

Individual Counseling: Getting Your Participants Involved

This section provides an explanation of the information in the chart on page 39 of the Nutrition Education Plan.

Try new techniques to improve the quality of individual counseling. Consider implementing one new technique in individual counseling every year or 6 months.

Start with open-ended questions to find out what your participant wants to know. An open-ended question is one that cannot be answered by a “yes” or “no.” Open-ended questions require your participants to give more information and do not lead the participant to a certain answer. Take a look at the contrasting questions below.

- H Ask an open-ended question such as “What have you heard about breastfeeding?” instead of “Are you going to breastfeed?” which is closed-ended.
- H Ask an open-ended question such as “What beverages does your child like to drink?” instead of “Does your child like to drink juice?”
- H Try an open-ended question such as “Tell me how you mix the formula.” instead of “Do you mix half water and half formula?”
- H Try an open-ended question such as “What was the first thing you ate yesterday?” instead of “What did you have for breakfast yesterday?”

Your participants are more likely to “open up” when you use open-ended questions. Notice too that leading and closed-ended questions sometimes give the answer away or lead the participant to answer a certain way. For example, consider the formula mixing statement: “Tell me how you mix the formula.” Notice that it only asks for information. If you include the answer (i.e. “Do you mix half water and half formula?), you are leading the participant to the answer. Even if participants are not mixing half water and half formula, they may answer “yes” to the question.

Then offer the participant the information she requested. Ask her how she can use that information to solve her problem. Help her see that the information you are providing is beneficial. She will change if she thinks change will benefit her. For example, an anemic child may be fussy and whine all day. Or an iron-deficient woman may be so tired she wants to sleep all day. Eating iron-rich foods can help both of them feel better. Make the connection for participants between the information you are providing and its benefit to their life.

At the end of the counseling session give the participant written material, such as a pamphlet on the counseling topic. This will allow them to review the information later and share the information with family members. You can also personalize the pamphlet by writing their child’s name, weight, height and/or hematocrit/hemoglobin on the pamphlet. Encourage the participant to underline or circle important information. Or the participant can write their plan on the handout. Your personalization or their writing will increase their interest in using the pamphlet.

Limit your individual counseling sessions to no more than two or three main points.

Participants learn best when they are not overwhelmed with information. Your participants will be more likely to incorporate the counseling information into their lives if you cover a limited number of points. Also, by limiting the amount of information you cover, you can discuss the information thoroughly. Remember this principle includes pamphlets too: one or two pamphlets is sufficient.

Choosing the most important points to cover is sometimes difficult. Narrow your topics by choosing ones that are relevant to the participant. Don't feel like you have to cover every risk code. Use them to help you identify problems. And remember participants do not have to know all their risk conditions. Nutrition education is designed to help people improve them, so focus on giving information to improve their health. You may see a child that is overweight, still drinking 40 ounces of milk from the bottle at age 2, anemic and a poor eater. The child's mother is most concerned that he is a picky eater, but you think weaning is of most concern. Try to help the mother see how weaning from the bottle may improve her child's appetite. In fact, weaning may improve the iron and weight status too.

Allow participants to select topics for individual counseling. Participants will be more interested in what you are telling them if it is related to their life and their concerns. Try asking your participants what concerns or questions they have about breastfeeding or feeding their child. Adults are most ready to learn when they are trying to deal with a problem such as a new baby, breastfeeding for the first time or feeding a picky eater. Show them how the information you have can help them solve their problem or deal with their concern. If participants don't have any concerns, then cover no more than the two or three topics you feel are most important.

Provide participants with positive feedback during the individual counseling session.

Positive feedback will keep your participants interested in your message and encourage them to keep achieving new goals. Look for small accomplishments at each individual counseling session. Comment on any progress at subsequent visits. Let participants know when hematocrit or hemoglobin has improved, growth has occurred or diets have improved. Don't wait until the entire problem or situation has been resolved. Praise any progress. For example, if a child is overweight, don't wait until they are an appropriate weight for length to give feedback to the parent. Praise the parent for a noticeable slow down in the rate of weight gain. Let the participant know that progress has been made. Remember, feedback can be verbal and nonverbal. Make sure your body language is telling participants "I'm listening, I'm interested."

