

Accessing Services & Support

9

LESSON

PURPOSE

Students have learned the facts about STIs and pregnancy prevention and applied this knowledge to their own lives. It is equally important to empower students with the ability to access valid sexual health information, services and related community resources and support. When students have the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and access resources and services, they are more confident and capable of maintaining their sexual health and well-being.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Identify valid information and services, online and through local resources, for sexual health and related services.
2. Identify trusted adults who can support youth in making sexual health decisions.
3. Analyze specific situations in which someone may need to access services.
4. Apply the skills for accessing resources.

LESSON SUMMARY

Activities	Minutes	Materials and Preparation Checklist
A Where Can I Go?	20	<input type="checkbox"/> Easel paper or whiteboard and markers. <input type="checkbox"/> Make copies of the Where Can I Go? worksheet for each student. <input type="checkbox"/> Web access to research online resources.
B Accessing Services	20	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy the Accessing Sexual Health Information and Services scenarios, one scenario for each small group.
C Being My Own Advocate	10	<input type="checkbox"/> Print out the Being My Own Advocate worksheet, one for each student. <input type="checkbox"/> Print out the Observer Checklist worksheet, one for each student.
D Reflection & Closure	5	<input type="checkbox"/> Notecards or journaling option for students to complete reflection questions.



INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Say,

Now that we have learned facts and skills to prevent STIs and unwanted pregnancies, we will explore how to access valid sexual health information and services as well as other community resources and supports that you may need. Having the confidence and skills to connect to health services and community supports is crucial for maintaining your sexual health.



ACTIVITY 9A: WHERE CAN I GO?



Say,

In this activity, you will identify people and places where you could go for support, information and services. Even if you do not think you'll need this information now, it may be helpful for you in the future, or for a friend or family member.

BRAINSTORM



- Post the following brainstorm questions on easel paper or a white board.
- As students respond to questions, record their answers and keep it in a visible place for students to use as a reference.
- Say, **thinking about the topics we've covered in this curriculum:**

1. Who could you or someone else turn to for support and information?

Possible answers: family members, friends, teachers, counselors and other professionals such as health care providers or religious leaders.

2. What types of information, services or support might someone need or want?

Possible answers: birth control options, STI testing, information on gender identity or sexual orientation, relationships, sexual assault, dating violence, substance use and homelessness.

3. If you were looking for information or support online, how would you identify valid websites and online sources?

Answers may vary. To know if a source is valid, here are some questions you can ask:

- *Is the website a well-known, reputable source with expertise on the topic/content?*
- *What is the main purpose or mission of the website? Is it clear and unbiased?
Is the source selling a specific product or promoting a narrow point of view?*
- *Is the information backed by research and consistent with other experts or related websites?*
- *Is the information up-to-date?*
- *Does the online source include quality information for the audience targeted?*
- *Where did the online information or website come from? Was it referred by a trusted source?*

FACILITATOR NOTE

Remind students that some organizations or companies may have a bias towards the subject or do not include research-based information to back their claims. For example, crisis pregnancy centers provide support to people who are pregnant and plan to go through with the pregnancy, but may not provide comprehensive, accurate and evidenced-based clinical information about all available pregnancy options such as abortion. Other examples include conversion therapy groups that do not support a person's gender identity or sexual orientation or pharmaceutical or for-profit websites that only highlight their medications or product over other valid options.

Say,

As you explore resources, it is important to know what your rights are in seeking and accessing services. Maine law empowers people under the age of 18 with the right to take control of their sexual and reproductive health. This means that minors in Maine are able to give their informed consent for confidential services like birth control, emergency contraception, testing and treatment for STIs and HIV, abortion care, mental health and substance use counseling and services and support related to sexual assault. Generally, all of these services are available to you without first requiring parent/guardian permission or notification.

For brochures or more information on minor's rights to access services in Maine, go to the mainefamilyplanning.org website or email education@mainefamilyplanning.org.

