

## Facilitated Discussions

### How do you evaluate participant learning at the end of the facilitated discussion?

#### How are these contacts documented?

At the end of each discussion, the group summarizes what they learned. Although New Mexico does not maintain a written record of the summary, they do record the session as an educational contact. A staff person is responsible for recording attendance. Evaluations at recertifications should provide insight into the effect of the facilitated discussion on knowledge, attitude and/or behavior change.

### How do you account for facilitated discussions in your annual nutrition education plan?

- ◆ The sessions can be organized in a coding system by *category* (pregnancy, lactation, post-partum women or anemic, overweight, or dental caries children) or *age* (infants in 3 month groupings, toddlers, preschoolers).
- ◆ A facilitators' guide must be developed for each topic. This guide provides substantive information to correct any misunderstanding. Each topic has a curriculum outline to aid in stimulating and continuing discussion.
- ◆ NOTE: Lecture-style lesson plans can be converted into facilitated discussion format.
- ◆ Even high risk clients can participate in these discussions by scheduling those with similar risk together and generating the subjects around the risk issues.

### How are participants involved in the discussion?

#### What can be done to motivate WIC participants to come to classes?

During the transition from lecture style to facilitated discussion, notify participants at certification that there will be a change coming. Provide them with a menu of potential classes appropriate for them. Explain it will be to their benefit to attend THEIR classes. Explain there will not be a lecture, but WIC staff and other participants will answer their specific concerns. By making the classes relevant and allowing clients to choose their group, participants should view nutrition education differently. In addition, facilitated discussions have been shown to decrease no-show rates.

#### What are some strategies to get client participation during nutrition education classes?

- ◆ Ice-breakers-are activities that create a safe environment, generate interest and make the group members feel comfortable. For some ideas, see **Getting to Know You**.
- ◆ Open-ended questioning is another technique used to stimulate and continue discussion. For more information see **Critical Thinking and Questioning**.
- ◆ Grouping together participants who have mutual concerns, special interest, or unique needs will generate communication.
- ◆ Some people are more comfortable writing down their thoughts. Use of pen and paper activities will be beneficial with this type of learner.

#### How can you teach or get through to someone with an attitude problem, that no matter what type of teaching you use she will just not respond?

- ◆ You can't. Facilitated discussion is not a magic bullet in dealing with difficult clients. Explaining the benefit of their participation to the health of their children may be tried, but in all likelihood will not be very effective.
- ◆ Encourage the difficult person to participate because there are others who might benefit from her perspective and experience.
- ◆ Instead of the staff having to deal with the person, allow the group to take over the role of disciplinarian.
- ◆ Assigning a role (e.g. time keeper) to the difficult participant may help her redirect her focus.

### How can we market the idea of facilitated discussion?

- ◆ **to WIC staff** -Begin retooling nutrition educators. As a group activity, take present lecture-style materials and work together to revise these into motivating questions. Stick with the general curricula, but restructure it to include and involve participants by choosing key words listed in the **Critical Thinking and Listening** section in this newsletter. Besides retraining nutrition education, teaching and certification staff, include clerical and other support staff in training. Since clerical staff persons make appointments, they need to be involved in how to assist the participant in making her choice of classes. Other WIC staff needs training in why this technique appears to get high ratings on client satisfaction.
- ◆ **to WIC participants** - before making the change, place posters announcing the change. Deanna suggested something along the lines of: *It's Coming! CREATE YOUR OWN NUTRITION EDUCATION.*
- ◆ **Remember, Motivate do not Intimidate.** When change occurs, some people will jump whole-heartedly onto the bandwagon, while others stay way behind. Be patient with both participants and staff. Your agency may wish to incorporate facilitated discussions for class time only. After a trial time period, reevaluate how these are working from both the clinic and the participants' perspectives. Adjust accordingly and then try to expand the concept for other client contacts.

## Facilitated Discussions

### ICE-BREAKERS\*

Use ice breakers to stimulate conversation, relax the group, and encourage each participant to speak out.

#### 1. Getting to Know You (Use this activity when a group first gets together.)

##### Process:

- ◆ This takes about 5 minutes.
- ◆ Have participants form a small circle.
- ◆ Tell them that you wish to share with them a special way to learn the names of all the others in the group.
- ◆ Have someone volunteer to go first.
- ◆ Tell participants to think of a positive, playful or childlike word that begins with the first letter of their first name. For example, Magical Madeleine.
- ◆ Next have participants silently think of a distinctive movement or gesture that somehow expresses their new name. For example, for Magical Madeleine, waving a wand could be the movement.
- ◆ Have the volunteer step into the circle, state their two-word name, make their special movement, and then step back into the circle.
- ◆ Standing where they are, together everyone repeats the first person's two-word name and gesture.
- ◆ This process continues with the next person to the right of the first person. However, after the next person is done, the group repeats that person's two-word name and gesture AND that of the first person.
- ◆ From then on, every time a new person says her name and performs a movement, everyone repeats that person's name and movement and those who went before.

#### 2. Children's Food Groups

##### Process:

- ◆ This takes about 10 minutes.
- ◆ Have participants form a small circle.
- ◆ Ask participants to name the food groups.
- ◆ Then ask participants what they think their children would list as the food groups.
- ◆ Have each participant name one food that belongs to the children's list.
- ◆ Have each participant name one food from each of the groups from the adult list that their child will eat.