Evaluate the individual counseling session. Find out the participant's solution. Your goal should be to help participants figure out their own solutions. Let participants wrap up the counseling session by telling you what they plan to do. The participants' solutions may not be the same as yours, but the participants know what is realistic in their situation. Try using some of these statements to evaluate the counseling session:

- 7 Okay, now tell me which of those choices you think might work out best for you.
- 7 Which of the high-iron foods we discussed will your child will eat?
- 7 We're about finished here, but before you go, can you tell me one or two things you're going to do the next time Brianna asks for the bottle at bedtime?

- 7 Which of the techniques for dealing with a picky eater do you think will work best with Jack?
- 7 Since Alexis won't drink milk right now, which of the other high-calcium foods do you think she will accept?

Remember to ask these questions in a friendly, nonthreatening way. Some participants may need a little help getting started, but try to give the participants time to process the information and come up with their own solutions. The participants' answers will allow you to determine if you have communicated your message effectively. Gently correct any wrong information and always give the participant positive feedback for their plan.

Help participants set small achievable goals at the end of the counseling session. Clear, specific goals that people can reach produce better results than general, vague intentions. When participants set specific goals it helps them take the counseling information and form a plan for integrating it into their lives. Provide your participants with guidance in their goal-setting, but allow participants to set their own goals. Here are some examples of goals that your participants may find achievable and motivating:

- 7 I will talk to my mother today about not giving my child the bottle when she goes to bed.
- 7 I will walk 4 times a week for 15 minutes.
- 7 I will give my child only 4 ounces of fruit juice a day.
- 7 I will turn off the TV when we eat dinner.
- 7 I will breastfeed my infant before I leave the hospital.

These goals are specific, clearly defined and more likely to be achieved than a general goal like, "I will eat better" or "I will give my child healthy snacks." Achieving goals increases self-confidence. When participants successfully meet one goal, they are more likely to set and meet additional goals.

Document the content of the individual counseling session. Simple, brief notes about the counseling session can improve your individual counseling. Look at some of the benefits of documenting your counseling:

- 7 It allows you to follow-up on the participant's progress at the next individual counseling session.
- 7 It allows you to acknowledge any progress the participant made and provide positive feedback.
- 7 Other staff can look back at your notes and know exactly what was covered at the last visit.
- 7 It allows you to make the most of each session and build on the information given in previous sessions.
- 7 You can use this information to help the participant set a new goal.
- 7 It creates an organized record of the participants educational experiences at WIC and helps chart their progress toward their goals.
- 7 It lets the participant know that someone is interested in their progress and will follow-up.

Make the documentation process easy. Designate a specific place in your participant files for documentation and keep your notes brief. Some Local Agencies have developed forms that list

the most common counseling topics. These forms are in all participants' charts. The counselor simply dates and initials the topic they covered, then jots down the participant's goal.

Training helps improve and maintain the quality of individual counseling. Well-trained staff is the key to providing quality nutrition education. In addition, training can make your staff more confident and motivated. Check the WIC website to find out what training is being offered by the WIC Training Section.

To get to the WIC website:

- 7 Type "<http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/wichd/>" in the address box to get the main WIC web page.
- 7 Click on "Training" in the left-hand margin.
- 7 Once the Training web page comes up, click on "Courses Offered" in the left-hand margin.

You can also call the Training section at 512-406-0757. Don't forget the Nutrition Education/Breastfeeding Workshop. This is a two or three day workshop held in Austin, each spring.

Scheduling Nutrition Education

The scheduling system you have in place will either make or break your classes, motivate participants to attend, or drive your staff crazy. If you have been using the same scheduling system for years, it may be time to review your system. Some things to consider when developing a schedule are what times work best for your participants, how can your staff help with the scheduling of participants, and what's the best way to control the size of your classes. Also consider what your participants need. Use the participant survey results to find which topics and times are the best for group classes.

