



Idaho WIC Training

Customer Service/Communication



WIC is an equal opportunity provider.

What Will You Learn?

- How to establish rapport with others
- Understand methods that facilitate communication
- Identify positive messages that foster good communication
- Identify different aspects of culture
- Explain how a person's culture affects beliefs and attitudes
- Guidelines for communicating with individuals from other cultures
- Identify methods for providing good customer service
- Ways to resolve conflict when someone is upset

Instruction Level

Prerequisite for taking the Customer Service & Communication course: WIC Overview

Items Needed for This Course

The Idaho WIC website wic.dhw.idaho.gov houses all the online materials for staff under the Staff page.

- Definitions and acronyms (located under the policy manual area)
- The links to the videos are within the guidebook. To access them please use "Ctrl + Click" on the links.

Note: Arizona WIC developed this course. Any issues with the Video will need to be communicated to the Idaho WIC State Office so we can provide a better video.

Recommended Time

- Approximate time it takes to complete the Customer Service Guidebook and Videos: 2-4 hours
- Approximate time it takes to complete the face-to-face activities and discussion: 1-2 hours

Module 1: Rapport Building & Communication Skills

- View to following videos and proceed through the modules below and complete the activities.

[Principles of Influence – Module 1 – Introduction](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 2 – Liking](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 3 – Consensus](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 4 – Reciprocity](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 5 – Commitment and Consistency](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 6 – Authority](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 7 – Scarcity](#)

[Principles of Influence – Module 8 – Conclusion](#)

Rapport Building

Definition: Rapport can be defined as a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Importance: Developing rapport with participants can help you provide them with better service. It can also help the participant be open to new ideas.

How you can establish good rapport:

- Greet each participant and co-worker with a smile and a friendly hello
- Smile when you answer the phone
- Use good communication skills
- Respect other cultures
- Appreciate different personality types
- Provide up to date and accurate information
- Respect other's time
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy
- Create a friendly clinic environment
- Be understanding, not judgmental
- Provide good customer service
- Convey the following message to WIC participants
 - We care about you and your family
 - You are important
 - We are here to help you
 - You have choices
 - We believe in you
 - Let's work together
 - We know you care about your children

Communication Skills

Definition: Communication is the giving and receiving of messages between people.

Importance: Good communication is making sure that each person understands the message and that the message gets to the person in a positive way.

Good Communication Helps WIC Participants

- Gain access to nutritious foods
- Receive accurate and up-to-date information about nutrition
- Receive referrals to other important services
- Receive good customer service

Good Communication Helps WIC Staff

- Be more efficient, effective, and satisfied
- Feel less stress
- Work as a team

How We Communicate: Elements of Communication

There are 6 things or elements that are part of how we communicate with others.

1. Attitude
2. Actions
3. Talking
4. Listening
5. Appearance
6. Setting

Chart of Communication Elements

The chart on the next page describes the elements of communication and how to use these elements effectively. Use the chart to guide you in your communications with staff and participants.

Overview of the Elements of Communication

Element & Description	Suggestions
Attitude How our mood comes across to people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be polite, friendly, optimistic & respectful • Show compassion & confidence
Actions What we do while we communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the person feel welcome and comfortable • Be on time & use time efficiently • Focus your full attention on the person
Talking What words we use, what questions we ask and how we ask them, and when we talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be courteous • Establish trust • Ask appropriate questions • Do not interrupt • Choose your words carefully (for example, carefully choose when you will use formal or familiar words in Spanish)
Listening How we listen and how we respond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a good listener • Avoid judgmental responses • Help the person identify her/his feelings • Reassure the person that her/his feelings are okay
Appearance How we look (non-verbal cues)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posture: Lean toward the speaker • Avoid crossing arms & legs • Gestures: Use open-palm gestures. Do not point, clench fist or shake fingers. • Facial expressions: Nod or smile. Do not look bored or disgusted. • Body Language: Do not fidget or act restless • Voice: Use a respectful tone that is not too loud
Setting How the area looks and feels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the area is clean, attractive and orderly • Make sure the area feels private

1: Attitude

Think about an office that you have visited like a doctor or dentist. Was there one staff member whom you appreciated? What was it that made your visit a success? If you wrote down a list of the characteristics that made the visit a success, what might your list include?

