

The development and use of this discussion guide was supported by the Generalist Physician Faculty Scholars Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, NJ (Dr. Whitaker).

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WIC Health Professionals

Child Feeding 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 identify maternal beliefs and practices about child feeding that are associated with the development of childhood obesity. The purpose of the focus group study with WIC nutritionists was to gain insight into the parent/ child feeding relationship in families of low socioeconomic status.

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 your experiences discussing feeding and obesity with mothers of preschoolers enrolled in WIC. I am anxious to hear about your opinions and experiences. I understand everyone here is a WIC nutritionist. Is that correct? 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 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?

Prompting Questions

1. Terminology

- Which term should we use – overweight or obesity when discussing children who are overweight?
- Why?
- If you see an obese woman walk into the WIC office with her newborn infant, what are your first thoughts?

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2. Recognition of need to educate parents on nutrition and activity

- When do you think education about obesity should begin with the parents?
- What are the nutrition tools/strategies that you have found helpful with families?
- How much/often do you target increasing activity level in your efforts to manage weight?

3. Professionals feeling of “Powerless” to do anything to combat childhood obesity

Explore in context of issues WIC families face and WIC systemic issues/bureaucracy

- How do you find ways to invest effort when previous efforts have not been reinforced with compliance and success?
- Other thoughts

4. Incidence of obesity in WIC (low income families)

- How much of a problem do you think obesity is for this population?
- At what age, if ever, does a child's weight become your concern (as a WIC health professional)?
- At what age, if ever, does a child's weight become a parent concern?
- How concerned do you think parents are about their children being or becoming obese?
- How much of a priority for these families is weight maintenance or nutrition?
- Is "bigger" better?
- Are there gender differences with parent beliefs? (i.e. boys should be bigger than girls)

5. Factors associated with obesity among WIC (low income families)

- How much do the following risk factors contribute to a child becoming obese in this population?
 - a) Low Income
 - b) Fast foods/junk foods/convenience foods
 - c) "Late" weaning from the bottle
 - d) Parents adding cereal to the bottle
 - e) Feeding on a schedule vs. on demand
 - f) Lack of activity
 - g) Eating too much or too often
 - h) Types of foods the WIC Program offers

6. Etiology of obesity

- What do you think causes obesity? (probes might include activity level, caloric intake, specific foods)
- Do overweight kids become inactive or do inactive kids become overweight?

7. Child behaviors

- What are some behaviors in the child that you often hear parents complaining about or expressing concern with in regard to their child's intake of food or mealtime behaviors?
 - a) Picky eating
 - b) Watches TV during meals
 - c) Temper tantrums
 - d) Child refusal
 - e) Constant snacking/grazing all day
 - f) Dawdling at meals/taking forever to eat

8. Parent behaviors

- What are some ways that you have seen parents trying either to encourage or limit their child's eating., both during the meal and outside of mealtimes?
 - a) Force feeding
 - b) Feeding on demand vs. feeding on schedule
 - c) Threatening
 - d) Enforcing "clean plate"
 - e) Restricting child from eating too much
 - f) Putting child on diet
 - g) Restricting eating only to set mealtimes
 - h) Encouraging or coaxing at every bite
 - i) Letting child choose food from what is served
 - j) "Short order" cooking
 - k) Using food as a coping mechanism (for mom or child)

9. Parental attitudes and beliefs

- How have you seen parents use food as a reward or punishment to:
 - a) Improve (shape) their child's social behaviors?
 - b) Increase their child's intake at meals? (i.e. eat your peas, and you'll get dessert)
- How do parents' beliefs about their own competence with child rearing relate to how much their child eats? (i.e. if my child eats more, then I'm a better parent)
- How have you seen parents use food as a soothing agent or expression of affection with their children?

10. Parental knowledge of normal eating and nutrition

- How much do you think parents understand the following concepts:
 - a) Autoregulation, or a child's ability to self-regulate intake?
 - b) Attending to their child's satiety cues?
 - c) Children's initial resistance to trying new foods? (neophobia)

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11. Families mealtimes and feeding environment

- What are some issues that we need to be aware of regarding mealtimes in these families and the social context or environment in which eating occurs.
 1. Access to food/food availability
 2. Mealtime patterns (structured vs. unstructured)
 3. Does family eat together?
 4. Do parents eat with their children?
 5. TV viewing during meals or dictating the structure of meals
 6. Safety issues of the environment which interferes with activity or outdoor play
 7. Size of family
 8. Family composition--extended family members and their eating patterns

12. Effect of maternal eating practices

- How does the mother's relationship with food and dieting relate to how this mom feeds her child? (Lack of parental inhibition and restraint)