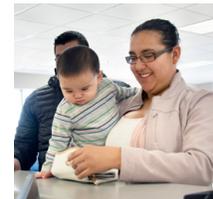


# VENA Guidance Training

## Video Discussion Guide for

## *VENA: A Systematic and Personalized Process*



### How to Use This Guide

This discussion guide accompanies the VENA Guidance training video, *VENA: A Systematic and Personalized Process*, and is intended to reinforce the video-based training content and enhance viewer comprehension. Along with the *VENA: A Systematic and Personalized Process* 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 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 they are comfortable 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 six steps of the WIC assessment process, why each step is important, and the role of the Competent Professional Authority (CPA). (VENA Guidance pp. 16-24).
2. Understand how probing questions are used to engage participants, and provide examples of probing questions for various health and nutrition objectives (VENA Guidance Appendix 5).
3. Explain the importance of fostering partnerships with participants and identify ways to build trust and mutual respect during the assessment process (VENA Guidance pp. 7-8).
4. Describe how to focus a WIC assessment on participants' strengths and capabilities (VENA Guidance pp. 13-14).

#### Suggested Materials

- [Probing Questions Worksheet](#)
- Whiteboard or flip chart paper (virtual whiteboards are recommended for online trainings)
- Sticky notes
- Note paper
- Dry erase markers
- Pens or pencils





## Facilitators' Guide



### **Introduce the Video Topic** (1 minute)

The information gathered during the nutrition assessment is crucial to providing targeted nutrition services. That's why it is important for State agencies to develop a systematic process for collecting all the necessary information for each participant.

This brief informational video describes the six broad steps of the WIC nutrition and breastfeeding assessment process. WIC uses an assessment approach that balances a systematic process with the flexibility CPAs need to individualize each assessment to each participant's nutrition and health status and situation.



### **View the Video** (8 minutes)

After attendees view *VENA: A Systematic and Personalized Process*, guide the group through interactive activities and discussions to reinforce the training content.



### **Lead Group Activities** (40–60 minutes)

#### **Group discussion: Steps of a WIC Nutrition and Breastfeeding Assessment**

1. This exercise can be completed in small, rotating groups or as a large group discussion. Before the session, write the six steps of the WIC assessment process on a physical or virtual whiteboard or flip chart. Rotating groups may begin at any step and cycle through the remaining steps until they have addressed all six steps (i.e., it is not necessary for each group to begin with the first step).
  - Set the agenda
  - Collect relevant information
  - Clarify and synthesize information
  - Guide nutrition services
  - Document the assessment
  - Conduct follow-up
2. If the activity is being conducted in person, provide attendees with markers and large sticky notes. Ask attendees to list answers to the following questions.
  - What happens during the step?
  - Why is this step important?
  - What is the role of the CPA?
3. Once everyone has completed the exercise, review the answers as a group. Identify commonalities and gaps in responses to generate discussion.





## Lead Group Activities

*(continued)*

### Worksheet Exercise: Probing Questions

1. A systematic assessment process cannot be so rigid that it reduces the assessment to a series of questions or data collection points. Such rigidity can limit a CPA's critical thinking ability and make it more difficult to build a rapport with participants. The probing questions will depend on the participant's answers to the springboard question, and this is where the CPA uses critical thinking skills to ask probing questions that are specific to the participant's situation (i.e., this is where there is flexibility in the nutrition assessment process).
2. This exercise can be completed individually or in small groups. Distribute electronic or hard copies of the exercise worksheet.
3. Once everyone has completed the exercise worksheet, review the answers as a group. Identify commonalities and gaps in responses to generate discussion.

### Optional Exercise: Probing and Springboard Questions Role-Play

Invite attendees to role-play CPAs and WIC participants in pairs or as a group. Ask attendees to act out a mock interaction with tailored springboard and probing questions, using the completed Probing Questions Worksheet. Discuss common themes as a group.



## Ask Discussion Questions

*(10–20 minutes)*

1. The VENA approach fosters ongoing partnerships with participants that are built on trust and mutual respect through open, honest, and respectful communication. How do you build trust and show mutual respect with your participants?
2. Describe a time during a nutrition assessment when you focused on a participant's strengths and capabilities.
  - What did you say?
  - How did the participant respond? How did they feel?
  - How did it affect your assessment interaction?



## Worksheet: Probing Questions

Springboard questions are broad, open-ended questions that help start the conversation during a WIC nutrition assessment. Probing questions go deeper and engage a participant in a conversation to explore health determinants that may affect her ability to achieve her desired health outcome.

While the WIC nutrition assessment is a systematic process, it cannot be so rigid that it reduces the assessment to a series of questions or data collection points. During a WIC nutrition assessment, CPAs use critical thinking to ask probing questions based on a participant's answers to springboard questions. This allows for flexibility in the nutrition assessment process and leads to a more personalized experience for WIC participants.

Using the worksheet below, list possible probing questions for each springboard question.



### Pregnant Women

Nutrition/Health Objectives	Springboard Question	Possible Probing Questions
Consume variety of foods to meet energy and nutrient requirements and remain free from foodborne illnesses.	Tell me what you eat in a typical day.	
Achieve the recommended weight gain.	How do you feel about your weight gain during this pregnancy?	
Remain free from nutrition-related illness or complications.	Tell me about any concerns or problems you are having with this pregnancy. Do you have any medical conditions?	
Make an informed decision about breastfeeding.	What have you heard about breastfeeding?	

# Worksheet: Probing Questions (continued)



## Infants

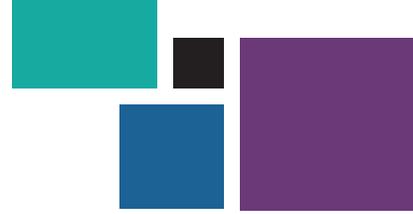
Nutrition/Health Objectives	Springboard Question	Possible Probing Questions
Consume human milk and/or iron-fortified infant formula and other foods as developmentally appropriate and remain free from foodborne illnesses.	How does your baby act when he or she is hungry?	
Receive ongoing health care, including screenings and immunizations.	What has your baby's doctor told you during the well-baby checkups?	
Achieve a normal growth pattern.	How do you feel about your baby's weight and growth?	



## Children

Nutrition/Health Objectives	Springboard Question	Possible Probing Questions
Consume a variety of foods to meet energy and nutrient requirements, achieve developmental milestones for self-feeding, and remain free from foodborne illnesses.	Tell me about feeding times with your child.	
Remain free from nutrition-related illness or complications.	Does your child have any medical conditions?	
Achieve developmental milestones.	Tell me something your child has recently learned to do on his or her own.	

# Notes



For more information and resources, visit

[https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/resources/value-enhanced-nutrition-assessment-vena-guidance.](https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/resources/value-enhanced-nutrition-assessment-vena-guidance)

