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Mothers of Preschoolers

Obesity Prompting Questions

Version 2.1

Introduction to Users

The following set of focus group prompting questions were developed as part of a research project whose primary aim was to provide qualitative data to inform the development of an obesity prevention intervention for low-income children enrolled in the WIC Program. The focus groups were conducted with mothers of 2-5 year old children who were enrolled in WIC.

The purpose of the focus groups was to understand:

- a) The basis of maternal misperceptions about obesity risk (e.g., why mothers who are either obese and/or who already have overweight children are not concerned about their children's current or future risk of obesity).
- b) Among those already concerned about their child's obesity risk, what barriers exist to making alterations in their children's diet and activity patterns.
- c) What specific counseling would be most useful for increasing awareness about the risk of childhood obesity and for changing behavior to prevent childhood obesity.

Brief Overview about Focus Group

What is a focus group?

How are the results utilized?

Assurances of confidentiality

Explanation regarding use of video or audio taping

Answer any questions from participants

Introduction

The purpose of our discussion today is to talk about ways health professionals can make WIC counseling more helpful to parents. I am anxious to hear about your opinions and experiences. Everyone here has at least one child between the ages of 2 and 5. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers—just your own feelings. I know that you all have important contributions to make today by sharing your thoughts and opinions. I would like to remind you that only one person should speak at a time in

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order for the rest of us to hear what is being said. Thank you so much for participating, your time and your input are greatly appreciated. Does anyone have any questions before we get started?

I'd like to begin by going around the table and having everyone introduce themselves, first name only. Please also tell us how many children you have and what their ages are. I would also like to remind you that once we begin our discussion today, my questions only concern your children that are between the ages of two and five years old. I realize some of you may also have infants, but while we are talking today, let's discuss your 2-5 year old child.

Prompting Questions

1. Concept of what it means for a child to be “healthy”

- What does it mean to you if someone says---“she has a **healthy** child?”
- What does “healthy” mean to you?
- Do you think your child (or children) is healthy? Why or why not?
- How do you know if a child is healthy?
- What do you look for/what signs are there to let you know that your child is healthy?

2. Concept of a healthy weight or relationship of weight to health

- Is there such a thing as a healthy weight for a child?
- How does someone know if his or her child is at a healthy weight?
- Is there a weight that is too high?
- Can a child be too heavy?
- Are there warning signs to you that a child is overweight?
- Can a child be overweight and still be healthy?

3. Perception of the consequences of overweight (adult)

- Is weight or being overweight a problem for anyone in your family?
- What makes it a problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- How long has it been a problem?
- Has being overweight affected other aspects of their life?
- In what ways? (probes might include health concerns, clothes, society)
- Does it affect others in the family?
- How does someone know that they are overweight?
- Does someone tell them?

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4. Perception of consequences of overweight for children

- Does anyone know any children that are overweight?
- How old are they?
- Does the child's being overweight affect other areas of his/her life?
- Does it affect others in the family?
- In what ways? (probes might include health, clothing, teasing)
- At what point or at what age, does being overweight for a child become a problem? Why?
- What makes it a problem?

5. Perception of own child's weight and its consequences

(may overlap with #4)

- Is anyone here worried about her own child's weight?
- Why do you think that your child is overweight?
- Did someone tell you that your child is overweight?
- Who was that person? (family, friend, MD, WIC)
- How does that make you feel?
- What are your biggest concerns about your child's weight?
- Do you think that your child's weight affects any aspects of their life? (probes might include running and playing, teasing, health problems, buying clothes)
- How old was your child when s/he was identified as being overweight?

6. WIC experiences regarding your child's weight

- Has anyone been told by WIC that your child is overweight?
- If so, how did that make you feel?
- If WIC told you that your child was overweight and you did not agree, did you say anything?
- If so, how did that conversation go?
- Could WIC have brought this up in another way that would have changed your mind?
- Are you told your child's height and weight?
- Were you shown a growth chart? Was it useful? How did you feel about that?
- Do you know why your child is on WIC?

7. Natural history of children's weight

- Do you think that your child will always be overweight? Why/Why not?

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8. Level of concern regarding child's weight

For those of you who think that your child **is** overweight

- Is this a big issue or problem for you?
- Is this something that concerns you a lot?
- Is this something that worries you? Why/Why not?
- What would happen to make this a bigger concern for you?

For those of you that think that your child **is not** overweight

- Do you think that your child will ever become overweight?
- What makes you feel that way?

9. Etiology of overweight in children and adults

- Why do you think that some children are overweight and others are not? (probes might include eating habits, other caretakers, and heredity)
- If overweight runs in a family, how likely is it that the children will become overweight too?
- Do you know of any families where everyone is overweight but there is someone in the family who is not?
- Why do you think that that person is not overweight?
- Can someone do something about **their** weight if their whole family is overweight?
- Can they make a change?