You might list the characteristics of a helpful staff member:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courtesy • Motivation • Empathy • Energy • Trustworthy • Flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendliness • Optimism • Compassion • Openness to change • Ability to maintain confidentiality |
|---|---|

You might also say that this person:

- Enjoys working at a fast pace
- Respects participants and treat them as equals

- Allows participants to feel heard even when they are in error
- Believes in themselves and the services they offer

You could say the same is true of a successful WIC employee.

Other things besides attitude influence communication, such as the mood of the participant. Regardless of the situation, you must try to give the best service to each and every participant. You can change your attitude even if the participants do not change theirs.

2: Actions

The way you act when you talk with participants tells them a great deal about how important they are to you. A success is making the participant feel welcome. Greet the participant by name, introduce yourself and thank the participant for coming to WIC. Let the participant know what will be happening in the appointment and approximately how long it will take. How you use time also communicates a great deal. Do you start counseling sessions and classes on time or are you always running behind? Having to wait a long time to be seen may convey a message that the clinic is inefficient, and the staff doesn't place any value on the participant's time.

Cutting a counseling session short when the participant still wants to talk or not having enough time to schedule sufficient individual counseling sessions can communicate to the participant that they don't matter, and their needs are unimportant.

Unfortunately, in most WIC clinics, not having enough time is a fact of life. Counseling sessions must be short because that is all the time that is available. Be aware of how the participant perceives this. Use your time wisely and let the participant know how important they are; that their concerns matter and you're going to do what you can to help, even in the limited time available.

Success is making the participant feel valued. As much as possible, limit external interruptions such as phone calls, text messages or staff stopping by to talk. Work on maintaining privacy and confidentiality, even in a busy, crowded WIC clinic.

3 & 4: Talking and Listening

Communication also involves what you say to the participant and how you say it. Use the following suggestions to express yourself in positive ways.

Always be Courteous

You should always show respect and be friendly. Your tone of voice should be calm, friendly and reassuring.

Establish Rapport

You need to establish rapport with the participant. The key is to focus on feelings. How someone feels about a problem is initially more important than the details of the problem itself. You can show support for participants' feelings in a number of ways. Changing the tone of your voice may

be effective. Letting your voice show your concern when you've heard something sad can be effective. When you communicate that you recognize what's happening in the participant's life and its effect on them, you might use phrases such as:

"It sounds like a lot has been happening to you", "That must be really hard for you to deal with", "You sound really frustrated."

Gather Information

Once the participant feels comfortable talking with you, you can begin gathering information from the participant. You will want to sort out important facts from unimportant facts to really understand the participant's needs.

Avoid "WIC Talk"

Not everyone is familiar with WIC terms that you commonly use in the office. (For example: cert, Health Screen, IE, BMI, RD, Hemoglobin, post-partum). Provide an explanation of what these mean.

Ask Questions

Asking questions allows you to gain time to think, helps both of you to look at problems and possible solutions. You can use:

- Open-ended questions
 - Open-ended questions are those that can't be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". These questions often start with who, what, where, when, why, or how.
 - "Who prepares the meals in your home?"
 - "When did your nausea start?"
 - "Why do you feel that way?"
 - "How can I help you with that?"
- Directive questions
 - Directive questions request further explanation on a particular point.
 - "Can you tell me more details?"
 - "Are there any other reasons you think your baby might be spitting up?"
- Closed-ended questions
 - Closed-ended questions are used to confirm details.
 - "Can you remember the name of the person you talked to?"
 - "Do you have our telephone number?"
 - "Are morning appointments good for you?"

Be a Good Listener

In addition to asking questions, it's important to be a good listener. Let the participant have time to talk and don't interrupt her while she is speaking.

Sometimes it helps to repeat what you've just heard. Repeat an important thought—a key word, phrase or sentence. Someone might say, "I'm really worried!" Your response might be, "You're worried," which should be in a tone of voice which encourages the other person to tell you more.

