Introduction to Nutrition Care Guidelines

The Arizona WIC Nutrition Care Guidelines serve as a compilation of nutrition assessment considerations and basic education prompts to support the delivery of quality nutrition care in WIC. The Nutrition Care Guidelines are intended not to standardize nutrition counseling for each participant but to ensure that nutrition counseling in WIC is consistent with national guidelines. In alignment with participant-centered services (PCS), WIC is most effective when recognizing that participants are the experts about their own circumstances, and that WIC is a resource to help participants apply the principles of nutrition in an effective way.

Nutrition care is provided in the context of participants' environmental and educational limitations, their interests, and their cultural preferences with consideration for their progress through the stages of change. Stages of change are the cycles that participants go through to decide whether they want to change and what the change will mean to them. Behavioral change doesn't occur in one step; it progresses through several steps or stages. The formal stages of change model identifies the following stages: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The Nutrition Care Guidelines act as a reference resource for WIC staff when offering nutrition education that may be of interest to WIC participants with relevance to the specific WIC category and risk.

The Nutrition Care Guidelines are not intended to replace or duplicate any of the content of new employee training or the in-depth training and resources that accompany the required weeklong breastfeeding training for all Arizona WIC staff. Though the Nutrition Care Guidelines will provide a broad overview of breastfeeding guidelines specific to the sections about infants and breastfeeding women, the guidelines cross-reference the *Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple* textbook for detailed information.

The Nutrition Care Guidelines align with USDA guidelines, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines, and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) nutrition care process (NCP) practice guidelines within the nutrition care manual (NCM). The NCP consists of four steps: assessment, diagnosis, intervention, and monitoring and evaluation.

> **Step 1: Nutrition Assessment**. The USDA WIC Nutrition Services Standards require that staff perform a comprehensive nutrition assessment using the value-enhanced nutrition assessment (VENA) process to provide high-quality nutrition services in a participant-centered framework and to determine program eligibility. In addition, comprehensive nutrition assessments will be done at mid-certification assessments, when there is a change in the amount of infant formula being requested, or when a breast pump is being issued. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics defines nutrition assessment as a systematic method for obtaining, verifying, and interpreting data needed to identify nutrition-related problems, their causes, and their significance. Nutrition assessment is an ongoing process that

involves both initial data collection and continued reassessment and analysis of participants' nutrition status. Arizona WIC utilizes the conversational approach to assessment and completes the nutrition assessment by using the ABCDE assessment guide, which coordinates with the WIC codes. *A* is gathering anthropometric information, or height and weight, from the participant and includes WIC codes in the 100s. *B* is gathering biochemical information—specifically, screening for risk of anemia and high blood lead concentrations—and includes WIC risk codes in the 200s. *C* is assessing for any clinical or medical conditions that may affect nutrition status, such as diabetes, and includes WIC codes in the 300s. *D* is the bulk of the assessment in WIC and includes exploring diet- and nutrition-related information with participants, such as eating patterns or vitamin use. This may include the use of projective tools (tools that help participants express their true feelings), if appropriate, to elicit deeper, more meaningful conversations. The *D* portion includes assessing for WIC codes in the 400s. For breastfeeding dyads, *D* also includes assessing for codes in the 600s. Lastly, *E* is assessing environmental and other factors that affect health and safety; it includes WIC risk codes in the 900s.

Step 2: Nutrition Diagnosis. AND describes the nutrition diagnosis as using data collected during the nutrition assessment to guide selection of the appropriate nutrition diagnosis. This is different from the traditional use of the word *diagnosis* and does not imply that nutrition professionals are deciding what health conditions are present; rather, it means they are simply naming the specific nutrition problem or risk based on their assessment. USDA Food and Nutrition Services has defined nutrition risk criteria that are used within WIC. In WIC, the diagnosis step of the nutrition care process entails the assignment of the WIC risk codes based on the information collected in the complete assessment.

Step 3: Nutrition Intervention. The purpose of this step is to resolve or improve the identified nutrition problem by planning and implementing appropriate nutrition interventions that are tailored to the participant's needs and interests. Planning the nutrition intervention involves identifying the interests and motivations of the participant, prioritizing the risks, consulting evidence-based nutrition practice guidelines, determining participant-centered approaches and outcomes, determining time and frequency of care, and identifying needed resources and referrals. Implementation is the action phase and involves communicating the nutrition care plan and carrying out the plan. In WIC, this phase of the NCP is known as nutrition education. Nutrition education, counseling, coordination of care, and assignment of the tailored food package prescription in Arizona WIC are built around the participant-centered services framework known as the Together We Can model.

Step 4: Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation. This final step of the nutrition care process is used to determine whether participants have achieved or are making progress toward their individual goals. In the Arizona WIC setting, participants self-select their goals based on the assessment and education offered. It is important to listen for "change talk" from participants because this usually identifies their goals without the need for specific questions. It is also important to follow up with participants regarding their progress and any changes that have occurred at each appointment. This is called continuity of care, and it makes participants feel important, valued, and heard. Documentation is also a vital part of this phase of the NCP. Documentation assists in the continuity of care so that each staff person who sees a participant has an idea of the status and can check in with the participant to evaluate progress. In addition, documentation also protects staff if any significant issues arise which might result in a review of WIC records. In Arizona WIC, nutrition care is usually documented using a TGIF note. *T* documents the Getting to the Heart of the Matter tool that was utilized during the discussion as well as any concerns, challenges, or motivations identified by the participant or caregiver. *G* documents the goals that have been identified by the participant. *I* comprises the bulk of the documentation of the assessment and includes participants' knowledge, feelings, and beliefs; relevant information that was learned during the assessment; what nutrition education was offered; any new WIC codes identified; and information specific to the tailoring of the food package prescription. Lastly, *F* documents the follow-up needs that have been identified and require further attention at future visits to ensure continuity of care.

The Arizona WIC Nutrition Care Guidelines are divided into sections by participant category, with ABCDE assessment subsections under each category. The guidelines are based on the best information available at the time of this compilation.