Volume 10, Issue 3 **June 2013**

Customer Service Notes for WIC

Handling Change

If there is one constant in any organization today, it is change. Our busy WIC offices are no exception when it comes to change.

Whether it's an updated system, a revised policy, new food packages, a modified procedure, or new staff, change is the new normal. For many of us, we may not necessarily adapt well to change. In fact, we may resist or even resent the change since we may be comfortable with how things have been going.

For some employees, the first reaction is often a negative one. While there is often a transition period where things are not always smooth, usually the change is not nearly as bad as the person might first envision it to be. Some employees dealing with a change will also experience an increase in stress, which can lead to less positive interactions with co-workers and participants.

It is important that we not let change in our busy WIC offices impact the service we provide to participants. When possible, make the change as transparent as possible to the participants. It would be unprofessional to hear an employee say, "I'm so sorry it's taking so long to find your file. This new system we have is really slow."

When a change involves the participant doing something additional or different, it can be helpful to briefly explain the reason for the change. When participants are aware of the rationale behind the change, they are less likely to resist it.

Also keep in mind that it may be difficult for your participants to change their habits. We may wonder why Mrs. Davis can't find different ways to serve her overweight son more fruits and vegetables. Be patient, however, since Mrs. Davis may be struggling to change from an unhealthy diet to one that includes healthier food. In a situation like this, remember to praise Mrs. Davis for even small positive changes that she makes, since this may encourage her to continue making the progress you are seeking.

While it's not always easy, we can manage change and not let it manage us!

Questions for Reflection:

1. How often do you have an immediate negative reaction to an upcoming change? What can you do to reduce your resistance to change?
2. What have you found works in helping your participants make positive changes?
3. How can you commit to a change and even become a "change agent" within your office?

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