It also helps to periodically summarize and repeat back to the other person what she has said. This tells the participant you're involved and interested and are really listening to what they are saying. At appropriate points rephrase or restate what you have understood the participant to say. Your summary should be brief, non-judgmental and refer directly back to the participant's concerns. This is known as paraphrasing. For example, you might hear, "I feel like I've tried everything. I'm at my wit's end!" You could paraphrase by saying, "You're frustrated because nothing has worked." You can also use statements like: "Let me see if I understand. Your problem is (repeat back what you heard). Is that correct?"

Avoid Judgmental Responses

Sounding judgmental discourages a participant from talking to you. If this is the only type of response you use, your counseling is in trouble! Here are some examples:

- "What do you mean you never eat breakfast?"
- "He's still on the bottle!"
- "You smoke and you're pregnant?"

Keep the Conversation Going

Avoid long silences during the early part of the conversation. Depending on the participant's culture, if you are silent for too long the participant will begin to wonder if you are still listening. Some cultures may not mind silences as much as others. Keep the conversation going with comments such as "hmm", "uh huh", "I see", "I understand", "ok", "that's interesting", etc.

Reassure the Participant that Feelings are Okay

Comments like, "That must be very hard for you," or "It sounds like a lot has happened to you," validate the participant's feelings. The participant is hearing that others in that situation might feel the same way and that these feelings are okay.

Share Personal Experiences Briefly

Sharing related personal information can create a bond of understanding between yourself and the participant more quickly than other responses. Examples might be:

- "Yes, I know how you feel since I had the same experience."
- "My baby used to spit up a lot, too!"
- "I worried that I didn't have enough milk, too!"
- "Lots of women have nausea early in the pregnancy - I thought it would never end!"
- "I was worried so much when my 15-month-old's appetite dropped."
- "Yes, it is possible to breastfeed after a Cesarean section. I had one and this is what happened at the hospital..."

If you decide to share such an experience, be careful to avoid implying that the participant is a lesser person if she is unable to overcome the common problem under discussion. You also must be ready to accept the participant's reaction to your experience. Remember our counseling time is limited and counseling time is for the participant. Keep your examples short and related to your counseling topic.

Talking and Listening Counts

- Always be courteous
- Establish a bond/rapport
- Gather information
- Be a good listener
- Keep the conversation going
- Reassure the participant that feelings are okay
- Share personal experiences briefly if appropriate

5: Appearance/Non-Verbal Communication

Out of an hour spent communicating with other people, you may actually talk only 15 minutes or so. The rest of the time you'll be communicating by smiling, frowning, shaking your head, raising your eyebrows, tapping your foot, leaning forward, or making a hundred other body movements which communicate a message.

When you're talking, your actual words only carry about 10% of the message. The other 90% of the message is carried by your voice tone and inflections, your facial expressions, and your body movements. Actions speak louder than words.

Examples of Non-Verbal Communication

Posture, gestures, touching, facial expressions, eye contact, body language, and voice tone contribute to nonverbal communication. A person's overall non-verbal language can convey any number of messages: energy/fatigue, interest/boredom, approval/disapproval, anxiety/confidence, like/dislike, approachable/unapproachable, and so on.

Posture

Generally, "closed" postures such as crossing arms and legs and leaning away from a person convey dislike. Open positions and leaning forward indicate interest and liking.

Gestures

How often you gesture towards the other person and the kinds of movements you make convey your attitudes. Frequent gestures are generally positive, as are relaxed open-palm types of gestures. Negative signals can be sent by rolling your eyes, pointing and shaking fingers, or using hardly any gestures at all.

Facial Expressions

Facial expressions convey a lot of information. Head and facial movements are probably the clearest indicators of nonverbal information and attitude. Nodding your head is positive, shaking it is negative. Lowering your head, peering over your glasses and cocking the head to one side usually indicate skepticism or suspicion. You tend to make more facial expressions when you are trying to be persuasive. Different parts of the face give clues to different emotions. Fear is clearest in the eyes, and anger in the lower face, brows, and forehead. A smile usually indicates friendliness and warmth.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is a major element of nonverbal communication. Many experts say you cannot counsel effectively without it. Good eye contact conveys a desire to help participants in a sincere manner. Eye contact indicates a desire for communication or feedback and friendliness. Avoiding eye contact may send a message of dislike or lack of interest. In some cultures, however, eye contact has different meanings. In Latin cultures, people may avoid eye contact, lowering their eyes as a sign of respect. Among many Southeast Asians, direct eye contact is seen as impolite or intimidating. It is important to be sensitive to cultural cues. Look at your participants when you counsel. But don't try to force them to establish eye contact if you sense a reluctance.

