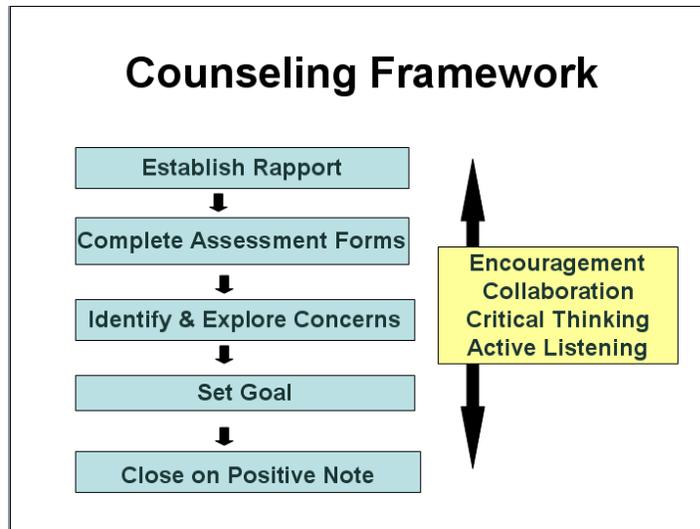




## VENA Counseling Framework

The VENA Counseling Framework provides guidance for structuring VENA counseling sessions. Having a meaningful conversation with clients is a critical part of the VENA assessment process. Try following the five steps in blue, and remember to keep in mind the important points in yellow throughout the session.



**Keep these in mind throughout the entire counseling session:**

### **Encouragement**

Praise clients for healthy behaviors they are already doing. Encouragement and support boosts confidence to try healthy changes.

### **Collaboration**

Engage clients in identifying concerns, barriers, and strategies for improvement. It is a good sign if clients are talking at least 50 percent of the time.

### **Critical Thinking**

Keep your thinking caps on in order to connect client information with your WIC nutrition knowledge. Analyzing and prioritizing information is essential in order to provide relevant and helpful guidance.

### **Active Listening**

Listen carefully to clients for not only words, but also feelings behind words. Repeat, paraphrase, or reflect back what you hear in order to check for understanding and keep the conversation going.

**Follow these five steps to guide your counseling sessions.**

### **1. Establish Rapport**

Build a positive relationship with clients – one based on mutual understanding and trust – in order to lay the foundation for effective counseling. Introducing yourself, smiling, displaying positive body language, and demonstrating a caring attitude help to establish rapport.

### **2. Complete Assessment Forms**

Completing forms accurately and efficiently promotes continuity of care. Clarify client responses and focus on relevant information in order to allow time for a meaningful conversation.

### **3. Identify and Explore Client's Concerns**

Engage clients in determining main topics for discussion. Use open-ended questions to explore client feelings and attitudes and to identify potential areas for change. When providing nutrition education, ensure that the information is accurate, tailored to the client's concerns, and not overwhelming.

### **4. Help Client to Set Goal**

Ease into this step of the counseling process by summarizing the key points of the conversation and asking clients what they are willing to work on. Help clients make their goals specific and realistic for their lifestyle, and remember that they are the best judge of what will work for their family.

### **5. Close on a Positive Note**

Closing the session in a positive way maintains rapport and sets the stage for the next counseling session. Expressing enthusiasm about following up at the next session will help promote continuity of care.

