Professionals - Communication

Communicating with Your Patient

Conversations about your patient's mental health can be challenging, but they are necessary. This handout is designed to provide quick and supportive statements you can use during an appointment if you suspect your patient is experiencing mental health concerns.

General Formula for Initiating Dialogue

Share what you've noticed + Ask an open-ended question

Share what you've noticed

- "I noticed your blood pressure is higher than usual and wondered how you are doing."
- "I wanted to check in with you because you've either missed or rescheduled several of our appointments recently."

Ask an open-ended question

- "Can you tell me more about your current support systems?"
- "Have you thought about seeing a therapist?"

Offer support and hope

- "You're not alone in this. I'm here for you and so are your friends and family members. "
- "I care about you and your baby and want to help."

Acknowledge that it's not easy to open up

- "I know these things are hard to talk about… This is really brave of you."

Approach and respond from a place of care and compassion

- "I'm asking this because I care about you and how you're doing."

Avoid judging; normalize their experience

- "What you're going through is common for many birthing parents. It's a lot to deal with."

If indicated, ask about their personal safety

- "It sounds like there's a lot going on. Do you feel safe?"

If concerns around safety arise, conduct a risk assessment and evaluate if the patient is a risk to themselves or others.