Body Language

After to your eyes, your hands, feet, and legs reveal a lot about what you are feeling. Open body language includes uncrossed arms, facing the participant, leaning forward, eye contact and nodding when appropriate.

Voice

A final part of nonverbal communication is voice characteristics. This refers to how you say things: tone, loudness, and affect are included. For example, speaking loudly, rapidly, or at a high pitch can indicate anger. Boredom is sometimes indicated by moderate volume, pitch, and rate along with a monotonous inflection. Beware of sounding superior. Use a tone that indicates you respect your participants, you've got a great message to give them, you're happy they are there, and you're glad to be there, too.

Putting It All Together

When you're watching a person's body language to get a clue to their attitude, keep in mind the culture they come from and what's going on at the moment. Movement of any one part of the body does not always communicate one specific message and may change in meaning depending on the situation and the person being communicated with. By observing total body and facial expression, general posture, you can get an idea of the person's general attitude and expression.

Work on Developing Your Awareness of Non-Verbal Communication

Almost all non-verbal signaling is learned from our home, friends, coworkers, and so on. The better you know people or become familiar with their ethnic and geographic background or what they do for a living, the more accurately you can read them. Figuring out nonverbal behavior involves knowing:

- what to look for
- where to look for it
- how to observe it

It's hard to observe all non-verbal actions at once. One good way to improve how well you observe non-verbal communication is turn off the sound when watching TV set and just watch the picture. Try to interpret the moods and interactions based only on the gestures and movements.

Watch for:

- eye movements
- facial expressions

- gestures
- posture
- hand, arm, foot, and leg movements

<p>Defensiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arms or legs crossed tightly in protective gestures • minimal eye contact with sideways or darting glances • leaning back in chair • squinting or peering over glasses 	<p>Anger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rigid body • glaring eyes and tightly closed lips • fist like gestures • chopping movements with hands • pointed index-finger
<p>Frustration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eye rolling • shaking your head no • rubbing the back of the neck 	<p>Nervousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tugging at ear • twitching lips or face • shaky voice • playing with objects and fidgeting • tapping fingers • plucking at collar
<p>Boredom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drumming on table • tapping of feet • drooping eyelids • head in palm of hands • blank stare 	

Non-verbal actions can create a negative message and cut down on the communication. Avoid:

- turning away from the person speaking
- closing your eyes
- using an unpleasant tone of voice
- speaking too slowly or too quickly
- yawning excessively

Positive non-verbal actions that communicate friendliness, openness, and cooperativeness include:

- maintaining eye contact without staring
- occasionally nodding the head in agreement
- smiling and looking interested, not letting the eyes wander
- leaning toward the speaker
- speaking at a moderate rate, in a quiet, assuring tone
- having arms gently and loosely crossing the lower body, with hands open
- head slightly tilted with a relaxed facial expression

If you wonder if you are sending mixed signals, ask your supervisor for feedback. Remember, it is impossible not to communicate non-verbally.

6: Setting

The space you use, its set-up, and appearance communicate many messages. Although sometimes you have no control over the setting of a WIC clinic, you can do small things to make it more comfortable and confidential for participants. If you're in a church basement or rec center you could add an extra chair and some children's books/toys from the main clinic to make the family more comfortable.

The attractiveness, cleanliness, and arrangement of the surroundings can certainly create feelings that carry over into the communication between people there. For example, how the furniture and dividers are arranged or how much closeness or distance there will be between you and the participants will influence how the participant reacts to the information you're presenting.

Think of the difference a few posters, a plant, and pictures of children can make. You can make a few small changes to add warmth to your work area.

Behaviors that Affect Communication

Positive or Negative Effects

Your behavior can have a positive or a negative effect on how well the WIC program works. Participants get better service when you use good communication skills with co-workers and participants.

