

A Provider Self-Assessment Tool to Measure Gender Competency for Family Planning Services

Module A: Gender Sensitive Communication

Data for Impact

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
123 West Franklin Street, Suite 330
Chapel Hill, NC 27516 USA

Phone: 919-445-6949 | Fax: 919-445-9353

D4I@unc.edu

<http://www.data4impactproject.org>

This publication was produced with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the Data for Impact (D4I) associate award 7200AA18LA00008, which is implemented by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in partnership with Palladium International, LLC; ICF Macro, Inc.; John Snow, Inc.; and Tulane University. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government. TL-23-103b D4I

April 2023



Overview

This document contains one of six modules (A–F), each of which are related to one domain of gender competency. In each module, providers respond to statements that represent knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the domain. For each statement, providers indicate if they “Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree” with the statement. Select modules can be administered on their own, or as part of a holistic assessment. The background and development of the provider self-assessment tool is described in detail in the parent document.

The tool includes three sections for each module as follows:

- The first section is the **Statement and Response Form**. This is the form used by providers to document their responses to each statement. The form includes the statements that relate to the domain, and the response options (strongly agree—strongly disagree). Providers review the statement and select one response for each statement.
- The second section is the **Answer Key**, which shows the ideal response for each statement and a point value for each response. Providers write the point value for their response in the “Your Score” column of the answer key and sum their score for the module.
- The third section is a **Discussion Guide**, which provides a brief explanation about why certain responses demonstrate gender competency. It also summarizes main points about the domains and includes self-reflection and group discussion questions.

This provider self-assessment tool aligns with HRH2030 and USAID’s Office of Population and Reproductive Health’s gender-competency framework and eLearning for family planning service providers. A free, self-paced online training program can be accessed at:

<https://chemonics.com/resource/defining-and-advancing-gender-competent-family-planning-service-providers/>.

Statement and Response Form

Consider each statement and whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. Write a check in the box next to your response in the column to the right.	
Statement	Check the box with your response here
A1. I show respect to all clients, no matter their age or gender, by maintaining eye contact and paying attention to what they are saying.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A2. I adapt my counseling to support clients who may have less authority over decision making for family planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A3. I adapt my counseling based on a client's level of literacy, which can be different for women, men, girls, and boys.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A4. To adapt communication based on a client's gender, I often ask clients to repeat what I've told them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A5. I can explain the full range of contraceptive methods to men as effectively as I can to women.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A6. Being aware of my own beliefs and values about gender and family planning keeps me from being biased in my counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A7. I am able to explain things differently based on the different needs and understanding of male and female clients.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A8. I should not let my influence and status as a provider interfere with clients freely making their own decisions about family planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A9. It is important that clients see me as an expert that can provide information, not an authority who should make the decision for them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A10. I use different counseling approaches so that the different needs of women, men, girls, and boys are met.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A11. It is difficult to separate my own beliefs about how men and women should act from how I counsel clients about family planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree

A12. If an unmarried client wanted it, I would provide them with a family planning method.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
A13. I can effectively counsel both older and younger clients with different family planning desires.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree

Answer Key

Step 1: Use your responses from the “statement and response form” to match your response choice with a point value. Then write your point value for the statement in the “your score” column.		
Statement	Points	Your score
A1. I show respect to all clients, no matter their age or gender, by maintaining eye contact and paying attention to what they are saying.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A2. I adapt my counseling to support clients who may have less authority over decision making for family planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A3. I adapt my counseling based on a client's level of literacy, which can be different for women, men, girls, and boys.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A4. To adapt communication based on a client's gender, I often ask clients to repeat what I've told them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A5. I can explain the full range of contraceptive methods to men as effectively as I can to women.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A6. Being aware of my own beliefs and values about gender and family planning keeps me from being biased in my counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A7. I am able to explain things differently based on the different needs and understanding of male and female clients.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A8. I should not let my influence and status as a provider interfere with clients freely making their own decisions about family planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A9. It is important that clients see me as an expert that can provide information, not an authority who should make the decision for them.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A10. I use different counseling approaches so that the different needs of women, men, girls, and boys are met.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
A11. It is difficult to separate my own beliefs about how men and women should act from how I counsel clients about family planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 4	
A12. If an unmarried client wanted it, I would provide them with a family planning method.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	

