

Nutrition Education

Policy

USDA Federal Regulations: 246.2 Nutrition education means individual and group sessions and the provision of materials that are designed to improve health status and achieve positive change in dietary and physical activity habits, and that emphasize the relationship between nutrition, physical activity, and health, all in keeping with the personal and cultural preferences of the individual.

246.11(a)(1) Nutrition education including breastfeeding promotion and support, shall be considered a benefit of the Program, and shall be made available at no cost to the participant. Nutrition education including breastfeeding promotion and support, shall be designed to be easily understood by participants, and it shall bear a practical relationship to participant nutritional needs, household situations, and cultural preferences including information on how to select food for themselves and their families as well as the maximum monthly allowances of authorized supplemental foods to which they are entitled as a Program participant.

(2) The State agency shall ensure that nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support, as appropriate, is made available to all participants. Nutrition education may be provided through the local agencies directly, or through arrangements made with other agencies. At the time of certification, the local agency shall stress the positive, long-term benefits of nutrition education and encourage the participant to attend and participate in nutrition education activities. However, individual participants shall not be denied supplemental foods for failure to attend or participate in nutrition education activities.

(3) As an integral part of nutrition education, the State agency shall ensure that local agencies provide drug and other harmful substance abuse information to all pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children participating in the program. Drug and other harmful substance abuse information may also be provided to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children participating in local agency services other than the Program.

246.11(b) Goals. Nutrition education including breastfeeding promotion and support, shall be designed to achieve the following two broad goals:

(1) Emphasize the relationship between nutrition, physical activity and health with special emphasis on the nutritional needs of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants and children under five years of age, and raise awareness about the dangers of using drugs and other harmful substances during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

(2) Assist the individual who is at nutritional risk in improving health status and achieving a positive change in dietary and physical activity habits, and in the prevention of nutrition-related problems through optimal use of the supplemental foods and other nutritious

foods. This is to be taught in the context of the ethnic, cultural and geographic preferences of the participants and with consideration for educational and environmental limitations experienced by the participants.

246.11(c) State agency responsibilities. The State agency shall perform the following activities in carrying out nutrition education responsibilities, including breastfeeding promotion and support,:

(1) Develop and coordinate the nutrition education component of Program operations with consideration of local agency plans, needs and available nutrition education resources.

(2) Provide in-service training and technical assistance for professional and para-professional personnel involved in providing nutrition education to participants at local agencies. The State agency shall also provide training on the promotion and management of breastfeeding to staff at local agencies who will provide information and assistance on this subject to participants.

(3) Identify or develop resources and educational materials for use in local agencies, including breastfeeding promotion and instruction materials, taking reasonable steps to include materials in languages other than English in areas where a significant number or proportion of the population needs the information in a language other than English, considering the size and concentration of such population and, where possible, the reading level of participants.

(4) Develop and implement procedures to ensure that nutrition education is offered to all adult participants and to parents and guardians of infant or child participants, as well as child participants, whenever possible.

(5) Monitor local agency activities to ensure compliance with provisions set forth in paragraphs (c)(7), (d), and (e) of this section.

(6) Establish standards for participant contacts that ensure adequate nutrition education in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section.

(7) Establish standards for breastfeeding promotion and support which include, at a minimum, the following:

(i) A policy that creates a positive clinic environment which endorses breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding;

(ii) A requirement that each local agency designate a staff person to coordinate breastfeeding promotion and support activities;

(iii) A requirement that each local agency incorporate task-appropriate breastfeeding promotion and support training into orientation programs for new staff involved in direct contact with WIC clients; and

(iv) A plan to ensure that women have access to breastfeeding promotion and support activities during the prenatal and postpartum periods.

