

# Oregon WIC Listens – Continuing Education *Program Eligibility: A Health Outcome Approach*



## Staff Handout

The goal of the WIC program is to promote good health for WIC families. It is important that program participants know this is the reason for the nutrition assessment. The health outcome-based approach organizes components of the WIC nutrition assessment around a desirable health outcome.

### Content:

USDA requires that participants are informed about the reasons they are eligible for the WIC program beyond income eligibility. Nutrition assessments are completed in order to identify "risks" that qualify an individual for the program and **guide our education in an effort to impact health outcomes.**

USDA has defined general health outcomes for each WIC category:

- ❖ **Pregnant woman:** Delivers a healthy, full-term infant while maintaining optimal health status.
- ❖ **Breastfeeding and Non-breastfeeding Postpartum Woman:** Achieves optimal health during childbearing years and reduces risk of chronic diseases.
- ❖ **Infant:** Achieves optimal growth and development in a nurturing environment and develops a foundation for health eating practices
- ❖ **Child 1-5 Years:** Achieves optimal growth and development in a nurturing environment and begins acquiring habits association with good health.

Ideally, our statement to the participant will summarize the reasons a participant is being enrolled on the program and connect program participation to improved health outcomes. **Reviewing every risk with the participant is not required.** A general statement is acceptable unless more specific information is warranted. Examples might include:

- ❖ For a new pregnant woman: *I will be enrolling you on WIC today so we can be a source of information and support for you during your pregnancy and once your baby arrives.*
- ❖ For a recertified child with presumed eligibility or diet risks only: *We can continue WIC services to help you with your child's diet.*
- ❖ For a recertified breastfeeding mother: *We would like to continue providing WIC services to help you successfully breastfeed your baby.*
- ❖ For a new pregnant woman with anemia and low weight gain: *We will enroll you on the WIC program today so we can work together to keep an eye on your iron count and weight gain throughout your pregnancy.*
- ❖ For a recertified underweight child: *We will continue WIC services for your child so we can help with his nutrition and watch his growth and weight gain over the next six months.*
- ❖ For a new child with health issues: *Your child is being enrolled on WIC so we can assist you with the health concerns we talked about today and so we can help your child be as healthy as he can be.*
- ❖ For a recertified non-breastfeeding postpartum woman: *We will continue WIC services until your baby is 6 months old to help you regain your strength after pregnancy and delivery.*

Oregon WIC Listens and the health outcome approach both focus on goals participants can accomplish. Working towards these goals creates positive interactions and encourages participants to continue taking care of their health. To promote this, point out strengths and positive practices, highlight successes and progress, and reinforce the growing skills of caregivers.

### **Practice Activities:**

**1. Reviewing Required Elements-** Using the handout entitled *Required Elements of a WIC Certification*, highlight the element that discusses program eligibility. Using the space provided on that handout, record your ideas about how you would word an eligibility statement.

2. **Practice makes perfect** – Use the general health outcomes provided by USDA (see content of this lesson) to practice framing an eligibility statement in your own words, for each category of participants.

**Pregnant woman:** Adrienne is a 33 year-old pregnant, vegetarian woman who is concerned about her protein intake during pregnancy.

Your eligibility statement for Adrienne:

**Breastfeeding and Non-breastfeeding Postpartum Woman:** Ling is a breastfeeding mother who is eager to breastfeed her baby for the first year of her baby's life.

Your eligibility statement for Ling:

**Infant:** Taylor is six months old and is ready to begin solids.

Your eligibility statement for Taylor:

**Child 1-5 Years:** Sergui is two years old and is quite the picky eater.

Your eligibility statement for Sergui:

3. **Observations** - Practice observing a fellow certifier. Take notes on the way they connect program eligibility with the participant's health outcome. Share your observations with your co-worker, being sure to highlight what they are doing well.