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Customer Service Notes for WIC

Utilizing Motivational Interviewing Techniques

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a collaborative conversation used to strengthen a person's own motivation for and commitment to change.

As many of you know, motivational interviewing offers helpful techniques when working with WIC participants, particularly those who may be resistant to change. With MI, the relationship between WIC and the participant is more likely to be collaborative and friendly, as the nutritional goals and change strategies are negotiated between the WIC staff member and the participant.

Below are 4 principles of MI:

- Express Empathy – actively listen to show you understand the participant's situation
- Avoid Confrontation – avoid arguments as they are counterproductive and cause defensiveness
- Deal with Resistance – offer new perspectives but do not impose them
- Support Self-Management – get the participant to believe in the possibilities of change as an important motivator; the participant is responsible for choosing and making the change

How you phrase your statements and questions is critical with MI, as shown in the 3 examples below.

Conventional Communication	*Motivational Interviewing Communication*
1a. "I know you don't want to discuss Joey's weight, but I'm going to talk about it with you."	1b. "Would it be okay if we spent a few minutes discussing Joey's weight?"
2a. "When are you going to be ready to address this problem?"	2b. "I'm confident that if and when you can commit to introduce more vegetables into Maria's diet, you will do it."
3a. "Let me tell you what you need to do."	3b. "Based on my experience, I would encourage you to consider cutting back on sugary snacks."

The above "b" statements show empathy and not a dictatorial style of communication with participants.

We know that with continued use of MI techniques, you are more likely to get participants to "self-manage" and make more positive changes!

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you consistently utilize motivational interviewing techniques with participants?
2. How can you use motivational interviewing with participants who are resistant?

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