WHERE CAN I GO? ACTIVITY



- Pass out a copy of the **Where Can I Go?** worksheet to each student.
- Let them know their responses are for their own use, and they will not need to share or hand them in.
- They should list 2-3 people, places or websites under each category and use the web to research available resources, as needed.

Trusted adults you would go to for information, support and guidance.

Examples may include: parent, teacher, coach, older sibling, other relative, school nurse, etc.

Students can list the names of these support people in their lives.

Local community resources you could go to for information, services or support.

Examples may include: local family planning clinic or healthy care providers, local sexual assault center, LGBTQ support groups, teen centers, organizations providing food, housing and other resources for individuals and families.

Valid websites and online resources for finding out more information, services available and resources on topics related to health, prevention, relationships, etc.

Examples may include: websites with information about different birth control methods and services, confidential ways to get STI testing or to notify sexual partners about an STI, getting advice on a relationship situation, finding a local LGBTQ support group, etc.

Text, chat and hotlines you could reach out to for information or support.

Examples may include: dating or relationship issues, substance use or mental health concerns, questions about gender identity or sexual orientation, where to go for testing, resources for food and housing needs, support in crisis situations, etc.

- After students have had time to fill out their worksheets, bring everyone back together and debrief the activity.

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY



1. Why is it important to identify resources before you may want or need support and information?

Possible answers:

- *Being prepared leads you to the best person, organization or website for receiving support and information.*
- *Responding in a crisis or stressful situation may lead you to sources that aren't valid or helpful.*

2. What characteristics should a support person possess?

Possible answers: being trustworthy, a good listener, confidential (they won't tell others), supportive of your choices, non-judgmental and able to help you think through alternatives so you can make an informed decision that is best for you.

3. What qualities would you look for from your local resources?

Possible answers: easy access, addresses your needs, confidential, affordable, available hours, knowing others have had good experiences with those resources.

4. Having done this activity, will you be more likely to continue to research additional resources and services you may need?

Ask for thumbs up for yes, thumbs down for no or palm held flat for maybe.

SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include the following:

- **In this lesson, you identified trusted adults, organizations, websites and hotlines that can help you be safe and healthy. These are what we might call protective factors in your life.**
- **Protective factors are those things around you that give you strength and support to handle life's challenges. These include your own abilities and knowledge, positive role models and support people in your life and helpful organizations or groups in your school, community or online.**
- **These protective factors also increase your ability to avoid risk and promote sexual, emotional, mental and physical health.**



WHERE CAN I GO?

Directions: You are in the center. List 2-3 resources under each category. Feel free to be specific with names of people, organizations, web addresses or phone numbers.



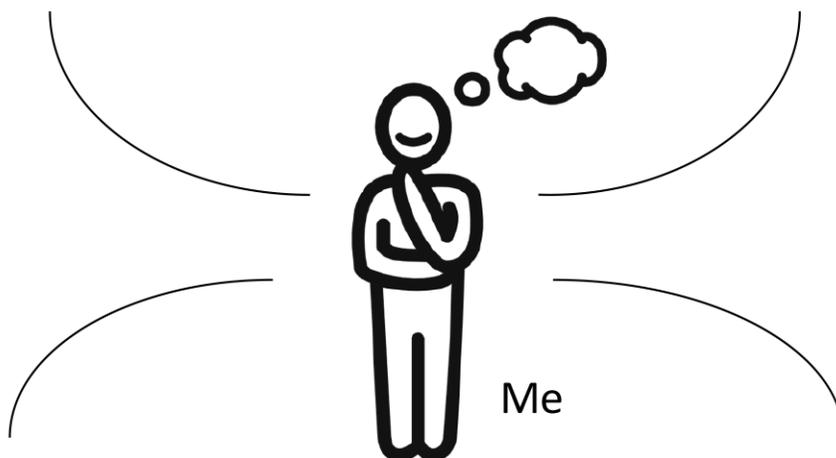
Trusted Adults

Who would you go to for information, support and guidance?

