices. All of these services and subjects share certain characteristics that make them particularly sensitive: They are intensely personal and command a high degree of privacy; they are associated with strongly held beliefs; and they are the subject of social, religious, political, and legal strictures. All also are significantly affected by sexual partners and behaviors, which bear directly on an individual's choices, health status, and treatment outcomes.

In 2001, a literature survey conducted by EngenderHealth noted a dearth of training resources to help providers counsel clients about their reproductive health in a comprehensive manner. Existing training materials on counseling largely ignored a discussion of sexual practices and their relationship to health. Similarly, providers generally addressed the different areas of reproductive health care separately, without regard for what these areas have in common, for what linkages there are among them, or for how interrelated clients' reproductive health needs often are. Discomfort and lack of information related to sexuality as a health issue remain widespread among both clients and providers, posing a substantial barrier to effective client-oriented counseling and good client-provider interaction. Opportunities for addressing the whole client and all of his or her reproductive health needs too often are missed, producing a negative impact on the public health of communities.

This curriculum responds to the identified gap in existing training materials and fills a field-expressed need for help in developing knowledge about, skills in, attitudes toward, and comfort with effective communication and counseling in all areas of reproductive health, including sex-

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uality. It thus adopts the term *sexual and reproductive health* to describe the scope of health issues sought by those who would receive integrated counseling.

This curriculum's intended audiences are health care providers, their supervisors, and the managers of the programs in which they work. The counseling skills addressed here are expected to be relevant to the provision of both preventive and curative health services through the participants' national health systems. Finally, the curriculum's participatory approach to defining terms and to generating profiles of potential clients is designed to assist trainees in addressing the realities of and exploring the reproductive health priorities of their communities in a culturally appropriate manner.

Acknowledgments

Comprehensive Counseling for Reproductive Health: An Integrated Curriculum represents the work of many teams and country programs at EngenderHealth. It is the culmination of a process that began in 1998, when sexual and reproductive health (SRH) counseling training tools and skills-development exercises were introduced to EngenderHealth¹ staff from five global teams and 12 country programs. This curriculum's development also involved follow-up surveys and interviews on field needs, a literature search and review of training materials, planning and coordination among several global teams, writing, and field testing. Thus, many individuals and EngenderHealth teams must be recognized and thanked for their input into this training package. (All individuals recognized below were with EngenderHealth when this curriculum was developed or written, unless otherwise noted; in addition, some EngenderHealth teams acknowledged here either no longer exist or operate under a different name.)

A staff-development workshop on informed choice and counseling training, held in Bangkok in 1998, was conducted by members of EngenderHealth's Advances in Informed Choice, Clinical Services Support, Postabortion Care, Reproductive Health Linkages, and Training teams, with major support from the staff of EngenderHealth's Bangkok regional office and with participation by staff from 12 country programs.

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The curriculum was conceptualized, drafted, and reviewed over the period 2000 to 2002 by Julie Becker, Dr. Fabio Castaño, Dr. Carmela Cordero, Kristina Graff, James Griffin, Connie Kamara, Jan Kumar, Andrew Levack, Manisha Mehta, Amy Shire, Jill Tabbutt-Henry (coordinator), and Peter Twyman. A literature search and review of training materials was performed in 2001 by Kathryn L. Schnippel Bistline (intern).

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¹Prior to March 2001, EngenderHealth was known as AVSC International.

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Although the development of this curriculum was coordinated by the Advances in Informed Choice Team, much of the curriculum and the participants' materials were adapted from materials developed by other teams at EngenderHealth, including the HIV/STI Team, the Maternity Care and Postabortion Care Team, the Men As Partners Team, and the Quality Improvement Team. The following EngenderHealth training materials, in particular, are used widely throughout this curriculum:

- AVSC International. 1995. *Family planning counseling: A curriculum prototype*. Trainer's Manual. New York.
- EngenderHealth. 2000. *Introduction to men's reproductive health services*. Trainer's Manual and Participant's Handbook. New York.
- EngenderHealth. 2002. *Integration of HIV/STI prevention, sexuality, and dual protection in family planning counseling: A training manual*. Working draft. Volume 1—Manual; Volume 2—Handouts. New York.
- EngenderHealth. 2002. *Youth-friendly services: A manual for service providers*. New York.
- EngenderHealth. 2003. *EngenderHealth online courses: Sexuality and sexual health online minicourse, sexually transmitted infections online minicourse, and HIV and AIDS online minicourse*. [Online.] Available: <http://www.engenderhealth.org/res/onc/index.html>.
- EngenderHealth. 2003. *Counseling and communicating with men*. New York.
- EngenderHealth. 2003. *Counseling the postabortion client: A training curriculum*. New York.
- EngenderHealth. 2003. *Choices in family planning: Informed and voluntary decision making*. New York.

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