



Already Doing Client-Centered Activities?

Wondering What Else You Can Do?

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Client-Centered Nutrition Education is more than group classes. Adopting a client-centered approach means that you are focused on helping clients have the best possible experience at WIC. From the moment clients walk into the clinic, the experience should be focused on meeting their needs, keeping them engaged, and helping them feel welcome.

Before Clients Arrive

Give clients choices whenever possible. This includes letting them select their class time and class format. Being client-centered means that you are making the client's needs and interests a priority. Ample choices allow clients to have some control of how and when they receive their nutrition education. It also allows them to tailor the experience to best suit their needs.

When Clients Enter The Clinic

Next time you walk through the clinic doors, imagine yourself as a WIC mom who traveled by bus with a toddler to come get her benefits.

What kind of atmosphere would help you relax? Greet each client who enters with a smile. If you are on the phone and can't help the client immediately, make eye contact to acknowledge her arrival. Make signs friendly and positive. Try to make the environment as comfortable as possible. For example, can you replace the chairs with sofas or make water available? Give new life to used furniture, pillows, or lamps to make the environment more comfortable.

In The Waiting Room

Make every minute your clients spend in the clinic count. Some clients spend valuable time in clinic waiting rooms. How can you use that time, not lose it? Capture the clients' interest and educate them so they come into their class or counseling session with questions, ideas, and a little bit of background information. Use bulletin boards, play DVDs, and leave handouts, nutrition magazines or books on the tables.

Update waiting room information frequently.

Every time a client comes into the clinic there should be new information and material to reference. This does not mean a big change every month, especially if you consider clients visit clinics every three months. Just a few new things every once in a while will keep people engaged.

Include a safe space for children in the waiting room. Books and inexpensive toys can make them feel more relaxed and minimize complaining and disruptions while they wait.

Use the CCNE Evaluation Checklist for more ideas on how to make your clinic more client centered:

In the Clinic

- Waiting room and classrooms are attractive and inviting
- All staff promote client-centered principles (e.g. engaging and welcoming with clients)
- Staff greet clients when they enter the clinic
- Nutrition education is offered in a variety of class formats (e.g. group classes, online lessons, health fairs)
- All staff market a variety of client-centered class formats (e.g. promote group classes as well as online classes)
- Staff offer clients a choice of class time
- Staff offer clients a choice of class format
- Current and updated educational materials are available for clients
- Staff know where to find information about CCNE classes or principles
- The Real (WIC) World: Applying CCNE in the Clinic DVD is readily available for staff to view

The Classroom Experience

Give yourself enough time to prepare for class and practice so you can use the lesson outline like a guide rather than a script. Write down extra questions and prompts that you can use, if needed.

If you have a large group or your classroom is not conducive to putting chairs in a circle, try out other ways to get the conversation started. For example, breaking into small groups might help make a large class feel smaller.

When leading an interactive discussion, make sure it is more than just a question and answer session. Avoid the “one and done” mentality.

One answer from one client does not count as a discussion. Let the conversation build as clients answer one another’s questions and share ideas of their own. Try redirecting the conversation back to the group by using phrases such as “Has anyone else experienced something similar?” “What helped you in this situation?” “Would anybody like to offer a suggestion?” Add additional information or use prompts to keep the conversation moving.

Think ahead of time about the resources you have available. Don’t be afraid to admit that you need to refer to a resource or another staff member before answering a client’s question. This demonstrates to clients that you are all learning together.

Use the CCNE Evaluation Checklist for more ideas on how to make your group classes more client centered:

In Group Classes

- Topic and language are appropriate for the audience
- Interactive discussion involves most or all participants
- Visual aids are used to prompt discussion
- Lesson plan is used as a road map to guide discussion rather than as a script
- Includes hands on activities or demonstrations
- Engages multiple senses (sight, sound, touch, taste)
- Classroom environment is conducive to interaction (e.g. chairs in a circle, couches)
- Provides activities for children or involves children directly in the class
- Instructor summarizes the discussion at the end of class rather than simply ending it
- Instructor asks the participants for feedback at the end of class about what they’ve learned or would like to try

You don’t need to change everything all at once to provide a client-centered experience at your clinic. Make a little “to-do” list of small things you want to try out in the classroom, in the clinic or with the clients. For example, old lessons can be modified to add a discussion component and make them more client centered. With a few tweaks here and there, you can make old practices exciting and engaging.