Local Resources

Where would you go for information and services in your community?







Text, Chat and Hotlines

Where would you reach out for information and support?

Websites & Online Resources

What websites or other online resources would you use for information or support?





ACTIVITY 9B: ACCESSING SERVICES



INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Say,

Now that you have had an opportunity to map out your local resources, we are going to explore how to take steps to access valid information, local resources and services to promote sexual health. Thinking through where and how to access resources will make it easier to get connected when you, or a friend, may need them.

- Split students into small groups, giving each group a different scenario. Have them read the scenarios and answer the questions as small groups.
- Come back together as a large group and ask the small groups to read their scenario and share their responses. Process the motivations for a young person to access services, as well as possible obstacles, solutions and individual, online or local resources available.
- Use the corresponding set of Facilitator Keys for possible answers as you debrief the individual scenarios.

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY:

Ask students the following processing questions in a large group.

1. What obstacles did the people in the scenarios face?
2. What additional resources would help the young person in the scenario?
3. What advice would you give the people in the scenarios if they were your friend(s)?

SUMMARIZE

In summarizing the activity, include these key points:

- We've now explored some of the obstacles people might face when accessing care in Maine. Having a plan ahead of time for where to go online or in-person for accurate information as well as how to access services can make a difficult situation less stressful for you, or for someone you are trying to support.
- While involving trusted adults in decisions can be very helpful, remember that in Maine minors have a right to access confidential sexual health and other services without first needing permission from a parent or guardian.
- LGBTQ services as well as sexual assault and dating violence resources are also confidential. The only time confidentiality is broken is when there is known or suspected abuse or neglect, or potential harm that could happen to a minor.



ACCESSING SEXUAL HEALTH INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Directions: There are a number of reasons a young person may wish to access sexual health information or services. Read the following scenario. Consider the information Hayden has and what information they need in order to make decisions around their sexual health. Answer the questions that follow.

SCENARIO 1: HAYDEN

Hayden is a sophomore who lives in rural Maine. Hayden was dating a senior for almost a year who always put them down, called them names and controlled who they could see and when. After learning about relationships in health class, Hayden realized that the relationship was unhealthy and with the support of their best friend was able to end the relationship. Since that relationship, Hayden feels like their self-esteem has been really low and they need to process the situation with someone. Their friend said they can call a local hotline to talk to someone confidentially, but Hayden is nervous because they have never called a hotline before.

1. Why might Hayden want to call/text/chat a hotline?

2. What obstacles is Hayden facing in this situation?

3. What steps can Hayden take to deal with these obstacles?

4. Who could Hayden talk to about this?

Scenario 1: Hayden (Suggested Responses)

Hayden is a sophomore who lives in rural Maine. Hayden was dating a senior for almost a year who always put them down, called them names and controlled who they could see and when. After learning about relationships in health class, Hayden realized that the relationship was unhealthy and with the support of their best friend was able to end the relationship. Since that relationship, Hayden feels like their self-esteem has been really low and they need to process the situation with someone. Their friend said they can call a local hotline to talk to someone confidentially, but Hayden is nervous because they have never called a hotline before.

1. Why might Hayden want to call/text/chat a hotline?

Possible answers:

- *To process the experience and their emotions.*
- *To be validated and supported in their experience.*
- *To get connected to resources like support groups or information.*

2. What obstacles is Hayden facing in this situation?

Possible answers:

- *Hayden lives in a rural area and may be afraid about confidentiality.*
- *Hayden has never used a hotline before and may feel uncomfortable reaching out.*
- *Hayden may wonder if their experience was serious enough to call a hotline.*

3. What steps can Hayden take to deal with these obstacles?

Possible answers:

- *Talk to a guidance counselor for support.*
- *Use chat or text which may feel less intimidating.*
- *Read articles on teen dating abuse to feel validated in their experience.*

4. Who could Hayden talk to about this?

Possible answers:

- *Hayden could continue to talk to their best friend.*
- *Hayden could talk to a trusted adult.*

Scenario 2: Sarah and Seth (Suggested Responses)

Sarah and Seth have been dating for 2 years. They've talked about having sex and learned about STIs and the risk of pregnancy in health class. Seth wants Sarah to go on birth control, but Sarah isn't sure she wants additional hormones in her body. Sarah would rather use condoms, because she doesn't want to risk getting an STI. Seth says if she is on birth control they won't need condoms since neither of them have had sex. After talking they have decided they need some more information and support to decide what to do for pregnancy and STI prevention, but they are not sure where to go.