A13. I can effectively counsel both older and younger clients with different family planning desires.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree = 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Agree = 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree = 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree = 1	
Total score		
<p>Step 2: Add the values for each statement to find your total score (sum points from statements 1–13). Be sure to note that for the statements highlighted in blue, the point values are higher for “disagree” and “strongly disagree” (3 and 4 respectively). For all other statements, the highest point values are for “strongly agree” and “agree.”</p> <p>Step 3: Compare your total score to the values in the table below to see if you have high, medium, or low gender competency in this domain.</p> <p>Step 4: Review the discussion guide which explains the ideal response for each statement. To strengthen competency in this area, complete the eLearning course https://chemonics.com/resource/defining-and-advancing-gender-competent-family-planning-service-providers/</p>		

Module	Maximum possible score	High gender competency	Medium gender competency	Low gender competency
A. Gender-Sensitive Communication	52	47–52	42–46	Equal to or less than 41

Discussion Guide

This guide will help you reflect on your experience responding to statements about using gender-sensitive communication. First, please consider the following personal reflection questions.

- What statements were confusing to you? Why?
- What statements did you answer and then second-guess your response? Why?
- What statements touched on practices that you already do when providing family planning services?

The statements in this module assess your ability to communicate with your clients in a manner that recognizes unequal power structures and promotes equality for all clients. This includes recognizing power differences between yourself and your client, as well as between clients and their partners. Power is the capacity to make decisions freely without any hinderance and to exercise control over one's body and reproductive choices. Through gender-sensitive communication, you can build respect and rapport with your client that they will feel comfortable and safe, and can make decisions about family planning that are appropriate for them.

Three Key Takeaways from this Module are:

1. There are differences in power between a provider and client. The provider normally has more power in this relationship due to more education and knowledge about family planning. As such, it is important to be aware of your increased power in that situation and use gender-sensitive communication to ensure your client feels at ease.
2. It is important for providers to understand how the different experiences of men and women in society can impact how to communicate with them. For example, women might have less access to formal education than men. A gender-competent provider would adjust their family planning counseling practices to ensure that the woman was able to understand the information.
3. To be gender competent, providers need to be aware of their own opinions and biases related to gender. They should be able to put those feelings aside when approaching a family planning counseling session. Approaching your client with an awareness of your personal opinions and any biases will help you create an open environment for your client to make their own informed contraceptive choice.

Below are the answers and explanations for the statements in this module. The explanations are meant to assist with your understanding of the statements. Training about each topic is available through the Gender Competency eLearning course.

A1. I show respect to all clients, no matter their age or gender, by maintaining eye contact and paying attention to what they are saying.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Giving your full attention to the client builds trust and allows for the client to feel comfortable discussing family planning. Being respectful by maintaining eye contact shows the client that you value them and are available to help them with their family planning needs or goals. Showing respect to all clients, whether they are male or female, young or old, is important to build client trust and rapport. Assure your clients that you will keep the discussion private and confidential. Give them time to talk and ask them what help you can be to them.

A2. I adapt my counseling to support clients who may have less authority over decision making for family planning.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Often, women have less authority over decisions, especially when it comes to family planning. As a provider, you should be aware of the barriers that may impact your client’s ability to make decisions about family planning, including who else might influence their ability to make decisions. By asking your clients questions about decision making in their home, you can learn more about how to counsel them. In particular, younger women may face more pressure from an older partner or from their parents and in-laws. By discussing these issues, you can help guide them on whether and how to discuss family planning with others, and you can discuss contraceptive methods they can use discreetly without others knowing about it. You could consider counselling a woman and man who are a couple separately first and then together as a couple. This will ensure that the client with less authority has a safe space with you to ask questions and express concerns.

A3. I adapt my counseling based on a client’s level of literacy, which can be different for women, men, girls, and boys.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

A client’s literacy level may be influenced by whether they are from an urban or rural area, their age, and gender. Girls and women may have less opportunity for formal education and therefore have a lower level of literacy. A gender-competent provider should be able to determine their client’s level of literacy and adapt their counseling accordingly. The provider may choose to communicate in a local dialect if both the provider and client are fluent. If a client is younger or has less formal education, then using visual aids may better help you explain family planning options.

A4. To adapt communication based on a client’s gender, I often ask clients to repeat what I’ve told them.

Good answers for this statement include “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Male and female clients might have a different understanding of the family planning counseling session. By asking a client to repeat back what they have been told, the provider will be able to ensure that the client understood the information provided and the discussion during counseling. Providers using this strategy might explain to clients that they are not asking questions to test the client’s knowledge or whether the client is paying attention, but just to make sure that they, as the provider, are communicating things clearly.

A5. I can explain the full range of contraceptive methods available to men as effectively as I can to women.

