AGENCY NAME
DISABILITY PROTOCOL

Introduction

The goal of (agency name) is to offer family services to women and men with the following:

- Physical disabilities requiring the use of crutches, wheelchairs, canes or braces:
- Blindness or low vision;
- Learning disabilities;
- Developmental disabilities
- Deafness or limited hearing

Staff

All staff will receive training that will enable them to understand many of the issues associated with providing reproductive health services to people with varying disabilities. Selected staff will receive training in areas specific to the various disabilities such as assisting clients with physical disabilities use the bathroom, undress and dress and prepare for the examination.

Process

Prior to appointment

1. The staff person in charge of day-to-day activities of the clinic, e.g. Clinic Manager should be informed if a disabled client is scheduled for clinic visits so that the appropriate arrangements can be made for those with a special need.
2. Request for an interpreter should be made if needed.
3. Staff trained to provide counseling education and health care to disabled clients should be scheduled appropriately to allow adequate time for the client’s visit.

At the time of the appointment

1. The registration process will be expedited.
2. The layout of the clinic will be explained to the client (sight impaired, hearing impaired, client with assisted device, etc.). The sequence of events of the clinic visit will be explained as well.
3. The health educator will accompany the client to the counseling area, bathroom, examination, and/or any other place a client needs to go (with interpreter if any).
4. After the counseling and education process, the health educator will inform the clinician that the client is ready for her/his examination/care.

Client

Though the client with a disability will have been asked if she/he is in need of any type of assistance at the time the appointment was made, it will again be asked in a confidential setting. This assistance could include but not be limited to: (physical disability) disrobing, using the bathroom (particularly if it is not in compliance with ADA); and assuming the appropriate position for the physical examination/procedures; (blindness or low vision) being guided through the clinic; and (deafness or limited hearing) arranging for an interpreter.
If assistance is needed, determine the number of staff to be involved. The client should be asked to guide the staff in assisting her/him, as the client is usually the best judge of determine assistance needed and ways in which it should be provided.

Disability

I. Blindness or low vision.

To ensure the informed consent process for medical care, procedures and contraception is followed, the client will be provided all appropriate information verbally through a health educator. Method specific information and other health information as appropriate will also be offered in Braille and/or cassette tapes if available.

The client will be asked to sign the agency’s standard medical services and other appropriate consent forms. This form must be witnessed and signed by a staff person. Ideally, the consents should be available in Braille for sight impaired and blind clients who are able to read in Braille.

II. Learning disabilities

A staff member shall explain the consent, answer the client’s questions, and assess her level of understanding. This can be accomplished though asking the client questions that will enable the staff member to determine understanding of the information. The client should not sign the consent if understanding cannot be demonstrated.

III. Developmental disabilities

Persons who are unable to give informed consent must have the consent of a guardian to receive services.

IV. Deafness or limited hearing.

Arrangements for an interpreter should be discussed on the telephone at the time the appointment is being made. An interpreter* (as arranged by the agency or a person chosen by the client to serve as her/his interpreter) should be available to answer questions and exchange other information as needed. The use of the client’s family members or partner is to be discouraged unless it is the expressed wish of the client and after the client has been informed that a qualified interpreter will be provided by the agency.

- An interpreter is defined as a person fluent in English or in the necessary language who accurately perform sign language. The interpreter should have been trained in interpreting and have knowledge of medical terminology.
- When an interpreter is used, documentation should be made in the client’s medical record including the organization for which the interpreter works as appropriate.
In addition to the use of an interpreter and to ensure the informed consent process for medical care, procedures and contraception is followed, the client will be provided all appropriate information in writing.

If lip-reading is requested by the client and used by staff, the information provided in this manner must be documented in the client’s medical record.