

The Partner Notification Counselling session is intended to reduce risks for future STI by getting partners checked and treated. While STI and HIV knowledge and condom use are included in this counselling, the focus is on partner notification. Some key points to remember...

Partner notification has the double value of helping the partner and protecting the participant.

Notification of partners must be considered on a partner-by-partner basis.

STI and HIV have different implications for notifying partners and will usually be discussed separately. But because we are recruiting STI patients, whether HIV positive or not, we will focus on STI partner notification.

Partner notification is not the same as disclosure and can occur without disclosure.

Our objective is to give the participant options and choices for how to notify partners, but if the partner can be identified and contacted, we should resist making notification an option itself...unless there is sound basis for doing so.



Introduction and Project Explanation

The counselling/client interaction starts even before the counselling session begins. So establish good rapport to make the client feel comfortable by being warm and friendly.

Introduce yourself to the client. Welcome the client to the session and thank them for participating. Give them a brief introduction to the session and let them know what will occur and an indication of time.

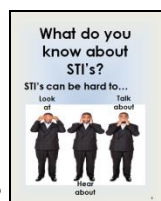
- “I wanted to welcome you today and say thank you for participating. I would like to start by letting you know what this program is about. We are going to spend some time talking about health information, especially sexual health. The focus is on you and how you can avoid getting STI in the future—so you can stay sexually healthy. I will try to answer all of your questions and concerns about your sexual health. Anything I cannot answer, I can help you find the answer. I should make you aware that everything we talk about today will be kept in this room. So feel comfortable to share information with me about yourself because I will not share it with anyone else. How does that sound?”
- “Feel free to stop me if you have any questions.”
- “I want to remind you that I am going to record our session. Only the researchers will listen to the recording. No one at the clinic will have access to the recording.”

Start the session of by asking the client to talk a little about themselves and why they have come to the clinic.

- “So tell me a little about yourself so I can know you better.”
- “How do you feel right now?”

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014

- “Thank you for sharing and I have listened to everything you have said.”



What do you know about STIs?

This is the transition into talking about STI and getting the basic STI knowledge.

Remind the participant that our focus is on sexual health – which means avoiding STI in the future. So, let's talk about STI.



STI can have no signs of symptoms

It is important to start the discussion of STI facts by acknowledging that many STI can be silent...that someone can have an STI, pass it to their partners and not even know they have an STI.

Ask the participant if they are aware of that...and if they have questions...



Common STI

When all STI go without treatment, they will eventually cause signs and symptoms. The infection is progressed when this happens and if it is not treated earlier it will only get worse.

The purpose of showing pictures of symptomatic STI is to educate the client on the sign and symptoms of common Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Briefly talk and describe each one.

Do not ask the client which Sexually Transmitted Infection they have. However, if the client offers that information, then explore how that makes the client feel.

- “These are the Sexually Transmitted Infections that are prevalent in our area such as Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Genital Herpes, and Genital Warts. You should be aware of the signs and symptoms of these infections because it is important to protect yourself. Here are some common Sexually Transmitted Infections. Here are the male pictures and here are the female pictures.”

HIV as a Sexually Transmitted infection – and it does not have signs or symptoms until a person starts to become very ill. That can take years to happen.

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014

- “Another common Sexually Transmitted Infection is HIV. As you can see, there is no picture for HIV. That is because you cannot tell when someone is infected. There is no sore, no discharge, no burning, no pain, and no cure. Only when HIV has progressed for years will a person start to become ill...and they will become very ill. But like other STI there are treatments...but no cure.”



Your recent visit to the clinic

Here we will link the participant's own experience to the session by using their recent clinic visit.

“I would like to ask you about your visit here at the clinic when my colleague asked you to do the survey and whether you might come today. What brought you to the clinic that day? Did you see a nurse? So tell me what happened?”

The participant will describe their STI experience which may or may not involve symptoms and may or may not involve treatment. However, if they were properly identified and recruited, their visit should have been STI related. It is important to determine the nature of their situation and the purpose of their STI visit.



