

## Customer Service Notes for *We All Make Mistakes*

As service providers, none of us are perfect and we all make mistakes.

How we handle the mistakes and recover from them is the key.

Given the number of participants that a busy WIC office sees, there is always the possibility to make a mistake that will negatively affect a participant. For example, suppose that Mrs. Watkins makes her next appointment for 11:30 on a future week. Also suppose that the office is busy, you are multitasking, and you mistakenly note her appointment for that day at 1:30. The day of the appointment when Mrs. Watkins arrives at 11:30, you realize that you mistakenly scheduled her for 1:30. So, what will you do?

Begin by apologizing to Mrs. Watkins for the scheduling mistake. Then determine whether she can be seen now. Do your best to try to see her, even if she needs to wait a few minutes. If it is not possible to see her at this time, again apologize and offer to reschedule if she cannot come back at 1:30. Taking responsibility for your mistake and letting Mrs. Watkins know how you would feel if the same thing happened to you goes a long way in recovering from the mistake.

“Service recovery” can make a difference in how a participant reacts to a mistake. In the above example with Mrs. Watkins, if you are sincere and apologize, she is less likely to become angry about the mistake. The mistake can be an opportunity to build a better relationship with your participants.

Also remember to apologize to co-workers or your supervisor when you make a mistake that impacts their work.

Any time we make a mistake is a great time to identify the cause. Perhaps it was because of how you manage your time; maybe you waited until the last minute and rushed to complete a report. Or maybe the mistake was related to your knowledge of your system, and you would benefit from additional training on the system.

If we can look at our mistakes as a learning experience, that will improve our performance and help us avoid making the same mistake in the future.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. When you make a mistake that inconveniences a participant, do you offer a sincere apology?
2. Can you view your mistakes as a learning experience?