Good answers for this statement include “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Male and female clients might have different levels of understanding about the various available contraceptive methods before coming to your family planning counseling session. Male clients might be less likely to have been exposed to information about all the methods in advance of the session. It is important for a provider to be able to effectively describe these methods, their side effects, efficacy, etc. to male clients in a way that they will understand. These discussions might look different based on methods that are male dependent (like condoms or vasectomy) as compared to those that are female dependent (like pills or implants).

A6. Being aware of my own opinions about gender and family planning keeps me from being biased in my counseling.

Good answers for this statement include “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

It is natural for people to have their own beliefs about family planning, including who should or should not delay or avoid pregnancy and when to control the time between pregnancies. Beliefs and values are influenced by the society and culture we live in. However, it is not appropriate for these beliefs to influence the advice given to clients by providers. By reflecting on your own personal beliefs about appropriate roles and behaviors for men and women (gender norms), and about family planning, you can identify your own biases and work to keep them from influencing your counseling.

A7. I am able to explain things differently based on the different needs and understanding of male and female clients.

Good answers for this statement include “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Male and female clients will have different needs and understanding of family planning services. This might include differences in previous knowledge and exposure to contraceptive methods, as well as the knowledge about menstruation and reproduction that is needed to understand how to use certain contraceptive methods (like the Standard Days Method). As a gender-competent provider, it is important that you tailor your approach to male and female clients based on their different knowledge levels and health literacy related to reproduction and family planning.

A8. I should not let my influence and status as a provider interfere with clients freely making their own decisions about family planning.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Realizing your power as a provider is important when counseling a client. Clients may see you, as a provider, as having more knowledge and therefore a higher status. Thus, they may defer to you to make their family planning decisions. Providers should help clients understand important information about contraceptive methods (e.g., cost, how long it lasts, if it can be concealed), and how these factors relate to their specific situation. In doing so, they should support clients in making their own decision without pressuring them to use a particular method. To ensure the client’s needs are met, it is important that their decision is made based on what they truly want, rather than trying to please you.

A9. It is important that clients see me as an expert that can provide information, not an authority who should make the decision for them.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

How you speak to your client may influence how the client perceives you. You should explain family planning options in a non-judgmental and direct way. If you tell the client which contraceptive method is best according to you, then they will not make the decision for themselves but instead make a choice based on what you believe is right for them. It is important that clients make a choice about family planning and contraceptive use based on their own desires about whether and when to have children, rather than to please other people, including providers.

A10. I use different counseling approaches so that the different needs of women, men, girls, and boys are met.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Male and female clients have different needs when it comes to family planning, so using different counseling approaches will help you better connect with the client and offer them the most appropriate family planning options. For example, female clients may have limited access to opportunities like education because of their gender. In this case, the provider should avoid using medical terms that someone with less formal education will understand. Gender-sensitive communication means adapting your communication to each client, based on their gender, education, and other factors.

A11. It is difficult to separate my own cultural beliefs about men and women from how I counsel clients about family planning.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly disagree” and “disagree.” The best answer is “strongly disagree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

It is important to set aside your own cultural beliefs about men and women when entering a family planning counseling session and respect the client’s own beliefs. By setting aside your own beliefs, you will be able to respond to the specific needs of your male and female clients and help them achieve their reproductive goals. Before counseling, providers should think about whether their cultural or religious beliefs strongly conflict with their ability to offer all family planning and contraceptive methods to a client without judgment, whether the client is young or old, married, unmarried, or with multiple partners, and male or female. Understanding this can help the provider plan to control body posture, tone of voice, and facial expressions when speaking with their client, despite whether the provider’s beliefs and values are different from the behaviors and choices expressed by the client, as long as they are medically indicated.

A12. If an unmarried client wanted it, I would provide them with a family planning method.

Good answers for this statement include “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Female and male clients, both those that are married and unmarried, have various family planning goals that deserve to be addressed without judgement. As a provider, it is important that you approach all clients, despite marital status, with the same openness to attend to their family planning needs and desires.

A13. I can effectively counsel both older and younger clients with different family planning desires.

Good answers for this statement are “strongly agree” and “agree.”

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Age is one factor that may influence how to effectively counsel a client. Younger and older clients may face different social pressures related to family planning, may have different control over decision making, and may fear judgement of their choices based on their age. They may also have had different levels of experience with previous contraceptive use. It is important that providers do not make assumptions about clients because of their age or how many children they already have. Rather, the provider should try to understand their client’s needs by providing non-judgmental counseling. They should be prepared to discuss all contraceptive methods including those that are long-acting and those that can be easily discontinued (like oral pills) and emphasize whether a given method prevents sexually transmitted infections as well as pregnancy. Providers should also be able to discuss menopause and FP options during the time when clients are pre-menopausal. It is important as a provider to respect the client and their family planning choice regardless of their age.