Put Positive Behaviors into Practice

The following behaviors can help communication and teamwork. Use these with co-workers and participants:

- show respect
- be polite
- be on time
- have a positive attitude
- listen carefully
- show empathy
- be flexible
- help out
- give compliments
- show appreciation

Avoid Negative Behaviors

The following behaviors can hurt communication.

- look "down" on others
- blame others
- gossip

- complain
- interrupt
- correct others
- criticize

Statements to Avoid

Statements Can Hurt Communication

Some statements can hurt communication. They can cause a participant or co-worker to become angry or upset. Be aware of these statements. Avoid them when communicating with participants and co-workers.

Statements to Avoid

Try to avoid the making the following kinds of statements:

- using “you” messages (such as “You did not fill out this form right” instead of “I noticed some parts of the form need correction”)
- giving orders
- using “should have” or “have to”
- focusing on what cannot be done
- using “always” or “never”

“You” Messages

Do not use “you” messages. When someone hears such a message, s/he may feel blamed. No one wants to feel blamed!

Giving Orders

Never give orders. When someone is told what to do s/he may feel “talked down” to.

“Should Have” or “Have To”

Do not use statements telling the person what s/he “should have” done or “has to” do. When someone is told “you should have...” or “you have to...,” s/he may feel as though s/he is being judged or is not being given the opportunity to take responsibility.

Focusing on What Cannot Be Done

Do NOT focus on what CANNOT be done. Always focus on what CAN be done. People may become disappointed, frustrated, and/or sometimes even angry when they hear what CANNOT be done.

“Always” or “Never”

Do not use “always” or “never”. When someone hears these words s/he may feel judged and also a need to defend her/himself.

Alternative Statements

Positive Alternatives

Carefully choose your words when you talk to co-workers and participants. Follow these recommendations when you communicate:

- use "I" messages
- do not give orders
- do not use "should have" or "have to"
- focusing on what can be done
- be specific; do not use "always" or "never"

Chart of Recommendations, What to Avoid, and Alternatives

The chart gives you a list of:

- recommendations
- statements to avoid
- alternative statements to use

Chart of Recommendations, Statements to Avoid & Alternatives

Recommendation	Statements to Avoid	Alternative
Use "I" messages	"You are confusing me."	"I am confused. Please help me understand what you mean."
Don't give orders	"Wait here!"	"Would you please wait here while I talk to my supervisor?"
Don't use "should have"	"You should have eaten less fatty foods."	"We want you to stay healthy. These recommendations may help you."
Don't use "have to"	"You have to bring your proof of address."	"We need to review your proof of address today."
Focus on what CAN be done	"It's not part of my job."	"Let me get Lynn. She can help you with that."
Be specific. Don't use "always" and "never".	"You always forget your medical information."	"You forgot your medical information on your last appointment."

Challenging People

Most of the people you will work with at WIC will be friendly. Sometimes you will have to communicate with someone who is upset or even angry. Learning to communicate well with an angry person can take extra skill.

There are some things you can do when talking to a challenging person. The following lists can help guide you.

Do:	Do Not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm • Deal with the person's feelings first by listening to what s/he has to say and putting yourself in her/his place (use such phrases as, "I see" or "you sound...") • Give the person plenty of personal space by not touching her/him and not coming too close to her/him • Deal with the problem after feelings have been dealt with • Respond quickly when helping • Speak confidently with a calm, firm, caring tone • React in a professional way by taking responsibility and showing respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scowl, roll your eyes, or smile inappropriately • Touch an angry person • Slouch • Sit or stand with arms crossed • Chew gum or eat • Sigh (This may look like you are annoyed or impatient) • Move slowly when responding or taking action (this may further upset the person)



Complete Activities 1 & 2 in your Activity Workbook

Module 2: Cultural Competency

Working with Diverse Staff & Participants

Introduction

The participants and staff at WIC come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. This section will help you to welcome and appreciate the diversity and differences at WIC.

What is Culture?

Definition

Culture is the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history, and institutions of a group of people.

Elements of Culture

Culture can include:

- Race or ethnicity
- Country of origin
- Roles of women and men
- Age
- Religion or spiritual practice
- Language or dialect
- Sexual orientation
- Family structure
- Residence
- Education
- Income
- Profession
- Health status

Culture is NOT Just Ethnicity

Culture includes ethnicity but is NOT limited to ethnicity. For example, you may identify with people who share your ethnic background but may identify more with people who share your religious beliefs.