1. What are Sarah and Seth's reasons for wanting more sexual health information?

Possible answers:

- *Discuss condom use and STI risk.*
- *Discuss possible birth control methods, including those that don't use hormones, and Sarah's concern about using hormonal methods.*
- *Free barrier methods and affordable, confidential services available at a family planning clinic.*

2. What obstacles is Sarah facing? What about Seth?

Possible answers:

- *Sarah does not want to use hormonal birth control.*
- *Sarah wants to use condoms, Seth may not want to.*
- *Seth doesn't understand why Sarah doesn't want to use birth control.*
- *It's possible they aren't old enough to drive, don't have transportation or live far from a clinic.*

3. What steps can both Sarah and Seth take together to deal with these obstacles?

Possible answers:

- *They could look at a trusted online site that details different birth control options, like bedsider.org.*
- *Sarah can explain to Seth why not using hormonal birth control is important to her.*
- *Seth can learn more about why Sarah may not want to use hormonal methods and learn about other birth control options.*
- *Seth and Sarah could read about ways to make condoms more pleasurable and easy to use.*

4. Who could they talk to about this?

Possible answers:

- *Sarah and Seth could talk separately with their health care provider (in person or on chat line) about their options and concerns with hormonal methods.*
- *Sarah and Seth may ask a school nurse, guidance counselor or clinic staff to help facilitate a conversation around their options and what would work best for them.*

Scenario 3: Chase (Suggested Responses)

Chase had sex for the first time a month ago. He just heard that the person he had sex with tested positive for chlamydia. Chase's friends asked if he used a condom. Chase didn't, but doesn't want his friends to know so he lies and says yes. Chase's best friend, Devin, mentions that he gets condoms free at the local family planning clinic. Chase can't decide if he should go to the clinic to get tested and pick up some free condoms. He isn't comfortable going to a clinic and he'd need to get a ride to the nearest one. He wonders if maybe he's better off not finding out if he has chlamydia since he hasn't had any symptoms. For all he knows the person he had sex with got chlamydia *after* they had sex.

1. Why might Chase want to visit a family planning clinic?

Possible answers:

- *Get tested for chlamydia and other STIs.*
- *Free barrier methods and affordable, confidential services available at a family planning clinic.*

2. What obstacles is Chase facing?

Possible answers:

- *He is embarrassed about not using a condom.*
- *He does not want to find out he has chlamydia.*
- *He may have limited knowledge about condom use and STI risk.*
- *He may not be able to afford to purchase condoms himself.*

3. What steps can Chase take to deal with these obstacles?

Possible answers:

- *Chase could ask Devin to give him more information about testing.*
- *Chase could find out about chlamydia and prevention of STIs from a trusted website.*
- *Chase can find a way to get to the clinic discretely, such as public transportation or his own vehicle, or use telehealth services.*

4. Who could Chase talk to about this?

Possible answers:

- *Chase could talk confidentially to his health care provider or a family planning clinic online.*
- *Chase could talk with his friend about using condoms, getting tested and how to get to the clinic.*
- *Chase could talk with a trusted adult or school staff about how to access condoms.*

Scenario 4: Alex and Ashley (Suggested Responses)

Alex and Ashley are best friends. Alex just told Ashley that he identifies as a male, not female. Ashley is really supportive, and wants to know if people at school know. Alex wants Ashley to use he/him pronouns for him, but only in private. Alex isn't sure he wants his classmates and teachers to know yet. While he is certain his family will support him, he doesn't know what he wants for himself regarding the next steps in his transition or how it impacts his sexual health or health care going forward. Alex wants to find more information and support around being trans online. He has heard of some national organizations like the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) but wants to find local connections and information.

