



Customer Service Notes for *When Not to Give Advice to Participants*

We know how helpful WIC staff are to participants. WIC staff often go above and beyond to provide participants with useful information. There are some situations, however, when it is best not to give advice to participants.

Let's start with a situation where it is appropriate to give advice. Suppose Ms. Jackson tells you that she's struggling to get her son Marcus to eat more vegetables. It is fine for you to give her advice on a few different ways to make carrots and green beans that Marcus might like.

On the other hand, suppose Ms. Jackson tells you that her husband is fed up with his boss and is thinking of quitting. Being a good listener is fine; however, refrain from offering advice. She may only be sharing some of the information, not requesting your input. Therefore, it is not your role to be her advisor.

Also be careful about giving medical advice that is outside the scope of WIC. Suppose Ms. Jackson tells you that her doctor just put her on a particular medication for high blood pressure. You are aware that your sister was put on this same medication and got dizzy as a side effect. Your sister's doctor ultimately switched her to a different medication. It would be inappropriate for you to share this information with Ms. Jackson. Even though you are well intentioned, you don't know if Ms. Jackson will experience that side effect.

Also do not give financial advice to participants. Suppose during a visit, a participant shares that she and her husband are considering moving to a new apartment complex in town. You are familiar with the complex and feel the rental pricing there is expensive. While it's understandable that you might want to advise the participant of this, you may not be aware that they may be able to get a "good deal" for their unit.

Please continue to help your participants as much as you can. Just steer clear of situations where it is not appropriate to offer advice. Sometimes the participants just need a "listening ear" regarding situations that we are not aware of. Offer your ear, but avoid being the counselor; stick to information related to WIC services.

Question for Reflection:

1. When a participant brings up a topic outside the scope of WIC services, do you give thought to **not** providing specific advice?