246.11(d) Local agency responsibilities. Local agencies shall perform the following activities in carrying out their nutrition education responsibilities, including breastfeeding promotion and support,:

(1) Make nutrition education, including breastfeeding promotion and support, available or enter into an agreement with another agency to make nutrition education available to all adult participants, and to parents or caretakers of infant and child participants, and whenever possible and appropriate, to child participants. Nutrition education may be provided through the use of individual or group sessions. Educational materials designed for Program participants may be utilized to provide education to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to parents or caretakers of infants and children participating in local agency services other than the program.

(2) Develop an annual local agency nutrition education plan, including breastfeeding promotion and support, consistent with the State agency's nutrition education component of Program operations and in accordance with this part and FNS guidelines. The local agency shall submit its nutrition education plan to the State agency by a date specified by the State agency.

Authority

7 CFR Part 246.2
7 CFR Part 246.11(a)(1-3)
7 CFR Part 246.11(b)(1-2)
7 CFR Part 246.11(c)(1-7)(i-iv)
7 CFR Part 246.11(d)(1-2)

Procedures

Nutrition education contacts shall be made available at a quarterly rate to participants or parents/caretakers of infant and child participants. (This often looks like as Certification/Recertification appointment, Nutrition education appointment, Health Update appointment, Nutrition Education appointment; Repeat) The Iowa WIC program only approves www.wichealth.org for participant electronic internet based nutrition education contacts.

Nutrition education is part of the certification/recertification appointment, as is developing the plan for future contacts.

If a participant is unable to attend their scheduled nutrition education appointment (or does not complete their wichealth.org lesson) explain the option of wichealth.org or reschedule them for another nutrition education appointment within the same month. If neither of these options are possible within the same month, allow the participant to receive one month's of benefits and reschedule the nutrition appointment for the following month.

Nutrition education is also part of the health update appointments for children, infants and breastfeeding women.

The content of nutrition education contacts and the setting (face-to-face with individuals, groups, teleWIC, or wichealth.org) must address individual needs such as:

- Nutritional needs and interests,
- Nutritional risk,
- Health history,
- Household situation,
- Anticipatory guidance for nutrition and physical activity through the lifecycle,
- Cultural preferences,
- Language spoken and literacy level, and
- The CPA's evaluation of appropriate teaching strategy and setting.

Nutrition education contacts must involve participants in more than information sharing in order to affect or influence food choices and health behaviors. Nutrition education must be completed using the participant centered approach. The participant centered approach involves engaging the participant through talk, information exchange, listening, and feedback. This type of interaction helps build rapport, improves the quality of information the participant is provided, and allows feedback to flow smoothly between WIC staff and the participant. Receiving print or other take home materials, watching an audiovisual program, looking at a display, tasting recipes or foods and listening to a lecture in and of itself cannot be counted as a contact because there is no opportunity for interaction. Examples of strategies that promote participant-centered nutrition education during contacts **include**:

- Dialogue and interactive discussion using open-ended questions
- Topics focused on issues relevant to the participant
- Problem-solving
- Skill-building and other application activities, and
- Goal-setting, **as appropriate**.

The same nutrition education topic codes will be used by all local WIC agencies. Staff must document the nutrition education topic(s) provided at the contact in the participant record on the nutrition education panel.

- Staff must limit their counseling points to one to three per contact.
- Participants who refuse any second nutrition education offered during **WIC appointments** may not be denied food benefits. The local agency shall document "NE Refusal" in the participant's electronic record on the nutrition education panel.

Best Practices

WIC agencies and staff use appropriate print, audiovisual, and other materials (posters, bulletin boards, displays, health fairs, public service announcements, etc.) to reinforce the nutrition and health messages provided in nutrition education contacts.

The most effective WIC nutrition education contacts incorporate these elements:

- Review nutrition assessment to determine participant's interests and nutrition education needs;
- Select and tailor messages that engage participants;
- Use interactive counseling methods and teaching strategies;
- Select appropriate setting;
- Provide informational or environmental reinforcements; and
- Follow-up at the next contact to evaluate progress, provide support, identify barriers and reassess/redefine nutrition education plan.