Multiple Cultures

People often relate to many cultures. For example, a person may be Hispanic, have grown up in a rural community, speak only English, and be a single mother. She may identify with at least 4 cultures.

Cultures Served by WIC

Types of Cultures

WIC serves people of many cultures. The chart that follows gives you a list of some of these cultures and an example of each.

Type	Description People of this culture identify with people who:	Example
Age	Are similar in age	Teenagers
Country of Origin	Were born or grew up in the same country	Syrian immigrants
Ethnicity	Are of the same ethnic background	Chinese Americans
Family Structure	Have a similar family make up	Single mothers
Gender	Are of the same sex	Male WIC participants
Health Status	Have a similar health condition	Diabetics
Income	Make about the same amount of money	TAFI recipients
Language	Speak the same language	Spanish-speaking participants
Religion	Share similar religious beliefs	Seventh Day Adventists
Residence	Live in the same area	People living in a migrant camp
Work	Do similar work	WIC Staff

Why is Culture Important? A Design for Living

Culture gives people a design for living. It is a group's

- assumptions about the world
- goals and meanings of life
- views about what is right and what is wrong
- views of what is important and what is not
- beliefs about how to behave and how to expect others to behave

(Adapted from a definition by Noel Day, Porlaris Research and Development, San Francisco)

Culture helps people structure their community and family life.

Culture Affects Beliefs, Values, and Behaviors

A person's culture often determines her/his:

- beliefs
- values
- behaviors

Beliefs

Beliefs are a person's trust, faith or confidence in someone or something.

Values

Values are what a person sees as important or meaningful in life.

Behaviors

Behaviors are what a person does. For example, exercising is a healthy behavior.

Culture Affects Health Behaviors

Culture greatly affects our health decisions. It can affect our behaviors about:

- diet and nutrition
- pregnancy
- breastfeeding
- alcohol and drug use
- family planning
- health care

Cultural Competence

Definition

Cultural competence is the ability to communicate comfortably and effectively with people of different cultures.

Culturally competent people:

- have an open attitude toward others who are different from themselves
- are willing to learn new information and skills from people of other cultures
- communicate in ways that are sensitive to the needs of people of other cultures
- are willing to share information about cultural experiences

Having an Open Attitude

Culturally competent people have an open attitude toward others who are different from themselves. Having an open attitude means being nonjudgmental when someone has beliefs or practices that differ from yours.

Willing to Learn New Information & Skills

Culturally competent people are willing to learn new information and skills from people of other cultures. You can develop cultural competence by becoming familiar with the customs, beliefs, and values of the people you work with and serve at WIC. You can do this by:

- talking to your friends, neighbors, and co-workers from other cultures
- attending cultural events such as special festivals and celebrations
- eating at different ethnic restaurants
- reading about other cultures
- paying attention to local news stories that focus on cultural issues

Communicating in a Sensitive Way

Culturally competent people communicate in ways that are sensitive to the needs of people of other cultures. They make sure the words, language, posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye

contact, and body language they use are appropriate for the culture of the person with whom they are communicating.

Sharing Cultural Experiences

Culturally competent people are willing to share information about cultural experiences. They realize that we develop cultural competence through a variety of experiences and that learning about and appreciating our cultural diversity is an ongoing process.

Working with the Participant Whose Cultural Background Differs from Yours

WIC Serves Many Different People

At WIC you will meet many different people. You may meet people who have different customs, beliefs, values, attitudes, language, education, and experiences from yours.

Communication Can Be Difficult

Communicating with people of different cultures can be difficult. Even with the best intentions, you may make some mistakes in communicating with people whose background is different from your own.

Some Characteristics to Keep in Mind

The following chart may help you understand the diversity among WIC's participant population. It lists some characteristics that may differ among cultures. Keep these in mind when communicating with people who may not share your cultural background.