1. Why might Alex want to visit an LGBTQ organization?

Possible answers:

- Alex may want to talk with other people in the LGBTQ community about transitioning and what it is like coming out as trans.
- Alex may want to know more about medical transitions and what services are available for youth in Maine.
- Alex may need a safe space to be himself without worrying about what others think.

2. What obstacles is Alex facing?

Possible answers:

- Alex is unsure he wants to be out to his peers and family.
- Alex might not know where to go for LGBTQ support that is confidential.
- Alex may live in an area with very few out LGBTQ people or services.

3. What steps can Alex take to deal with these obstacles? How can Ashley support Alex?

Possible answers:

- Alex may engage in online resources for Maine LGBTQ folks like OUT Maine, Equality Maine or Maine Transgender Network.
- Alex can ask Ashley for support or help attending or finding groups for LGBTQ youth.
- Ashley can get more informed and let Alex know they're there for support.

4. Who else could Alex talk to about this?

Possible answers:

- Alex could talk to a trusted adult like a family member or school social worker.
- Alex can talk to Ashley about his experience and ask for their support if needed.

Scenario 5: Dani (Suggested Responses)

Dani is 14 and is going into 9th grade. She is sexually active, and always uses a condom. This month, Dani's period is late. She doesn't want to buy a pregnancy test from the pharmacy, because she doesn't want anyone to see her buy one. Her sister Macey is 18, and gets her birth control at a local family planning clinic. Dani wonders if she should go there to get a pregnancy test, but Dani thinks that her mom will have to come with her, like she does for her other health care appointments. Dani knows her parents will be mad if they find out she is sexually active.

1. What is Dani's reason for wanting to go to a family planning clinic?

Possible answers:

- *Dani's period is late and she wants to take a pregnancy test.*
- *It is more private than buying a test at the pharmacy.*

2. What obstacles is Dani facing?

Possible answers:

- *Dani is 14 and cannot drive.*
- *Dani is worried her mom will need to give permission to get services.*
- *Dani's parents do not know she is sexually active.*

3. What steps can Dani take to deal with these obstacles?

Possible answers:

- *Dani could contact family planning and find out if her mom has to be involved.*
- *Dani could ask a friend, trusted family member or other trusted adult to drive her.*
- *Dani could take public transportation, if available.*

4. Who could Dani talk to about this?

Possible answers:

- *Dani could talk to her sister, Macey, about taking her to family planning.*
- *Dani could ask a care representative at family planning online or on the phone to find out if she needs her mom present to get services.*
- *Dani could talk to friends she knows that go to family planning.*
- *Dani could talk to the individual she last had sex with about her concern and need for a pregnancy test.*



ACTIVITY 9C: BEING MY OWN ADVOCATE



Say,

Now that we've explored local resources and ways to overcome barriers to accessing services, we are going to practice some self-advocacy skills. It is important to be able to communicate to a provider or a provider's office about the sexual healthcare you need. Whether you need STI testing, birth control, an annual checkup or answers to your health questions, it is a valuable skill to be able to call and set up an appointment for yourself or to ask questions about your health.

- Pass out a copy of the **Being My Own Advocate** worksheet to each student and tell them that they have 3 minutes to read the worksheet and fill out their script.
- After 3 minutes, instruct students to get into pairs and act out the script. One person will read their script as if they were calling to make an appointment. The other person will listen and make notes using the observer checklist. The observer role is one of support, not to be critical of the other person.
- Give each student 2 minutes to act out their script and receive feedback from their partner. Then have them switch roles.