Group Discussion/Reflection:

After reviewing the statements on gender-sensitive communication, it is important to reflect and plan for how best to communicate with clients so that they can make informed contraceptive choices. Below are some questions to discuss as a group regarding gender-sensitive communication.

- What are some examples of differences in power between a provider and client? Between male and female partners? What are ways that you, as a gender-competent provider, can make sure that these differences in power do not compromise a client's ability to achieve their family planning goals?
- What are some examples of gendered biases that a provider might have towards a client? What are some strategies for ensuring that these biases do not interfere with their ability to provide family planning services to all clients?

The first module of the Gender Competency for Family Planning Providers eLearning Course is dedicated to the importance of gender-sensitive communication. The following learning objectives are addressed in the online module:

- Define gender-sensitive communication;
- Explain the importance of gender-sensitive communication;
- Identify the competencies of the "Gender-sensitive communication" domain; and
- Apply the competencies to your work.

Taking this online course will help you further develop your understanding of how to incorporate gender-sensitive communication into your practice as a gender-competent provider.

Data for Impact

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

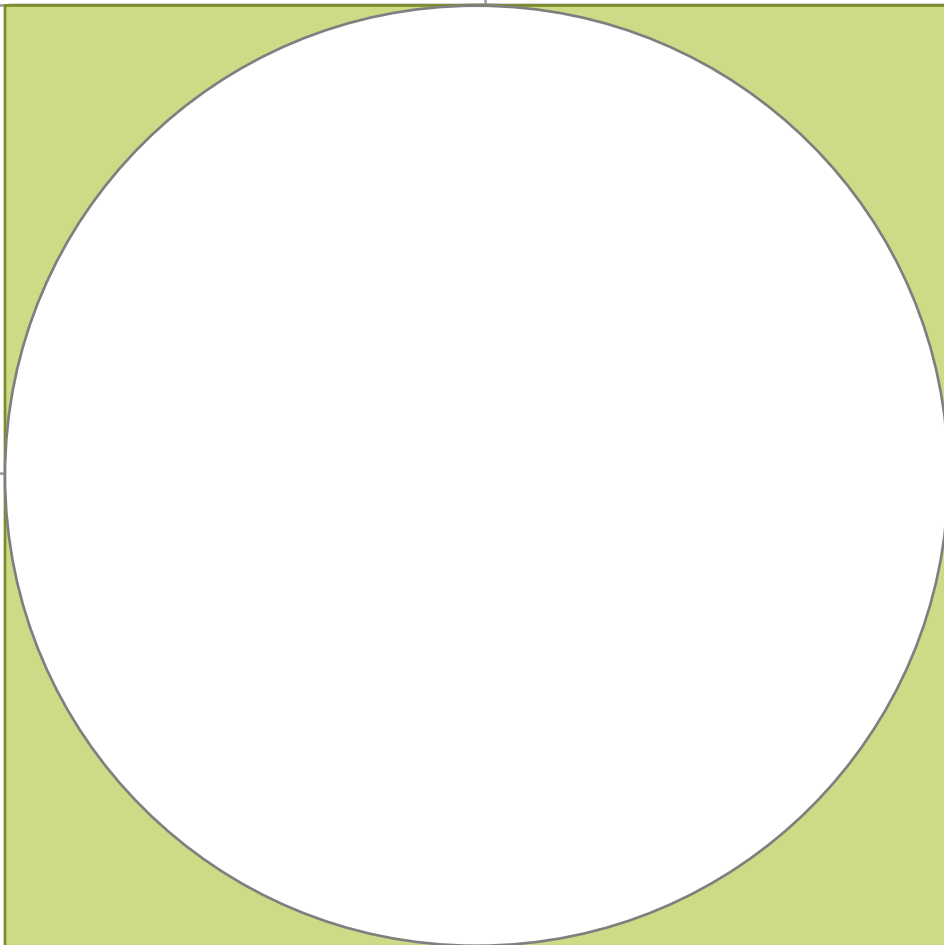
123 West Franklin Street, Suite 330

Chapel Hill, NC 27516 USA

Phone: 919-445-6949 | Fax: 919-445-9353

D4I@unc.edu

<http://www.data4impactproject.org>



This publication was produced with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of the Data for Impact (D4I) associate award 7200AA18LA00008, which is implemented by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in partnership with Palladium International, LLC; ICF Macro, Inc.; John Snow, Inc.; and Tulane University. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government. TL-23-103b D4I