



When it comes  
to queries on Sexual and  
Reproductive Health,  
let's help everyone

**TALK BEJHIJHAK**

*A quick reference aid for Counseling adolescent and youth for FOGSI Partners*

At FOGSI we have always been driven towards building new conversations through innovative approaches. It has empowered us to break barriers, one initiative at a time. And we believe that we have made it all possible only with the support of remarkable experts like you. The ones who join our journey, live our purpose, and take it a notch above.

As we embark on a new path, where few have ventured on, we are proud to gain your support and guidance. In bringing quality healthcare and awareness to India's adolescent and youth through a grand initiative – Pankh. It's built to bring great experts like you together to feed curious minds with right knowledge on sexual and reproductive health issues and contraception. An initiative that's driven and propagated through a thoughtfully crafted campaign, **Talk Bejhijhak**. Pankh, an innovative campaign, is ambitious to weave confident, yet assured conversations by giving today's adolescent and youth a platform to express themselves.

To empower you with the right tools, Pankh brings you this quick reference booklet. It highlights and builds different ways of guiding young India. It's enriched with key elements on family planning and fresh perspectives to create a mindful environment for those in need.

Certainly, to help them

**Talk Bejhijhak**

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## The landscape of Family Planning today. And why FOGSI wants to reinvent it, **Bejhijhak**.

- **Youth (15-34 yr)** account for **34.8 per cent of the total Indian population**, of which an enormous number still do not have access to contraceptives.
- According to an estimate by the Guttmacher Institute, **38 million of the 252 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years** in developing countries are sexually active **and do not wish to be pregnant** over the next two years.
- These **adolescents include a staggering 23 million** with an unmet need for modern contraception.
- Data from the fourth round of the **National Family Health Survey** carried out during 2015–16 show that about **13% of couples** of reproductive ages wanted to stop childbearing or delay the next birth, but **did not get the contraceptive services** they desired to have.
- Short intervals between births are linked with **higher maternal and child mortality and morbidity**<sup>2</sup>
- **Family planning can avert nearly one-third of maternal deaths and 10% of child mortality** when couples space their pregnancies more than two years apart<sup>1</sup>.
- Contraceptive counselling has a key potential to **improve effective use of contraception and reduce unmet needs**. Detailed counselling on side-effects for women initiating a method may be effective at improving continuation.<sup>3</sup>
- Public sector is actively providing FP services, however there are still unmet needs.
- Fortunately, **private sector providers have great potential** and can contribute immensely to reduce the unmet needs through proactive family planning counselling and integrating with other health services.
- Moreover, **adolescent and youth approach private providers** for various sexual and reproductive health issues, with an opportunity to integrate contraceptive counselling.

1. The Lancet: John Cleland, Stan Bernstein, Alex Ezeh, Anibal Faundes, Anna Glasier, Jolene Innis. Family planning: the unfinished agenda. The Lancet Sexual and Reproductive Health Series, October 2006.
2. Rutstein S. Further Evidence of the Effects of Preceding Birth Intervals on Neonatal, Infant, and Under Five Years
3. A systematic review of the effectiveness of counselling strategies for modern contraceptive methods: what works and what! Doesn't? Francesca L Cavallaro, 1 Lenka Benova,2,3 Onikepe O Owolabi,4 Moazzam Ali
4. Youth in India report. New Delhi: CSO; 2017. Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. [Google Scholar]
5. Darroch JE, Woog V, Bankole A, Ashford LS. Adding it up: Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents. New York: Guttmacher Institute; 2016. [Google Scholar]

## The Key Elements of Counselling for Family Planning

### Key Element 1: The Definition of Counselling

**Counselling** is a type of client-provider interaction that involves two-way communication between a doctor, a healthcare staff member, para medical staff or a trained counselor, and a client for the purpose of confirming or facilitating an informed decision by the client or helping the client address problems or concerns.

**Quality counselling is the main way that health workers support and safeguard the client's rights to informed and voluntary decision-making.** This means **never pressuring a client to choose one family planning method over another**, or otherwise limiting a client's choices for any reason other than medical eligibility.

**Counselling for family planning** helps clients choose and use family planning methods that suit their needs.

**Couples counselling** refers to counselling sessions in which a woman and her partner are present in discussions with the provider.

The information and skills presented here for counselling individuals may be applied to couples counselling. However, it must be recognized that couples counselling requires special sensitivity and skills to deal with gender-related issues.

## The Key Element of Counselling for Family Planning

### Key Element 2: The Benefits of Effective Counselling for Family Planning

In addition to protecting a client's right to informed and voluntary decision-making, effective counselling:

- Increases acceptance of family planning services
- Promotes effective use of family planning services
- Increases client's satisfaction with family planning methods and services
- Enhances continuation of family planning services
- Dispels rumours and corrects misunderstandings about contraceptive methods.

Good client-provider interaction, including counselling, is one of the primary conditions that supports **informed, voluntary decision-making and informed choices**.

**Informed and voluntary decision-making** is the process through which an individual should arrive at a decision about healthcare. It assumes that clients have the right and the ability to make their own health care decisions, voluntarily and with full information, and understanding of the consequences of each option.

**Informed choice** is an individual's well-considered, voluntary decision based on options, information, and understanding.

