

PATIENT-CENTERED PRACTICES



Weight Stigma in Reproductive Health Care

All staff working with NC Title X projects are required to complete multiple, annual trainings in order to help ensure that clients receive high quality, client-centered, reproductive health care. This year, the Reproductive Health National Training Center's (RHNTC) **Weight Stigma in Reproductive Health Care** recorded webinar was chosen to highlight one population experiencing reproductive health disparities, with the hope of bringing awareness and ideas on how to begin to address it in your clinic setting.

Stereotypes, such as that heavier individuals are uninterested in their health, and anti-fat attitudes persist, with 40% of adults in the United States experiencing weight-based stigma ([RHNTC, 2023](#)). Individuals experiencing weight-based stigma are more reluctant to seek health care or to discuss new health symptoms, especially if they have had experience with a provider blaming their health issues only on their weight or received unsolicited advice around losing weight in the past. Specifically in reproductive health care, this could mean skipped or delayed pelvic exams or pap tests. Additionally, providers may be hesitant to put higher-weight patients on a birth control method that may cause weight gain, despite the patient's preferences ([RHNTC, 2023](#)).

The webinar presents numerous strategies to help better welcome and accommodate larger individuals in the reproductive clinic setting. Reproductive Health Branch staff also plan to offer additional webinars for NC Title X subrecipients throughout the year to further unpack this important topic. We hope you'll join us!

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Patient-Centered Care in Focus: Extended Clinic Hours

In an ideal North Carolina community, every reproductive-health age individual would be able to access family planning services at a convenient time for them. Extending hours in your family planning clinic is one manageable step toward reaching this goal. It provides an opportunity to bring family planning services to individuals facing access barriers. According to the Guttmacher Institute, "51% of clients reported preferring to go to clinics with extended hours because they did not have to take time off from work or school, were more likely to find free or low-cost child care, and experienced shorter wait times during non-conventional clinic times."

Patient-Centered Care in Practice: Franklin County

For several years, the Franklin County Health Department Family Planning Clinic has provided confidential services to "ALL individuals who desire reproductive health assistance." In February 2024, their clinic decided to further work toward **improving access** and **optimizing patient experience** by beginning to offer after-hours appointments and services. On the third Tuesday of every month, the clinic stays open until 7:00 p.m. in order to provide various reproductive health services, such as contraceptive counseling, preventative care, and physical exams to those who need more appointment scheduling flexibility.

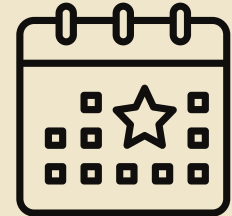
Advertising is one of the strongest tools agencies can use in promoting an extended clinic hours schedule. Franklin County Health Department is accessing media and social media spaces, such as Instagram and Facebook, to engage the community, share health information, and promote new services. Simple, inviting posts are shared online to engage students, adolescents, and working individuals in the community.

During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the Reproductive Health Branch will continue to offer technical assistance to local health departments with extended hours, as well as agencies that are interested in adopting an extended hour schedule. An **informational guide** highlighting the benefits, lessons learned, and effective tips for extending clinic hours will be made available and distributed in the summer of 2025. For more information, please reach out to Reproductive Health Program Consultant, Naisha Coley, at naisha.coley@dhhs.nc.gov.



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Training Opportunities from the Reproductive Health Branch



- **Now available online:**
 - Trauma-Informed Care in the Workplace
- **Client-Centered Reproductive Healthcare Skill Building Series**
 - Providing high quality, client-centered care is the responsibility of **all** agency staff members.
 - Beginning with **Advanced Practice Practitioners**, RHB staff will be offering opportunities to deepen your client-centered counseling skills by examining case studies and role play practice.
 - Additional opportunities for **nurses** and **clerical staff** will follow this fall and winter.
 - **Advance Practice Practitioners** should sign up for **one** of the following opportunities (registration will be capped):
 - Wednesday, July 16 from 11am - 12pm
 - Tuesday, August 19 from 12pm - 1pm
 - Thursday, September 25 from 1pm - 2pm



Past issues of the "Patient-Centered Practices" newsletter are now archived on the Resources page of the [Women, Infant, and Community Wellness website](#) for easy access. They are also now archived on [Smartsheet](#).

We would love to highlight your Title X clinic in a future newsletter! Reach out to Jessica Johnson, Patient Experience Coordinator, at Jessica.L.Johnson@dhhs.nc.gov with ideas or to be featured.