Never Make Assumptions

Beliefs differ between groups and within groups. Do NOT make assumptions. A person's beliefs can change with age, new experiences, new generations, and new information. Only by asking will you know what a person believes! For example, people from certain Asian cultures may not eat a lot of dairy products but we cannot assume that every individual from that cultural group does not eat dairy.

Some Characteristics to Keep in Mind

Characteristic Suggestions:

Social Structure (a culture's views on a person's place in the group or family)

- Be aware of a person's place in the group or family.
- Be aware of who and how you talk to people in the family.
- Cultures differ in how they want to be addressed.

Concept of Time (a culture's views about time and its importance)

- Be aware that not all cultures are time conscious
- Explain the importance of being on time for appointments

Expressions (a culture's way of expressing feelings)

- Be aware that some cultures are expressive and direct while others are quiet and indirect

- Use humor carefully; humor is difficult to understand and differs by culture
- Do not point with your index finger or beckon with a curled finger. This is considered rude in some cultures.

Communicating with Someone Who’s Language You Do Not Speak

A WIC participant may speak little or no English. WIC staff are often hired to help participants who speak some of these languages. Talk with your trainer on the resources available for interpreters or a language line in your agency.

Communicating with Limited English Speaking Participants

If you do not speak the participant’s native language you will need to learn some ways to communicate with limited English speaking participants. For limited English speaking participants, use the guidelines listed on the next page.

Avoid Situations that Exclude Others

A staff person should be careful in speaking a language that a participant or co-worker does not understand. S/he should use that language as needed but not in a way that others may feel excluded.

Guidelines for Communication

DO:	DO NOT:
Listen carefully	Use words that the participant does not know
Show your face and lips when speaking	Use slang, jargon or abbreviations
Speak slowly	Use contractions such as “wouldn’t” for “would not”
Speak clearly	Use words that have a negative meaning such as “barely” or “hardly”
Focus on the main points	
Use words that the participant uses	
Write down words when spoken words are not working.	



Complete Activities 3, 4 & 5 in your Activities Workbook

Module 3: Customer Service

Customer Service

Definitions:

Customer service is how we meet the needs of the people who use our services.
A customer is any person who uses our services.

There are 3 types of customers:

- external customers
- internal customers
- former customers

External Customers

People who use the services of your agency. Examples of external customers are participants, referring agencies, and food stores.

Internal Customers

People you work with. Examples of internal customers are your supervisor, co-workers, or anyone else who works within your agency.

Sometimes we do not think of our co-workers as customers. But for you to do your job well you need the help of your co-workers as much as they need your help. By treating your co-workers as important customers you can make sure your agency works as well as possible.

Why is Customer Service Important?

Participant Satisfaction

WIC depends on its employees to provide excellent customer service. When staff gives poor customer service the participant suffers.

If a WIC participant does not feel satisfied with their experience at WIC, they may not come back or they may not recommend WIC to other families. They would miss out on getting:

- healthy, nutritious foods
- useful nutrition education
- important referrals

WIC Funding

Although our customers need our services, we also need them. Your WIC agency gets a certain amount of money for each participant it serves. If participants do not come back to your agency because of poor customer service, there could be less money for your agency.

Cost Effectiveness

Good customer service also helps WIC be cost effective. It helps prevent:

- missed appointments/no-shows
- wasted time spent enrolling or counseling participants who do not come back

Giving Exceptional Customer Service

Exceptional Customer Service

Exceptional Customer Service is service that:

- anticipates the customers' needs
- tries to understand what the customer is thinking
- meets and exceeds the customer's highest expectations

Basic Customer Needs

There are 4 basic customer needs. A customer needs to feel:

- welcome
- understood
- important
- comfortable

Meeting Basic Customer Needs

When working with a participant you will want to make sure you meet her/his needs. You may want to use the suggestions below to guide you.

<u>Need</u>	<u>Suggestion</u>
Welcome	Be friendly Greet participant Introduce yourself Use a positive tone of voice
Understood	Listen carefully Repeat or rephrase to make things more clear
Important	Refer to participant by name Show interest in participant's family Ask open-ended questions Thank participant for coming
Comfortable	Explain what to expect during the session Use open body language Show concern

Customer Perception

Customer Perception is how the customer sees, hears, or understands a situation.

