



Customer Service Notes for *Suggesting and Recommending Skills*



A critical component of providing stellar service to WIC participants is how we communicate with them. Often, a significant part of our communication involves making suggestions and recommending courses of action.

The way we make the suggestion or recommendation and the words we use will go a long way toward whether the participant actually follow our advice.

For example, avoid using the phrase “have to,” as in “You have to provide your son James with more vegetables.” Using “have to” can turn off participants as it sounds like an ultimatum. A simple change in our word choice to “need to” makes the statement more tactful and less dictatorial.

Where you can, use the word “we” to show that you are in a partnership with your participants when making suggestions. A statement such as “We need to work on getting Lisa to eat more fruit snacks” suggest that you care about the participant and her daughter.

Also remember that our tone of voice and body language reveal a lot to participants. Suppose you have been recommending to Mrs. Martinez that her daughter eat different sources of protein, other than beef. You met with Mrs. Martinez and find that she has made little, if any, progress in doing so. For some of us, we might roll our eyes or fold our arms in frustration. Both of these are negative non-verbal gestures. We might also respond in a sarcastic way or use a scolding tone of voice. A better approach would be to say, “What can we do to get your daughter Anna to eat different sources of protein?” A discussion might then lead to your suggesting a few recipes using beans or offering peanut butter or cheese as snacks.

Consider using the following sentence starters when making suggestions or offering recommendations:

- “It would be great if...”
- “How can we...”
- “It would be so helpful if...”
- “We would like to see you...”
- “Why not try...”
- “Do you think...”

Statements using the above wording are likely to result in more compliant participants, leading to healthier babies and young children!

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you find yourself getting frustrated when participants do not follow your recommendations?
2. What can you do to get participants more receptive to your suggestions?

