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## **WIC Health Professionals**

### **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 health professionals who provide WIC nutrition counseling to mothers of preschoolers.

The purpose of the focus groups with the WIC health professionals was to understand:

- a) Perceptions about why mothers are either not concerned about childhood obesity or unable to make changes in diet or activity patterns in their children that would prevent obesity.
- b) Frustrations or resistance experienced in attempts to talk with mothers about the problem 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. Please remember, 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 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?

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I'd like to begin by going around the table and having everyone introduce themselves, first name only. (May also want to ask for the name of the health department or WIC agency they are from, # of years they have worked in WIC, etc.).

### **Prompting Questions**

#### **1. Perception of biggest health concerns among children**

- What are the biggest health concerns you are seeing among WIC children?
- If more than one mentioned, what is the **most important** problem in your opinion?

#### **2. Usefulness of growth charts as a counseling tool**

Let's talk about a typical WIC visit.

- Do you routinely show mothers the growth chart at certification?
- How do you explain where her child plots?
- Do you think most WIC moms understand the growth chart?
- Do you think most WIC health professionals can accurately explain a growth chart?
- Do moms ask questions about the growth chart?
- Do they ask to see it if it isn't shown to them?
- How do you think moms feel about the growth chart-do they like it or find it useful?
- How do you feel about the growth chart?

#### **3. Terminology used to define WHP > 90<sup>th</sup> %ile**

- What term(s) do you use to define WHP >90?
- If you certify a child for WHP >90<sup>th</sup> how do you explain this to the mom?
- Do you find it difficult to tell WIC mothers their child is overweight?
- Are there some parents you decide not to tell that their child is overweight? Why?

#### **4. Mothers level of concern regarding child's weight**

- How do moms react to this news?
- Do you think moms agree that their child is overweight?
- How do you think that they perceive their child's weight?
- Is it a big problem for them, do you think? Why or why not?
- Do any moms think that their child will outgrow this? Why?
- Do any of these moms ask for suggestions or help regarding their child's diet or weight control?
- What tools or strategies do you use to help families make changes?

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## **5. Concept of healthy weight**

- Do you think that there is 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?
- What signs are there that a child is too heavy/becoming overweight?
- Is there a certain age at which overweight becomes a greater problem for a child?
- Do you think overweight is more of a problem for girls or boys?
- Do you think that parents think that it is more of a problem for girls than boys?
- Can a child be overweight and still be considered healthy?

## **6. Etiology of overweight in children**

- What do you think contributes to a child's tendency to be overweight? (Probes might include eating habits, other caretakers, and reliance on fast food meals).
- Do you feel a child between the ages of 2-5 with WHP >90<sup>th</sup> %ile is at risk for remaining overweight in adulthood? Why or why not?
- If overweight runs in a family, how likely is it that the children will become overweight too?

## **7. Role heredity plays in weight loss strategies**

- Can someone do something about **their** weight if their whole family is overweight?
- Is there anything they can control?
- Do you think that they feel that they can change anything about their weight or are they born that way and they can't change it?
- What strategies work/don't work? Why?
- What do you think parents can do to keep children from becoming too heavy?

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## **8. Factors influencing overeating**

- Why do you think it is that people eat too much?
- Are there certain circumstances or situations that promote overeating?
- Do you think that people ever eat when they are not hungry?
- Do you think that parents ever feed their children when they are not hungry?
- Do parents ever use food as a reward or incentive? Do you think that this
- has an impact on weight?
- Do you ever discuss overfeeding with WIC moms?
- Do you think that parents understand satiety cues? Do you ever talk about this?

## **9. Control of eating and limit setting, mechanics of parenting**

- Whose responsibility is the control of eating for children?
- How much should a parent try to decide what a 3-5 year old should eat?
- Do you think it is hard for parents to say “no” to children with regards to eating certain foods or certain amounts of foods/frequency of eating?
- Do you ever discuss limit setting with your WIC parents?
- Is there anything WIC can do about this?

## **10. Barriers families face in preventing obesity**

- Are there specific barriers that WIC clients face in preventing overweight?
- What are they?
- Which one(s) present the largest obstacle? Probes might include neighborhood safety issues regarding physical activity, financial resources to purchase healthy foods, parenting skills, depression, and limit setting.

## **11. WIC staff as roles models, other sources of feeding advice**

- Do you think WIC participants perceive WIC staff as role models?
- If a health professional is overweight would that affect counseling methods?
- Who do you think is the most valued source of information for advice regarding health/nutrition for WIC moms?
- Do WIC moms ever mention receiving advice at WIC that conflicts with other advice from family members or from doctors?
- Do WIC moms ever seem uncomfortable or angry at suggestions offered or by WIC guidelines?
- How do you handle it?

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## **12. Perception of the impact WIC has on families**

- Do you feel that you can make an impact during counseling?

For 'yes' responses:

- How effective do you feel about your efforts most of the time?
- How do you envision your role in WIC?
- Do you feel like you can make a difference?

For 'no' responses:

- How do you feel about your job then?
- How does it affect your attitude toward your work?
- What would need to change in order for you to make a difference or to be more effective?
- When a mother brings in a child for nutrition counseling, who is it that you are trying to help?

## **13. Frustrations with WIC and suggestions to improve services WIC provides**

- What frustrations do you experience at WIC?
- What barriers exist at WIC that get in the way of helping families?
- How could WIC counseling be improved?
- What would need to change in order for you to do a better job?
- If you had a magic wand and time wasn't an issue what would you change if anything?
- Are there parts of your counseling responsibilities/tasks you think could be skipped? Why/Why not?
- Do you ever feel that moms just want the vouchers and are not interested in the other advice or counseling?

## **14. Rapport during WIC counseling session**

- Do you ever feel that you could use more time to talk with your parents?
- Do WIC participants ask questions?
- Do you think a WIC mom would tell you if she disagreed with the advice you were giving?
- Do you think WIC moms try to make changes that you suggest?
- Do you think parents would be receptive to classes or discussions at WIC relating to parenting issues such as limit setting?
- What about facilitated group discussion? Have you heard of it?
- Do you think it would be useful?
- Is there anything else that we haven't talked about you believe is important to discuss?