DEBRIEF THE ACTIVITY

Ask students the following processing questions in the large group:

1. **Raise your hand if you think it's helpful to plan what you are going to say or ask ahead of time.**
2. **What challenges did you have in creating and saying your scripts to each other?**
3. **What other strategies might make it easier to advocate for yourself in getting the healthcare or other support services you need?**

Possible answers:

- *Bring a friend or trusted adult with you to the clinic.*
- *Research the clinic and services you are interested in ahead of time.*
- *Use online chat features to ask questions or book an appointment if you feel uncomfortable on the phone.*

4. **How were your partners effective at communicating when reading their script?**

Possible answers:

- *They spoke clearly and loudly enough.*
- *They used a confident tone and body language.*
- *They knew when they were available.*
- *They said what they needed and asked questions.*

SUMMARIZE

Summarize the activity by making the following points:

- **Practicing ahead of time will make you more confident in advocating for what you need. This might be writing down ahead of time what you will say on a call, writing down questions you have, researching where you will go and figuring out how you will get there.**
- **Using online booking, chat features, emailing and messaging are options you have if you feel uncomfortable using the phone to make an appointment or connect with needed support.**
- **It is important to take time to get familiar with local resources so they will be easier to find if and when you, or someone you know, need them.**



BEING MY OWN ADVOCATE

Instructions: Imagine you need to access information or a health service. This could be an annual check-up, STI testing, birth control methods or something else. Decide what information or services you are seeking. Fill in the blanks of the script for what you might say when you call a local clinic seeking information or support. You do not need to know all the answers, you can make them up for this activity. Write down some questions you want to ask. In real life, the person answering the phone will prompt you with questions about the following information.

Introduce yourself and say what you need.

Hello,

*My name is _____ and I am calling to book an appointment
for _____ (insert health service you are seeking).*

Know when you are available.

I am available on _____ days, and at these times: _____.

Know how you will pay.

I have _____ insurance. (You may need to give your insurance number). Or, I need support paying for services. How much does this service cost?

Ask how to prepare for your appointment.

Is there anything I need to bring to the appointment? Is there anything I need to do to prepare?

After your phone call, you will need to prepare for your appointment. Ask yourself these questions.

What do you need to do to get to the appointment on time?

What questions do you have for the provider?



BEING MY OWN ADVOCATE OBSERVER CHECKLIST

Instructions: Watch and listen to your partner reading their script. Check the boxes that apply below. Note at least one thing they do that displays assertive communication. Write down any suggestions you have for them. After they are done speaking, provide them with your feedback. This is meant to be a positive, supportive role, not to test or critique them. We're just practicing!

Checklist:

- Speaks clearly
- Says who they are
- Says what they need
- Says when they are available
- Discusses how they will pay
- Asks how they can prepare
- Uses a confident tone

What did they do that showed assertive communication?

Do you have any suggestions for the person you were observing?

What questions do they have for the provider?



ACTIVITY 9D: REFLECTION & CLOSURE



REFLECTION

Provide each student with a notecard and ask them to answer the following questions. Let them know that this is their personal information and you will not be asking them to hand it in or share it with others. If students will use a journaling option to answer questions, think about how you will maintain confidentiality.

1. **What types of information, services or support do you think you might access now or in the future? (You may also think about a friend you may want to support.)**
2. **What barriers do you think you'll have to overcome?**
3. **How can you overcome these barriers?**

CLOSURE

Summarize these key messages to close this lesson.

- **It is important to develop skills to access the information you may need, now or in the future, to take care of your physical, social and mental health.**
- **Practicing these skills, and asking for support from others, will help you build a sense of self-advocacy that you can use now and as you get older.**
- **There are many online and in-person supports available for young people in Maine. These even include ways to chat with someone from afar, which is very helpful if you have barriers, like living in a rural area or if you are uncomfortable talking on the phone.**
- **While many young people talk to a parent or trusted adult about their health care needs, Maine laws give people under the age of 18 the right to access sexual health information and services without needing permission from a parent or guardian. Many of these services are available at low or no cost.**