### Critical Thinking and Questioning

For people to navigate through their environment, they need to make one decision after another. Some make spontaneous decisions while others carefully deliberate their choices. Some people base decisions solely on knowledge (the lowest level of thinking). Others thoroughly evaluate information. To assist participants in your facilitated discussions, consider using the key words listed below to construct your questions around the topic of interest. Initially you may need to start by asking simple knowledge and comprehension questions. As the group adjusts to working together, you will be able to lead them to the higher order thinking levels such as application, analysis and synthesis. At some point in time, persons may reach the highest levels of thinking: synthesis and evaluation.

Key words					Levels of Thinking
who	what	why	when		<b>Knowledge</b> – exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts and answers.
where	which	choose	select	find	
how	define	label	list	show	
match	name	relate	tell	recall	
compare		contrast	show		<b>Comprehension</b> – demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions and stating main ideas.
demonstrate		interpret	infer		
summarize		explain	relate		
illustrate		outline	rephrase		
apply		construct	build		<b>Application</b> – solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.
develop		interview	model		
make use of		utilize	organize		
experiment with		plan	identify		

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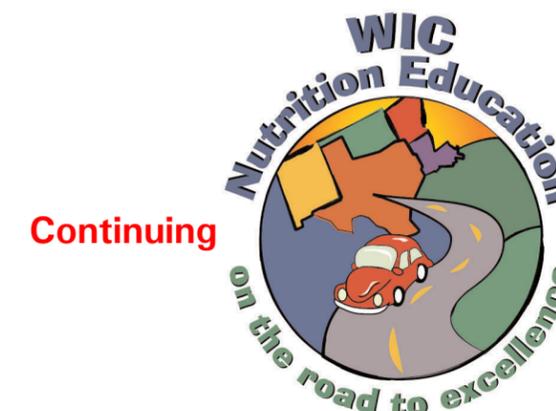
*\*See the books listed in the reference list for more examples.*



**Facilitated Discussions**

**Introduction**

Welcome to the first issue of **Continuing on the Road to Excellence**. During the next six months you will receive this monthly newsletter. Each issue will feature highlights from the teleconference presentations as well as answers to the questions posed during and after the broadcast. We hope that these will inspire and support your personal decision to adapt new delivery techniques and a new nutrition education philosophy. In each of the upcoming issues, we will ask for your feedback on the materials presented in the previous newsletter. Our hats are off to you all for your enthusiasm and interest to **continue on the Road to Excellence in WIC Nutrition Education**.



**Facilitated Discussions**

This conference topic drew the most interest. **The Road to Excellence** teleconference notebook has an excellent overview of this technique (pages 94-98). Rather than repeat that information, this newsletter focuses on answering the specific questions asked during and after the teleconference. Thanks to Deanna Torres, Nutrition Education Coordinator for New Mexico WIC for providing assistance in answering specific questions.

**Facilitated Discussions: Specific Questions and Answers**

**Describe the typical characteristics of a facilitated discussion?**

**What is the typical class size?**

Normally 8 and 10 persons per group is the best size.

**How much time do you allow for the facilitated discussion?**

Follow your typical class schedule. Some clinics run classes daily, others only have classes on special days. New Mexico WIC classes are scheduled every 30 minutes for 10 people. You figure the math-this technique actually **saves** 70 minutes (10 minute/person\*10 persons = 100 minutes).

**Who leads the discussion-dietitians or paraprofessional staff?**

Nutritionists should always be available to answer difficult questions or handle problem situations, but are not required to lead the discussions. However, any person leading the group must undergo extensive training in the techniques of initiating, maintaining, reflecting and summarizing the discussion in order to maintain the group and keep within the allotted time. And, naturally, they must be trained in the discussion content as well.

**What if the group takes the conversation to sensitive areas?**

If the area is truly outside the realm of WIC, refer the participant to agencies or persons with the knowledge and skills to assist. If the entire group is interested, arrange for a guest speaker on the topic.

**What should be done if the group wants to keep on talking and you have to start another class?**

Find other space in the clinic or just outside so they can continue. If the participants are at a critical point in the discussion, start the next group in another spot.

**What happens if mothers bring their children to the discussion?**

Young children can be placed in the center of the circle of parents and staff. Have blocks, books and other safe items available for the children. In this way, children are safely contained and within parents' view while participants can still talk. Older children can be given simple tasks to do while their mother is busy, such as help prepare a snack, arrange materials, etc. They also can entertain the smaller ones.

**When are facilitated discussions done, e.g. for certifications or as a second contact?**

Facilitative discussion is an interactive education technique that can be used in any situation. Facilitated discussions can be scheduled to coincide with voucher and farmer's market pick-ups. It is applicable during class times, high-risk counseling, and even at certifications. The key concepts of facilitative discussions are to allow learners (e.g. WIC participants) to suggest topics to be addressed and share their knowledge about the topics with other group members through discussion. These discussions are coded (documented) as a nutrition education contact.

**Critical Thinking and Questioning** *continued...*

Key words			Levels of Thinking
analyze	categorize	classify	<b>Analysis</b> – examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.
dissect	divide	examine	
inspect	simplify	survey	
distinguish	list	take part in	
test for	assumption	discover	
theme	conclusion	function	
inference	relationships		
build	choose	combine	<b>Synthesis</b> – compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.
create	make up	propose	
predict	change	elaborate	
imagine	happen	invent	
criticize	defend	determine	<b>Evaluation</b> -- present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.
judge	assess	rate	
recommend	value	dispute	
opinion	justify	measure	

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*Quick Flip Questions for Critical Thinking*. Linda Barton. 7 65515 00504. Edupress, Inc.  
 Abusabha R, Peacock J and Achterberg C. How to make nutrition education more meaningful through facilitated group discussions. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 1999;99:72-76

**NEXT ISSUE**

**How to Work with Adult Learners**