Consider your participants when scheduling group classes:

- 7 Your agency probably has more people in some client categories than others. If you do, schedule more classes for categories with most clients. For example, you may schedule more child classes than infant classes. Ask your WIC director for the number of clients you serve in each category.
- 7 Consider allowing each clinic to customize their schedule to meet the needs of their participants. For example, have early bird classes for clinics with high number of working moms.
- 7 Watch your clients' habits. For example, if mothers cannot get their babies to clinic early, a 9:00 am infant class may work better than one at 8:00 am.
- 7 Offer classes to non-English speakers at a time they can attend.
- 7 Use colored stickers or colored markers to code the participant's language preference on the record folder.
- 7 Schedule classes around the bus arrivals in your area.
- 7 Post class times and topics in the same place each month.
- 7 Tell participants about any schedule changes.
- 7 Offer a "core" class schedule to meet the basic needs of your participants. Core classes are the topics your agency identifies as a priority. See the examples following this section. The core topics are not the minimum requirements for nutrition education contacts.
- 7 During evening hours offer classes with general nutrition information, such as food safety or food economics.
- 7 At the end of the month, offer general nutrition classes for participants who needed to reschedule.
- 7 For topics which you cannot schedule as a regular group class, provide instead a one-time "special class."

Consider your staff when planning the schedule:

- 7 Get staff input on scheduling. The experience of your staff will help you plan a workable schedule. Either a staff survey or a group discussion can provide new ideas.
- 7 If only one CPA teaches classes and certifies participants, minimize their stress by scheduling group classes and clinics on different days.
- 7 Do patient flow analysis to get the most workable routine for your clinics.

Make Your Classes “Just Right”

- 7 Class sizes vary. Are they too small? Consider cutting duplicate classes or conduct classes for a half day instead of one full day. Are they too large? Add more classes to the schedule.
- 7 Class times vary. Decide the length of time needed to conduct a quality nutrition class.
 - l Classes every 45 minutes rather than every 60 minutes use staff time efficiently.
 - l Classes every 45 minutes instead of every 30 minutes alleviate overcrowding in the classroom and waiting area.
- 7 If your local agency provides very small classes at satellite clinics, consider offering individual counseling or general nutrition topics instead of categorical classes.
- 7 Use the over-booking formula to compensate for no-shows. It will help keep classes large enough to effectively use staff resources. The over-booking formula is

Desired class size divided by class show rate.

Example: If you want 10 people to be in a class, and you know your class show rate is 50%, you should schedule 20 people.

$$\frac{10}{50\%} = \frac{10}{0.5} = 20 \text{ participants scheduled.}$$

1999-2000 Schedule of Classes

Core Classes Offered Every Month

Pregnant Women <i>(Receive triple issuance)</i>	Parents of Infants <i>(Receive triple issuance)</i>	Parents of Children <i>(Receive triple issuance)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •First voucher appointment after certification: BF-000-09 Giving You the Best That I've Got (English) or BF-000-18 Es Lo Mejor (Spanish) •Second voucher appointment: Iron Nutrition Class — Choice in class of: NR-000-05 Anemia, the Silent Shadow NR-000-04 WIC Talk: Anemia •Third voucher appointment--Current Nutrition Topics 	<p><u>Breastfed Infants</u>--Receive single issuance at certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •First voucher appointment: Individual counseling appointment with BF Peer Counselor--Receive triple issuance •Second voucher appointment--Infant Feeding Class IF-000-11 Lily Feeds Her Baby OR IF-000-12 Lily Feeds Her Toddler Teacher selects lesson based on ages of infants in class: Majority <6 months, teach IF-000-11; Majority >6 months, teach IF-000-12; Equal numbers younger and older infants, teach IF-000-12 •Third voucher appointment--Current Nutrition Topics <p><u>Formula-fed Infants</u>--Receive triple issuance at certification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •First voucher appointment--Infant Feeding Class IF-000-11 Lily Feeds Her Baby or IF-000-12 Lily Feeds Her Toddler Teacher selects lesson based on ages of infants in class as described above. •Second voucher appointment--Current Nutrition Topics 	<p><u>ALL children certified at one year</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *First voucher appointment after certification DH-007-01 Bye-bye Baby Bottle! Children > 13 months and NOT WEANED from bottle *First voucher appointment after certification DH-007-01 Bye-bye Baby Bottle! Children certified for Risk Code 201 AND weaned from the bottle •First voucher appointment after certification Iron Nutrition Class — Choice in class of: NR-000-05 Anemia, the Silent Shadow NR-000-04 WIC Talk: Anemia All other children •First voucher appointment after certification-- Current Nutrition Topics