What can you do to avoid getting and STI in the future

This question should be asked of the participant. There are a few possible answers. Be sure that condoms and **something having to do with partners** are included.



How about Condoms? Male Condoms-

For the condom section, explore how the participant feels about using condoms and discuss when they have used condoms in the past. Ask about both male and female condoms.

“Condoms protect against STI and HIV, so what gets in the way of using them?”

Are there things the participant has tried that have helped them use condoms? What has worked and encourage using those strategies in the future.

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014

Note: It is unlikely that a participant has never used a condom. If they need to see how to use a condom, you may use the Appendix in the back to do a condom demonstration.

Tell the participant that they will receive some male and female condoms before they leave today.



Not just condoms

All participants should be aware by this point in the session that condoms will protect them from STI's, but we know that people do not use condoms 100% of the time. Introduce the idea that another way to avoid getting an STI in the future is to have sex with people who ARE NOT INFECTED WITH STI'S OR HIV.

“We know that people are not using condoms EVERY SINGLE TIME they have sex and that is why they are getting STI's. So another way to avoid getting an STI in the future is to get sex partners checked and treated for STI.”



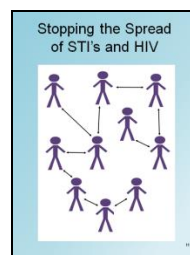
Sexual Network

Discuss the concept of sexual network – the partners that you have recently had, those you may have now, and those you will have the future.

“We have been talking up to this point about STI's and HIV and how using condoms or telling our partners that we have an STI can stop the spread of STI's. So we know that STI's are spread between partners. Let's take a closer look at how that happens. It happens in what we call a Sexual Network. A sexual network is like our social group – the people we spend time with – but for a sexual network the people are just those who we have sex with. Many times the people in our sexual network do not know each other, but sometimes they do know each other. And many times they will have other sex partners that we do not know about.”

Discuss the concept of a sex network to assess if the participant understands the concept.

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014



Stopping the Spread of STI / Sexual Network Activity

Materials:

- Activity board

10 Chips-one side STI and the flip side No STI

Introduction

“This activity will explain how STIs spread amongst sexual networks.

The activity board you see in front of you is an example of a sexual network – that is, people who have arrows between them are sexual partners.”

[The counsellor places a stacks of chips in front of the participant.]

“The chips in front of you have STI on one side and No STI on the other side. *[Show the participant each side.]* As we have discussed, people in a sexual network are having sex with each other. Let’s say that in this sexual network, no one is using condoms, BUT no one has an STI. *[Counsellor places a chip on each person with NO STI side up.]*”

“Now let’s say that one person has sex WITHOUT a condom with someone who is not in THIS network and the new person HAS an STI.” *[Ask the participant to identify this person on the board. It does not matter who they choose.]*

“Since this person had sex with someone who had an STI and they did not use a condom, is this person still uninfected?” *[The participant should identify that this person is now infected with an STI. Reinforce this idea.]*

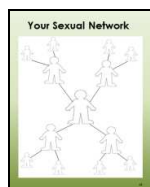
“Yes that is correct, this person now has an STI, so go ahead and flip the chip to show that. Since everyone in this sexual network is not using condoms, what is going to happen to this person’s partner(s)? And what about their partner(s)? *[Continue this till everyone in the network has STI chip facing up.]*



“That is right! When no one is using condoms or only using condoms some of the time STI’s spread quickly. But what about this idea of stopping the spread of STI’s if you only have sex with people who don’t have STI’s? What if this person *[point to the person who was originally infected]* told their partner(s) they had an STI so they could go to the clinic to get treated? *[Have the participant flip the coins as each person tells their partner(s) to get treated.]* As you can see, if everyone tells their partners, and the partners get treated then no one in the sexual network will have an STI.”

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014

“But you must remember that at any point if one of your sex partners has unprotected sex with an infected partner and you have unprotected sex with them, you will get reinfected with an STI again.”



Your Sexual Network

Now that the concept of a sexual network should be clear to the participant, use the Personal Sexual Network Brochure to elicit the first names and types of partners that participant has had in the past month.

