

Customer Service Notes for WIC **Communicating with Non-English Speaking Participants**

In order to provide stellar service to WIC's diverse participants, it is important that WIC staff communicate effectively. It takes extra effort to focus on the challenges of working with participants who don't speak English as their first language.

The following 10 techniques can help WIC employees better communicate with non-native English language participants.

1. Use simpler language and avoid WIC jargon.
2. Speak more slowly.
3. Enlist the help of co-workers who may speak the same language as a participant.
4. Utilize brochures and posters written in different languages.
5. Use active listening skills to ensure understanding of what participants say.
6. Be patient and do not show your frustration if the participant is not understanding you.
7. Use positive non-verbal communication to convey your message (e.g., a smile, a thumbs-up, a nod, etc.)
8. Consider writing down a word or phrase, as some participants may have a better grasp of written English.
9. When on the phone, paraphrase your understanding of what the participant is saying.
10. Reassure any participant who is self-conscious about their English skills that you are there to help them.

Making a supreme effort to communicate effectively with non-native English speaking participants will ensure that all of your participants receive quality service.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What is an alternate way, other than verbal communication, to provide information to a non-native English speaking participant?
2. Do you make an effort to not raise your voice when a participant doesn't understand you?