When applied to decisions about family planning, informed choice means that individuals freely choose whether to use a contraceptive method and, if so, which one they want to use, based on their awareness and understanding of these methods. Clients use the process of informed and voluntary decision-making to arrive at their informed choice.

Examples of the decisions that clients make concerning family planning:

- Whether to use contraception to delay, space, or end childbearing
- Which method to use
- Whether to continue using contraception if side effects occur
- Whether to switch methods when the current method is unsatisfactory
- Whether to involve one's partner(s) in decision-making about family planning.



## The Key Elements of Counselling for Family Planning

### Key Element 3: The Strong Pillars of Clients' rights in Counselling

#### 1. Privacy and Confidentiality

As an informed and conscious healthcare provider, one must safeguard the client's right to privacy and confidentiality.

**Privacy:** This is the client's right and power to control the information (about him/herself) that others possess.

**Confidentiality:** This means the provider cannot disclose private information to anyone else without the Client's consent. This is the mechanism through which the provider protects the client's right to privacy.

#### **Creating an environment that cares for clients' privacy and confidentiality:**

To uphold confidentiality, providers must counsel clients in areas that provide both auditory and visual privacy, so that no one not involved in the counselling session can see the client speaking or hear what is said in the session.

Further, providers must maintain and enforce confidentiality of client medical records and other personal information about clients, and must not leave client records where other clients might see the records or have access to them nor give the records to the client's family members, friends or other health workers without the client's written permission.

#### 2. Other important Client Rights

In addition to the rights above, family planning clients, and clients in all sectors of healthcare, have the following rights:

**Right to accurate, appropriate, understandable, and unambiguous information** related to reproductive health and sexuality and to health overall.

**Right to access to services:** Services must be affordable and available, without social barriers such as discrimination based on gender, age, marital status, fertility, nationality or ethnicity, belief, social class, caste, or sexual orientation.

**Right to dignity, comfort and expression of opinion:** All clients have the right to be treated with respect and consideration. Providers must ensure that clients are as comfortable as possible during procedures. Clients should be encouraged to express their views freely, especially when clients' views differ from the views of service providers.

**Right to continuity of care:** This includes services, supplies, follow-up, and referral.

**Right to safety of services:** Services should be provided by clinicians with sufficient skill, with attention to infection prevention and using appropriate and effective medical practices.

## The Key Elements of Counselling for Family Planning

### Key Element 4: Empowering the good Counsellor in you

#### **A family planning counsellor should have or develop the following characteristics:**

- Understanding of his/her own beliefs/biases, so they do not enter into the counselling process
- Honesty: Always telling the truth to the client
- Understanding and empathy: The ability to feel what the client feels and to demonstrate to the client that the counsellor understands and accepts the clients' feelings without judgment
- Sensitivity to clients' needs and concerns
- Genuineness, acceptance, and respect
- Technical competence: Being well-trained and knowledgeable about family planning methods and services.

#### **Principles of Effective Family Planning Counselling**

The key principles for cultivating good client-provider interaction and effective family planning counselling:

1. Show every client respect, and help each client feel at ease.
2. Ensure auditory and visual privacy and confidentiality.
3. Encourage the client to explain needs, express concerns, and ask questions.
4. Tailor the interaction to the client's needs, circumstances, and concerns.
5. Be alert to related needs such as protection from STIs/HIV, protection from gender-based violence, and support for condom use.
6. Listen carefully. Listening is as important as giving correct information.
7. Show empathy for the client's needs.
8. Remain non-judgmental about values, behaviours, and decisions that differ from your own.
9. Remain patient with the client, and express interest.
10. Give just key information and instructions. Avoid information overload. Use words the client knows.
11. Demonstrate comfort in addressing sexual and gender issues.
12. Respect and support the client's informed and voluntary decisions.
13. Use and provide memory aids.

## The Key Elements of Counselling for Family Planning

### Key Element 5: Diving deeper into different types of Family Planning Clients

#### New clients with no method in mind

- Discuss the client's situation, plans and what is important to the client about a method.
- Help the client consider methods that might suit the client. If needed, give key instructions on use, discuss how to cope with side effects
- Mention that methods switching is possible and allowed
- Schedule a return visit

#### New clients with no method in mind

- Check that the client's understanding of the method is accurate
- Support the client's choice, if the client is medically eligible for the methods
- Help the client choose another method if needed
- Discuss how to use the method
- Tell the client about possible side effects and how to cope with them
- Schedule a return visit

#### Returning clients with no problems or concerns

- Ask friendly questions about how the client is doing with the method
- Answer all questions of the client
- Provide more supplies or routine follow up
- Schedule a return visit

#### Returning clients who are experiencing problem or have concerns

- Explore and understand the problem
- Help the client resolve the problem: Is the problem side-effects, or difficulty using the method?
- If needed, help the client understand and manage side-effects
- Schedule a return visit

*Indeed, it takes time and efforts to*



By Pankh. A FOGSI initiative

At Pankh, an initiative by FOGSI, we hope to drive many campaigns – with you. We hope this Quick Reference booklet empowers you to approach counselling for family planning in a new way. We will keep bringing you several such collaterals to stay connected in this journey. Together, let's make India's adolescent and youth informed and aware – Talk Bejijhak

