

VENA Guidance Training

Video Discussion Guide for *VENA: Nutrition Assessment in WIC*



How to Use This Guide

This discussion guide accompanies the VENA Guidance training video *Nutrition Assessment in WIC* and is intended to reinforce the video-based training content and enhance viewer comprehension. Along with the *Nutrition Assessment in WIC* video module, activities in this guide can be incorporated into training plans or other opportunities for State agency and local staff training. The content can be adapted for in-person or virtual trainings.

For Regional Offices and State Agencies (Train the Trainer)

Regional Offices can use this training guide as a resource when overseeing State implementation of VENA by:

- Providing technical assistance
- Reviewing and approving State agency nutrition assessment policies
- Monitoring State VENA practices

State agencies identify training needed to conduct WIC nutrition assessments and quality nutrition services, and they establish methods to ensure WIC staff receive essential training. This guide is designed to be used to train those providing WIC nutrition assessments and education, as well as those who train, mentor, observe, and provide feedback to Competent Professional Authorities (CPAs). These practice activities provide opportunities for hands-on application of the VENA approach to assist CPAs in conducting WIC nutrition assessments in a health outcome based and participant centered manner.

Before conducting a train-the-trainer session, trainers should complete all the exercises to ensure proficiency with the material before conducting training sessions with local agency staff.

Local Agencies (Skills Practice)

Staff working in local WIC sites put State policies and processes into action to provide individualized, impactful services to participants. This guide can be used to support local staff in ensuring the VENA approach is integrated into WIC operations to help WIC achieve its mission in supporting positive health outcomes for participants.

Who Should Use This Guide?

- Primary audience: WIC State agency staff, FNS Regional Office staff
- Secondary audience: Local agency staff

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the participant-centered approach and provide examples of the four ways to create a welcoming environment and build rapport with participants (VENA Guidance pp.7-8).
2. Describe the elements of a health outcome-based framework (VENA Guidance pp.9-10).
3. Understand the various health determinants (protective factors and WIC nutrition risks) that affect a participant's ability to achieve nutrition and health objectives (VENA Guidance pp.10-13; Appendix 2).
4. Explain ways to reinforce factors that promote positive health outcomes and identify potential causes for WIC nutrition risks that hinder positive health outcomes (VENA Guidance pp.13-15).

Suggested Materials

- Whiteboard or flip chart paper (virtual whiteboards are recommended if conducting online trainings)
- Sticky notes
- Note paper
- Dry erase markers
- Pens or pencils

Facilitators' Guide



Introduce the Topic of Nutrition Assessment in WIC

(1 minute)

A WIC nutrition assessment is the starting point for designing all WIC nutrition services. Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment (VENA) is a participant-centered, health outcome-based approach to WIC nutrition assessment. VENA puts the needs of the participant and the goal of a healthy outcome at the core of WIC nutrition services.

We are going to view a brief informational video that describes why a nutrition and breastfeeding assessment is an integral part of WIC and how it facilitates individualized nutrition services.



Show the Nutrition Assessment in WIC video

(5 minutes)

After attendees view the VENA training video, guide the group through interactive activities and discussions to reinforce the training content.



Lead Group Activities

(20 minutes)

In your own words

Ask attendees to write an answer to the following question: “In your own words, what does participant-centered mean to you?”

- After everyone has completed the exercise, ask attendees to share their thoughts in small group discussions or as a full group.

Group brainstorm

1. This exercise can be completed in small, rotating groups or as a large group discussion. Before the session, write the desired health outcomes for each WIC category on a physical or virtual whiteboard or flip chart:
 - **Pregnant woman**—Delivers a healthy, full-term infant while maintaining optimal health status.
 - **Postpartum woman** (breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding)—Achieves optimal health during the childbearing years and reduces the risk of chronic disease.
 - **Infant**—Achieves optimal growth and development in a nurturing environment and develops a foundation for healthy eating practices.
 - **Child**—Achieves optimal growth and development in a nurturing environment and begins to acquire dietary and lifestyle habits associated with a lifetime of good health.





Facilitators' Guide



Lead Group Activities

(continued)

2. If leading the activity in person, provide sticky notes or markers to attendees. Ask attendees to list some of the factors that influence each desired health outcome. Include both factors that promote and factors that may hinder the outcome (e.g., behaviors, habits, capacities, strengths, developmental needs, nutrition risks).
3. Once everyone has completed the exercise, review the answers as a group. Identify commonalities and gaps in responses to generate discussion.



Ask Discussion Questions

(10–20 minutes)

1. How do you think the VENA approach enhances the WIC nutrition and breastfeeding assessment experience?
2. How do you use the WIC nutrition and breastfeeding assessment to personalize WIC services for your participants?
3. The video describes four ways to create a welcoming environment and build rapport with participants: collaboration, optimism, non-judgment, and empowerment. How do you create a safe and welcoming environment in your WIC clinic? Potential probes and discussion follow-up questions include:
 - Describe the appearance of the clinic.
 - How are participants greeted (e.g., warm welcome, use of the client's name, self-introduction)?
 - How do you set the agenda during appointments (e.g., gaining participant permission and input)?
 - How do you gather assessment information with a participant?
 - How do you identify and reinforce a WIC participant's strengths, positive practices, and motivations?



Notes



For more information and resources, visit

<https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/resources/value-enhanced-nutrition-assessment-vena-guidance>.

