

Standard Test Session I Counseling Protocol

Protocol Component	Time-Minutes
Introductions and Orientation to the Session	1-2
Enhancement of Client's Perception of Risk	2-3
Explore the Specifics of Most Recent Risk Incident	2-3
Review Risk Behavior and Risk-Reduction Experiences	2-4
Synthesis of the Risk Incident and Risk Pattern	3-4
Negotiate Risk-Reduction Plan	4-5
Identify Sources of Support and Provide Additional Referrals	1-2
Provide Appointment Card and Reminder for Follow-up	1-2
Total Time	16-25

Last revised 2/28/01

Introductions and Orientation to the Session**1-2 minutes****Introduce yourself to client**

Hello, my name is _____. I'll be talking with you today about what brought you to the clinic and your STD and HIV concerns.

Explain role of counselor

My role as your counselor is to work with you to identify your STD and HIV risks and to explore issues related to those risks.

Indicate the duration of the session (approximately 20 minutes)

We'll talk together for about 20 minute. What we talk about today will be kept private; it is confidential.

Outline content of session

Let me tell you what we'll be talking about.

Exploration of STD and HIV risks

As I indicated, we'll address your risk for STDs and HIV.

Identification of challenges to risk reduction

We'll look at how you have tried to reduce your risk.

Discuss strategies to reduce risk

We'll talk about changes you could make to further reduce your risk and develop a plan for doing this.

Referrals

If we identify issues we cannot address here, I may make referrals to other services for help—especially with reducing your risks for STDs and HIV.

Review “map” of client stops and activities during this counseling and testing visit**Address immediate questions and concerns**

Before we go any further, do you have any concerns or questions you need to talk about right now?

Enhancement of Client's Perception of Risk

2-3 minutes

Discuss reason for STD visit

What have you done that may have put you at risk for an STD or HIV infection?

Tell me why you feel you may be at risk for STDs or HIV.

Listen for and identify behaviors that are putting the client at risk for HIV

What have you done that may have put you at risk for STDs or HIV? Have you ever come to the clinic before because you believed you had an STD?

Do you practice safer sex?

[If yes] Tell me what safer sex means to you.

Assess client's level of concern about having or acquiring HIV

When you've had unprotected sex, have you thought you may be exposing yourself to HIV?

Which behaviors and which partners concern you most?

Discuss client's HIV test history and behavioral changes in response to results

Have you been tested for HIV before?

[If yes] What was that experience like for you?

Did the counseling or test results affect how you feel about HIV?

What did you and your counselor agree was placing you at risk for HIV?

Assess whether client is engaging in risky behavior because of previous HIV- negative test results

When you were tested before, how did getting the negative result influence your risk behavior?

What have you done since the test to stay negative?

Direct client's attention toward risk behavior

From what you've said about your behavior, you have a real risk of acquiring HIV.

It sounds like you have some STD or HIV concerns that we should talk about today.

Discuss examples of conflicts between client's beliefs and behavior or examples of mixed feelings about risk reduction

There are better treatments now for HIV, but there is no cure for it. Once people have it, they have it for the rest of their lives.

How would having HIV change your life?

Explore the Specifics of Most Recent Risk Incident

2-3 minutes

Explore the who, what, where, when, how of current risk

Tell me what happened that brought you to the clinic today. Tell me about the last time you put yourself at risk [sex or needle sharing].

Was this exposure with someone you knew?

Tell me a little about your partner. How did you meet this person? Where did you go to have sex?

Was this an unusual situation, or has it happened before?

Assess level of risk acceptable to the client

Did you have any concerns about having sex with this person? Could this person have had an STD or HIV?

How comfortable are you with this behavior?

Assess communication about STDs and HIV with partners

How did you decide to have sex? Did either of you suggest using condoms?

Did you talk about STD and HIV risk or whether either of you had been tested? Would you have engaged in the same behavior had you known this person had HIV?

What did you and your partner talk about in terms of STD or HIV risk, or about being safe?

Identify circumstances or situations that contribute(d) to risk behavior

What do you think kept you from protecting yourself at that time?

When was the last time, before this situation, that you had a risky exposure? Was there anything similar about that situation?

What was it about where you were or who you were with that allowed you to take this risk?