10. Influence of heredity or metabolism on weight status

(may overlap with #9)

- Do you think that people who are overweight feel that they can change anything about their weight or are they born that way and they can't change it?

If heredity or metabolism mentioned probe further with the following:

- What does the word 'metabolism' mean to you?
- What does the word 'hereditary' mean to you?
- Does everyone in the family have the same metabolism?
- Can anything change this?

11. Mood and overeating (explore if there are comments suggesting eating too much creates a weight problem)

- Why do you think people eat too much?
- Are there certain situations or circumstances, where people tend to overeat?
- What are these?

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12. Control of eating and limit-setting, mechanics of parenting

Let's talk a little bit about your child's eating habits during a typical day...

- What are your child's favorite foods?
- Does your child usually have a bedtime snack?
- If so, what does your child like to eat at bedtime?
- Do you choose the foods your child eats or does your child choose what s/he eats?
- Who decides how much your child gets to eat? Who portions the food?
- What happens if your child doesn't want to eat?
- What happens if your child wants seconds?
- Do you think it is hard for parents to say "no" to children with regards to eating?
- What do you think parents can do to keep children from becoming too heavy?
- How do you tell when a child is hungry or not really hungry?
- Are there certain foods that you limit or don't let your child have? What are they? Why?
- Is it hard to set limits (around food) with your child?
- Is it hard to stick to your rules? (explore how often parents say one thing about eating, then give in to what child wants)
- Describe times when you have been **successful** setting limits with your child around food.
- Describe times when you have been **unsuccessful** setting limits with your child around food.
- Are there other areas of parenting where you set limits?
- How are you able to control your child's eating? Do some things work better than others do?
- What could WIC or your doctor do to help you make changes in what your child eats (limit setting)?
- Who else do you think might be able to offer you guidance on how to change your child's diet (setting limits)?

13. Terminology and associations with words that describe weight

- Does the word **overweight** mean something different to you than the word **obese**?
- Does overweight or obese mean something different than the word **fat**?
- What about the word **big? Thick?**
- Have you ever heard someone say "She has a greedy baby?" What does it mean to you?

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14. Sources of feeding advice

- Does anyone in your family or neighborhood give you advice about meals and feeding your children?
- Who?
- What kind of advice do they give?
- Do you generally follow or listen to the advice that is given? Why/Why not?
- Is there anything that makes it difficult to follow this advice?
- What happens when you get advice that conflicts or contradicts other information you already have?

15. Usefulness of feeding advice given by WIC

- How does WIC help you? Has WIC given you any helpful advice?
 - Is the nutrition counseling they give helpful to you? Why/Why not?
 - What did you think of their suggestion(s)?
 - Did you ever get a suggestion about feeding your child and try doing it but then found out it was very hard to do?
 - What was that suggestion?
 - Why was it hard to do?
 - Did anything get in the way of you trying these suggestions? What was that?
- If grandmother is brought up as an issue, ask
- Would it ever be helpful if your child's grandmother came to a WIC visit? Why/Why not?

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16. Other roles WIC does or could play

- Are there other ways that you would like WIC to help you?
- Are there things that are not being done that you would like some help with? What are they?
- How can WIC help?
- Has anyone ever had an experience in the WIC office that made you feel really good about the job that you are doing as a parent?
- Can you tell us about it?

17. Frustrations with WIC and suggestions to improve WIC services

- Has anyone ever had an experience in the WIC office that made you feel that you were **not** doing a good job as a parent? Can you tell us about it?
- If you could make any changes with the WIC (*counseling*) system, what would you change, if anything?
- Who do you think should do more of the talking during your appointment with the WIC nurse or nutritionist?
- Who do you think does more of the talking during a WIC visit?
- Overall, how concerned do you think WIC staff are?
- In your experience, are WIC staff good listeners?
- Do you feel that you have enough time to talk or ask questions?
- What happens if you do not agree with the advice given to you by WIC? Do you speak up?
- Do you feel like you can have a discussion or a back and forth conversation? Why/Why not?

18. Individual relationship with WIC counselor

- Do you generally see the same WIC nurse or nutritionist at each appointment?
- Do you like it this way?
- Why or why not?
- Do you think the race of the WIC staff makes a difference?
- Is it more helpful to talk to someone in WIC who is a parent?
- Do you prefer they be more your age or older?

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19. Overall impressions of WIC

- Overall, do you think that WIC can help you?
- If yes-How?
- If no-Why not?
- Who can help?
- Is there any part of the counseling that you could skip? Anything that needs to be added?
- Is there anything else that we have not talked about, that you would to comment on?