“Let’s take a minute and talk about your sexual network. I am going to ask you to think back about the past month. Recall the people you have had sex with in the past month. That could include a main/steady partner or your Fasti, your casual partners/makhwapheni or your one time/once off partners. I am going to ask for their initials so later we can talk about each one. You will take this paper with you. I am not here to judge you. I just want us to find ways to keep you from getting infected with an STI in the future.”

Write an initial only for each partner and note the partner is a regular, casual or one-time partner.

If a participant does not know the partner name, then use a question mark..?

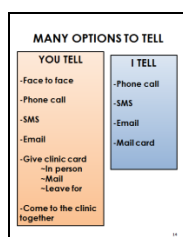
Assure the participant of confidentiality and do not write names on the activity form.

If the participant refuses to name partners, discuss their resistance. They can use fake names, nick names, or an initial to identify partners...it does not even need to be a first name. If they still refuse...proceed to explore how they will avoid getting a future STI with infections in their network.

Must Tell and Treat

Coming off of the sexual network activity and identifying the participant’s own recent partners, it should be clear that unless everyone in the participant’s sexual network uses condoms 100% of the time -- AND ALL OF THEIR POTENTIAL PARTNERS AS WELL -- they will be at risk for a future STI unless whoever is infected gets treated. That is why they must some how inform those partners that they should be checked and treated for STI.

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014



Many Options to Tell

“There are many options for notifying partners that they should go and get treated. What we will do with the rest of our time here today is to talk about the options for doing this with each of your partners that we have named here. Let’s look at all of the options first and then we will go through each of your partners and figure out the BEST WAY for the partner to be notified that they need to go to the clinic to get tested. You may choose different options for each partner. It is up to YOU had to inform them they should go to the clinic and get treated.”

You Tell

Review each of the options briefly with the participant. Later you will explore partner by partner and how to do with each of those.

Face to face-“You could go to the partner and tell them face to face that they should go to the clinic to get treated.”

Phone call-“You could phone the partner and tell them over the phone that they should go to the clinic to get treated.”

Send an SMS or Email-“You could message them and tell them that they should go to the clinic to get treated.”

Come to clinic- You could go to the clinic together and both of you could say that you are there to get treated.”

I Tell

“Another option is that you can notify partners without them knowing that it is you telling them. I can show you some options for anonymous ways to tell partners...meaning that there is no name and the message does not come directly from you. There can include..

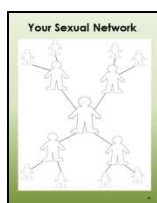
The partner coming to the clinic after they receive the clinic slip

Anonymous/confidential phone call

Anonymous/confidential SMS

Anonymous/confidential email

Anonymous/confidential card in the post



Brochure

Referring back to the participant’s own sexual network that is in their brochure, go through partner by partner and have the partner decide the best way to tell each partner.

The participant has identified the partner type, now go through the remaining questions...

“Do you know if this partner has an STI?”

Communication Session Manual 29 January 2014

“Does this partner know you have an STI?” *[If participant says yes, you will want to explore when and how they were informed. Reinforce them telling partners!]*

“Thinking about the options we just discussed, what do you think would be the best way to tell this partner that they should go get treated at the clinic?” *[Flip to the option in the flip chart.]*

Be sure to go through ALL OF THE QUESTIONS. Discuss the option thoroughly. Identify any barriers that may stop the person from telling. Remember the likelihood of them telling the partner goes down the longer they wait to tell. Want to encourage them to tell the partner sooner than later (if feasible and SAFE).

Listen for participants to share concerns of emotional or physical safety. DO NOT DISMISS THESE.

Work through each partner.

Once off/one time partners-Participants may not be able to tell these partners because they do not know their name or how to contact them. Discuss that the risk of unprotected sex with these types of partners! Remind them that in these cases where they are unfamiliar with the partner’s sexual network that having unprotected sex can result in them getting another STI and then passing it on to their more regular partners.



Session Wrap Up and Questions

At the end of the session, the counsellor should review the highlights and ask if the client has any questions. Give the client male and female condoms and their brochure in the project bag. End the session by thanking the client for coming to the session.