Identify vulnerabilities and triggers to the risk-behavior incident

Was there or is there anything going on in your life that could be increasing your risk behavior?

How does drinking alcohol influence your decision to have sex, unsafe sex?

Discuss examples of conflicts between client's beliefs and behavior or examples of mixed feelings about risk reduction

Would you have engaged in the same behavior had you known this person had HIV? Would knowing have made a difference?

It seems you're concerned about HIV, yet continue to have unprotected sex, which is how you could get HIV. Help me understand that.

Review Risk Behavior and Risk-Reduction Experiences**2-4 minutes**

Assess client's patterns of risk behavior (e.g., happening regularly, occasionally, due to an unusual incident) and establish number of partners, type of partners, and number of new or different partners

How often do you have a new partner? How many different sex partners have you had in the last [3, 6, 9, or 12] months? How often did you practice safer sex?

Where do you meet partners?

How well do you know your partners before you have sex? Have you ever had a steady partner?

Identify successful attempts at practicing safer sex

Do you remember a specific time when you practiced safer sex? Can you tell me about that time? How was it? What made it work for you?

Identify obstacles to risk reduction

What gets in the way of your protecting yourself?

What has been the most difficult part of reducing your HIV risk?

With which partners do you find it most difficult to use a condom?

Explore triggers and situations that increase the likelihood of high-risk behavior

Are there times or situations when you are more likely to take risks (not use a condom)?

[If yes] What is the difference between times you are safe and the times you are unsafe?

Do drugs and alcohol affect your having high-risk sex? [If yes] Tell me about that.

Are there particular people you find it difficult to negotiate with and to ask for safer sex?

Are there times in your life [when you've felt depressed/been unemployed/or recently broken up with someone] when you felt it was more difficult to practice safer sex, to protect yourself?

Tell me about what may be going on in your life that could be increasing your risk behavior.

Explore client's communication with friends and partners about risk

When STD and HIV risk reduction has come up with a sex partner, how did the discussion go? Who brought it up? How did you feel about it?

What do you and your friends talk about concerning STD and HIV risks?

Continued →

Review Risk Behavior and Risk-Reduction Experiences

(continued)

Discuss client's possible level of acceptable risk

Are you comfortable with the risks you've taken?

[If no] *What would you be comfortable with?*

[If yes] *This involves the risk of getting HIV, and you say you feel comfortable with that?*

What behaviors would you draw the line at? What do you consider too risky?

Discuss examples of conflicts between client's beliefs and behavior or examples of mixed feelings about risk reduction

The activities you say you feel comfortable with involve some risk of becoming infected with HIV, but you've said that you're concerned about HIV. It is important that we understand this.

Synthesis of the Risk Incident and Risk Pattern**3-4 minutes****Provide feedback about client's risk for STD and HIV**

From what you have told me, there have been _____ [quite a few/some/a couple of] risk situations that may have exposed you to an STD or HIV. It's really important that we work together to address this. You've taken the first step today to protect yourself, talking about and trying to figure out your risk situation.

Summarize the information the client has provided

Here's how I understand your risks for STDs and HIV.

[Retell the client's story as clearly as possible, making connections between issues and situations and summarizing the key issues identified by the client.]

Note pattern of risk behavior

Let's look at how often these risk situations happen. First, you've been able to protect yourself when [list circumstances that help the client reduce risk].

However, when you [describe circumstance] you lapse and find yourself engaging in risky behaviors. It is important that we understand this.

Identify triggers and vulnerabilities

Several things seem to have been going on in your life lately that affect your risk: [list].

In terms of relationships, there seem to be a few important issues: [list]. In the future, you would like your relationships/life to be [describe].

There are several issues that affect your risk behavior: [list specific behavioral/communication/substance-use issues].

You seem particularly vulnerable to engaging in risky behavior when you _____ [drink/go to bars/travel/fall in love/meet someone new].

Is this how you see your risk behavior? Are there other issues we need to talk about? Does this make sense to you?

Discuss examples of conflicts between client's beliefs and behavior or examples of mixed feelings about changing behavior

You really want to _____; however, you can't imagine how to change your current situation. How can you work through this?

It seems there's a level of risk you're comfortable with. At the same time, you say you're concerned about STDs and HIV. Help me understand this.