Quarterly Classes

Quarter	Current Nutrition Topics	Self-Paced Lesson/Hearing Impaired
Fall 1999 October, November, December	<p>Choice of: NR-000-05 Anemia, the Silent Shadow FE-000-05 Sally Gets Her Money's Worth</p>	SP-007-05 Facts on Fiber
Winter 2000 January, February, March	<p>Choice of: NT-000-04 Weight: Maintaining a Healthy Balance GN-000-06 Small Changes, Big Differences (English) GN-000-07 Grasa, No Gracias (Spanish)</p>	SP-007-03 Count on Calcium
Spring 2000 April, May, June	<p>Choice of: NT-007-01 Iron Rich Foods (Bingo) GN-000-08 Lily Bets on 5 A Day</p>	SP-007-01 5 A Day for Better Health
Summer 2000 July, August, September	<p>Choice of: CF-000-15 Childhood Obesity FS-000-01 Food Danger Zones</p>	SP-000-01 Storing Leftovers Safely

Marketing Nutrition Education to Your Participants

What do we mean by marketing nutrition education at WIC? Before a busy mom with limited resources will buy a product, she needs a compelling reason to use it and think she can afford it. Companies make great efforts to convince people that their products will make consumers' lives better. They seek to show that the product's value exceeds its cost. We call those efforts marketing.

Services, such as WIC nutrition education, also require marketing efforts. You can help increase the participants sense of value about this service by marketing its value.

The following three examples show some ways that each WIC staff member can highlight the value of nutrition education.

Example 1: During her pregnancy a 17 year old decided to exclusively breastfeed her baby. At that time, her WIC peer counselor gave her the toll free number to Mom's Place and explained how valuable Mom's Place could be to her. The teenager returned to WIC after the birth of her baby for certification, to get help with breastfeeding management, and get vouchers for the expanded food package.

Example 2: A young mom brought her six month old in for a mid-year visit. The CPA asked the mom if the baby was eating solid foods. The mom said that her baby refused the vegetables she had offered a few weeks ago and only wanted to breastfeed. The CPA congratulated the mom on her successful breastfeeding experience and took the opportunity to teach about the value of iron-rich cereals and other foods WIC provides to prevent anemia. The mom, with the help of the CPA, came up with a plan for starting the baby on cereal and how to introduce new foods over the next two months.

Example 3: To save time a busy WIC mom took her three children to get a fast-food dinner the night before her visit to the clinic. The WIC clerk noticed this when she took the mother's diet recall and made a note on the recall for the CPA. The clerk then told the mom about the great grocery shopping class that offered shopping tips to save time and money. She also talked briefly about how much other participants like the class and its coupon exchange activity. When the mom made her next WIC appointment, the clerk asked her if she'd like to schedule the grocery-shopping class for her next visit.

How can you market the value of WIC nutrition education? Take stock of your resources and recognize them as marketing tools.

Your Participants

7 Survey participants to find out what they want to learn.

7 Understand the needs of the people who come to your classes. First-time mothers between the ages of 13 and 18 have different needs from mothers who have two or more children, and

they have different needs from children 3 to 5 years old.

