Just the Basics: Policy

Definition and Essential Components of Care

The field of family planning promotes the ability of individuals and couples to anticipate, plan, and attain their desired number of children, if any, and their desired spacing and timing of pregnancy. Family planning can be defined as services “to help individuals achieve their reproductive health intentions...” The mission of the federal Title X family planning program reflects these definitions: “to assist individuals in determining the number and spacing of their children through the provision of education, counseling, and medical services.”

The World Health Organization defines reproductive health care within the framework of its definition of health, as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

“... [R]eproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life. Reproductive health, therefore, implies that people are able to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Implicit in this are the right of men and women to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice, and the right of access to appropriate health care services ....”

Comprehensive family planning/reproductive services must include the following components and principles to assist individuals and couples to achieve their personal reproductive plans:

- Provide complete contraceptive care (including education, counseling, and medical services and supplies), and related reproductive health care.

- Maintain policies and practices that promote and support essential health outcomes, including:
  - Safe and successful contraception
  - Protection of fertility
  - Maintenance of reproductive health

- Promote and protect patient reproductive rights, and safeguard patient privacy.

- Maintain a supportive, patient responsive environment. Patients are to be:
  - Encouraged to make informed and voluntary choices and decisions about sex, pregnancy, reproductive health, and contraception
  - Provided accurate, evidence-based health information for informed choices and decisions
  - Provided convenient access to services and supplies

Ethical family planning and reproductive care requires that policies and practices, and staff development and quality assurance are maintained to support these principles of family planning services.

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\[http://www.who.int/topics/reproductive_health/en/\]
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=34957DE77E6249D80CBE3CBB2E7DB083?doi=10.1.1.175.9331&rep=rep1&type=pdf

http://www.hhs.gov/opa/title-x-family-planning/

http://www.who.int/topics/reproductive_health/en/

These ethical and legal rights for which providers have an obligation to safeguard, such as privacy rights, are described on the WI Family Planning/Reproductive Health Education and Training Program website: www.wifamilyplanning.org Resources Section/Confidentiality.