Convey concern and urgency about client's risks (as appropriate)

It seems that unless these issues are addressed, you'll continue to engage in high-risk behavior and may become infected with HIV.

Your STD and HIV risk concerns me.

Encourage and support the client in addressing risk issues

Coming to the STD clinic, getting an HIV test, and participating in this project are the first steps in addressing your risky behavior.

Negotiate Risk-Reduction Plan

4-5 minutes

Prioritize Risk-Reduction Behavior

It is important that we prioritize. What are the most important issues and circumstances we need to address to reduce your risk?

Given what we've talked about, what do you think makes it most likely that you'll put yourself at risk for an STD or HIV?

Explore behavior(s) that the client will be most motivated about or capable of changing

How would you most like to reduce your risk for STDs and HIV? How can you remain uninfected?

What do you believe you could reasonably do to reduce your risk?

[If the client selects an “always” or “never” behavior change]

It's great that you really want to eliminate your risk. We know that change usually occurs in small steps. What would be the first step in reaching this goal?

This is challenging. Take it on in small steps—small change is the beginning of larger change.

[If the client is at a loss for how to reduce risk]

You have some options for reducing your risk: [list a broad menu of choices].

Identify a reasonable, yet challenging, step toward changing the identified behavior

Can you think of some small step you could complete in the next week that would move you closer to reducing your STD and HIV risk?

Break down the risk-reduction action into specific, concrete steps

Now that you've identified something you would like to do, tell me how you feel you could go about making this happen.

What do you need to do first, second, third? When do you think you could do this?

Problem-solve issues concerning the plan

What could make it more difficult for you to complete this step?

How will you handle it if something [specify] gets in the way of your trying this plan? What would be a good backup plan?

Role-play the plan

Let's practice how you'll handle this.

Imagine that I am your partner. What would you say? Let's switch roles.

Continued →

Negotiate Risk-Reduction Plan**(continued)****Identify supports for the risk-reduction step**

What would help make this plan easier for you? Who would be supportive of you in trying this?

If you're able to complete this step, how do you think it would make you feel?

Confirm with the client that the plan is reasonable and acceptable

How comfortable are you with this plan? Does it seem realistic to you? How does it feel? If we need to, we can rework the plan.

You will really have done something good for yourself by trying out this plan. How committed are you to trying the plan?

Acknowledge that the plan is a challenge and that there will be an opportunity to review it in the posttest session.

We'll review the plan in the next session. There may be some problems or challenges, so we may need to revise it a bit.

Ask the client to try to be aware of strengths and weaknesses in the plan while trying it out

Try to notice what works and what doesn't work for you about the plan. We'll want to talk about it next time.

Document the risk-reduction plan, keeping a copy for yourself

Let's write down your plan on this appointment card so you will have a copy of the specific details.

Identify Sources of Support and Provide Additional Referrals

1-2 minutes

Assess client's support system

Who in your life do you feel is supportive of you?

Is there someone that you feel you can talk with about your feelings and concerns?

Do you have people you spend time with? Are these people you feel close to?

Address the longstanding or tough-to-manage issues that contribute to risk

Your plan seems really good, but there are some important issues that contribute to your risk and that may best be addressed with professional help or assistance.

Since we've talked about how _____ [drug use/alcohol] affects your risk, have you considered getting help in dealing with this?

Assess the client's willingness to seek professional help or use a referral

Have you ever sought counseling or gone to a support group?

How interested would you be in getting a referral for services to deal with this issue?

What would be hardest about seeking support for [name the issue]?

Evaluate the types of referral the client would be most receptive to

Would you be more comfortable talking to an individual counselor or going to a support group?

Is there a particular type of support or service you would be willing to consider using?

Provide appropriate referrals

Here is the name and phone number of the service you should call to get assistance. When do you think you could call or go there?

Provide Appointment Card and Reminder for Follow-up

1-2 minutes

Review the follow-up schedule with the client

It's important that you come back for your results. What would help you remember to keep this appointment?

Identify ways for the client to remember follow-up events

Do you keep a datebook or calendar?

Review contact information for client and counselor

Your next appointment is [date].

Let me just make sure that you know how to contact me should you need to change the appointment.

Let me be sure I know how to reach you [review phone number/address].

Is this a good way to contact you?