- 7 Give participants the opportunity to evaluate the classes, staff teaching skills, and staff marketing of classes at your clinic. Use their evaluations to improve your classes, design skills training, and better marketing strategies.
- 7 Provide group classes, bulletin board information, counseling sessions that cover what your clients want to learn.
- 7 Encourage participants to discuss the benefits of WIC with their friends.

Class Scheduling

- 7 Check out the tools in the section “Scheduling Nutrition Education” to make an effective group class schedule.
- 7 Use a special handout listing by month, the group class topics for the entire year. One local agency does this. It generates interest and excitement among participants because they can plan their nutrition and breastfeeding education.
- 7 Offer a choice of classes with a list of available days and times to all participants. When individuals are given a choice, they are more likely to attend because they have chosen the day and time for themselves. Try this simple statement, “Tanya, look at all the topics you get to choose from for your next appointment. In this group class you will learn about and it’s offered at these times. Which day and time works best with your schedule?”
- 7 Send reminder cards or call participants before their class appointment. Most participants are scheduled 3 months in advance and forget or may not read their appointment cards.

Positive Attitude

- 7 When speaking with teenagers, instead of saying, “You have to go to class before you can get your vouchers,” you could say, “We have this fun class on introducing solids to infants. The video is funny, and you can learn a lot that will make things easier for you when your baby gets a little older.”
- 7 At each appointment, in a subtle way educate participants on the importance of attending their nutrition education class and coming to their appointment on time . A simple statement like, “Lori, you’ve chosen a topic class and time for your next appointment. I know you will enjoy the topic class and we’ll enjoy seeing you in class at 2:00 pm. If something comes up and you can’t make it on that day or time, please call and we’ll be happy to reschedule you.”
- 7 When you call to remind participants of their appointment or missed appointment, do it enthusiastically. Try this simple statement, “Hello, Sharon we missed you in class on date. I’m calling to find out when you can come in. You chose topic and we’re offering that again on day and time. How does that sound?”

Staff Who Do Not Teach

- 7 Show the nutrition and breastfeeding videos and teach the lesson to the **entire** staff. Why? So staff who do not teach will understand the importance of nutrition education. Their familiarity with the classes will help them feel confident and enthusiastically “sell” participants on the different topics.

- 7 One local agency developed special classes just for three and four year olds and trained the clinic clerks to market the classes to those youngsters in their clinic. A clerk would see a four year old in the clinic, kneel down and say, “Do you go to the Teddy Bear Classes? No? Well, it’s a special class just for you. We make snacks, learn about fruits and vegetables, and have a lot of fun. When you turn 5, you can graduate from the Teddy Bear Program and get a Teddy Bear Certificate. Let’s see if your mom would like to bring you back for the Teddy Bear Class.”
- 7 Create staff incentives to market nutrition classes. Ask staff who don’t teach nutrition education classes to assist with bulletin boards, displays, or newsletters. Hold a contest in each clinic for the best bulletin board or display. The clinic that wins gets bragging rights, their picture in WIC News, or free lunch with money donated from all the clinics.

Advertise in the clinic

- 7 Create a marketing bulletin board for nutrition and breastfeeding education classes. Use a *WIC for You* such as the Volume 8/Number 2, “WIC: Your Nutrition Headquarters,” which explains why the food package includes those specific foods to teach the connection between food and it’s nutritional value.
- 7 Use the “Keep Your Child on WIC Up to Age 5” *WIC for You* to show how the value of WIC continues after the first birthday.
- 7 Highlight up-coming nutrition education topics on a bulletin board, newsletter, calendar, or a display at the front desk. This will let participants know what to expect at the next class they have chosen or will attend.
- 7 Feature a special community calendar board showing classes outside WIC clinics which participants can attend and get a ticket to bring back to the clinic to get their vouchers. Advertise the WIC Health Fair or the Health Department Health Fair at which WIC will have nutrition education displays. Each participant who attends three or more information booths can get a nutrition education certificate to take to the clinic to get vouchers.