Perception is:

- what is heard, not what is said
- what is seen, not what is shown
- what is understood, not what is meant

A customer's perception is the customer's reality!

Determining Perceptions

Understanding a customer's perception is not easy. No two people see a situation exactly the same. A customer does NOT always think the way you do. S/he may therefore not see a situation the way you do. Always check to see what the customer is thinking. Never make assumptions.

Meeting & Exceeding Expectations

To give exceptional customer service you will need to make sure you know your customers attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and feelings. In other words, try to see things the way your customer does. This will help you meet and exceed her/ his expectations.

Types of Visits and Forms

To give participants exceptional customer service you will also need to:

- know what kind of appointments the participant needs
- know the procedures your agency uses for the different types of participant visits
- know what is needed at each type of visit

Giving a Participant Difficult or Negative Information

There will be times when you will have to tell a participant some difficult or negative information.

Examples of difficult or negative information may include telling:

- an applicant s/he is not eligible for WIC
- a participant s/he will no longer be served by WIC
- a participant s/he may have a long wait time

Presenting difficult or negative information is not easy. But there are ways to present this information in a positive way.

Resolving Conflicts with Upset People

Most of the people at WIC will be quite happy with how things work. Sometimes, however, a participant or co-worker may get upset.

- Conflict is disagreement between people.
- Resolving conflict means finding a way to take care of the disagreement or problem that all the people involved in the conflict can agree to.

When resolving conflict with upset people remember to:

- always stay calm
- first deal with the person's feelings and then deal with the problem

Suggestions for Resolving Conflict

Some of the steps may need to be slightly changed depending on the participant's culture.

Stay calm.

- Think before you talk.

Deal with the person's feelings first.

- Listen to the person's whole story.
- Do not interrupt (usually it will cause the person to "start over" until they feel the whole story has been heard – and they are likely to become more upset)
- Put yourself in the person's place.
- Use words such as "I see" or "I can understand how you must feel"
- Do not become defensive.

Ask questions.

- Ask if it's okay to get more information. Use words "Do you mind if I ask you a few questions to help me understand what happened?"
- Ask open-ended questions (questions that cannot be answered with "yes" or "no" or short answers) to get more information.
- Ask close-ended questions (questions that cannot be answered with "yes" or "no" or short answers) to make sure what you heard is right.

Give feedback.

- Restate what you think the participant is saying in your own words. For example, "It sounds like you were very disappointed with the way your appointment went."

Summarize the problem.

- Describe what you think the problem is.
- Describe the person's concern.
- Check to see if you have described the person's situation accurately.

Deal with the problem.

- Find out what the person wants. Use words such as "What would you like us to do?"
- Suggest alternatives. If you cannot do what the person wants, offer actions you can take.
- Try to reach realistic compromise. If you cannot resolve the problem, find someone who can help you.
- If the problem was caused by the WIC agency admit the error and apologize.
- Agree on a solution.
- Start on the solution and explain what will happen.

Communicating by Telephone

While working at WIC you will probably use the phone. Communicating by phone is an important part of customer service.

In some WIC agencies, there are special staff who answer phones. In other agencies, many staff may do the job of answering phones.

You will use the phone for a variety of reasons.

You may use the phone to:

- give information about WIC
- schedule an appointment
- answer a question
- give directions on how to get to your site
- refer someone to a health care agency
- handle a complaint

Telephone Tips

- Be ready. Have a pencil or pen and paper ready.
- Answer promptly. Answer within 2 to 4 rings.
- Answering machines. If staff are not available, change the outgoing message on the phone to indicate when you will be available. Try to have the option to talk to a live person as one of top selections rather than at the end of a long list of selection options.
- Be friendly. Say good morning or good afternoon.
- Be polite. Use "please", "thank you" and "you're welcome."
- Identify yourself. Say your agency's name first, and then your name.
- Repeat the caller's name. Saying the caller's name helps her/him pay attention to what you say.
- Listen carefully. Make sure you understand what the caller is saying.
- Give the caller your full attention. If you need to deal with something during a phone call, ask the caller if s/he can wait.
- Don't guess at answers. If you are not certain about information tell the caller, you will find out and call back.



Complete Activities 6 & 7 in your Activities Workbook