



CLINICAL GUIDELINES PROGRAM

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AIDS INSTITUTE | HIV · HCV · SUBSTANCE USE · LGBT HEALTH

GOALS Framework for Sexual History Taking in Primary Care

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Box 1: GOALS Framework for the Sexual History		
Component	Suggested Script	Rationale and Goal Accomplished
Give a preamble that emphasizes sexual health.	<i>I'd like to talk with you for a couple of minutes about your sexuality and sexual health. I talk to all of my patients about sexual health, because it's such an important part of overall health. Some of my patients have questions or concerns about their sexual health, so I want to make sure I understand what your questions or concerns might be and provide whatever information or other help you might need.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on sexual health, not risk. • Normalizes sexuality as part of health and healthcare. • Opens the door for the patient's questions. • Clearly states a desire to understand and help.
Offer opt-out HIV/STI testing and information.	<i>First, I like to test all my patients for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Do you have any concerns about that?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't commit to specific tests, but does normalize testing. • Sets up the idea that you will recommend some testing regardless of what the patient tells you. • Opens the door for the patient to talk about HIV or STIs as a concern.
Ask an open-ended question.	Pick one (or use an open-ended question that you prefer): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about your sex life. • What would you say are your biggest sexual health questions or concerns? • How is your current sex life similar or different from what you think of as your ideal sex life? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puts the focus on the patient. • Lets you hear what the patient thinks is most important first. • Lets you hear the language the patient uses to talk about their body, partners, and sex.
Listen for relevant information and probe to fill in the blanks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Besides [partner(s) already disclosed], tell me about any other sexual partners.</i> • <i>How do you protect yourself against HIV and STIs?</i> • <i>How do you prevent pregnancy (unless you are trying to have a child)?</i> • <i>What would help you take (even) better care of your sexual health?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes no assumption about monogamy or about gender of partners. • Avoids setting up a script for over-reporting condom use. • Can be asked of patients regardless of gender. • Increases motivation by asking the patient to identify strategies/ interventions.
Suggest a course of action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>So, as I said before, I'd like to test you for [describe tests indicated by sexual history conversation].</i> • <i>I'd also like to give you information about PrEP/contraception/other referrals. I think it might be able to help you [focus on benefit].</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows you to tailor STI testing to the patient so they don't feel targeted. • Shows that you keep your word. • Allows you to couch education or referral in terms of relevant benefits, tailored to the specific patient.