

## **Why do we need an Alignment Plan**

An alignment plan will outline the basis for how the VENA model and philosophy supports the way nutrition assessment and certification will now be conducted in the WIC Program. The reconfigured emphasis will be on: a patient centered approach to counseling; providing anticipatory guidance to achieve desired health outcomes; building rapport and exchanging relevant information that can be used to individualize nutrition services and directed discussions to assess nutritional risk and set positive health goals. Instead of the traditional focus on specific sets of deficiency findings.

The process of developing an Alignment Plan will require reexamination of current nutrition assessment and certification standards and practices in individual states. Service delivery monitoring tools used at the Local and State levels may need to be revised to measure qualitative outcomes such as behavior change, patient satisfaction, and improvement of medical nutritional risk. Staffing structures, credentialing requirements for CPAs and skill sets needed to perform new job tasks required by the VENA model may need to be determined.

There may need to be more emphasis on building partnerships between WIC client and staff in order to foster trust and thus achieve good information exchange. There may need to be a new look at how information is communicated between federal, state and local levels to assure that coaching/mentoring support is demonstrated from the top down.

The alignment plan should guide local agency goal planning so that there is consistency with state, regional and national goals that are set to improve the communities' health.

### **Alignment Plan Check Points**

The alignment plan should: be patient focused; sensitive to staff needs for training and development; ensure access to resources for patient care; support program integrity and infrastructure requirements such as confidential work space, equipment and operating necessities; strengthen channels of communication; measure customer/participant feedback; encourage community partnerships; be supported at every level by policies and procedures that are reviewed on a regular basis.