



## *Customer Service Notes for WIC*

### ***Words and Phrases to Avoid***

Communicating well with participants is a key component of stellar customer service. When communicating with participants, there are certain words and phrases that should be avoided. We have noted some of them below.

**“No”** – When a WIC employee responds with a “No,” that can come across as being unhelpful. You can get your same point across by eliminating “No” and starting your statement without it.

**“We can’t”** – While there are things asked of you that you truly cannot do, how you convey that makes a difference. Rather than potentially coming off as inflexible by beginning your statement with, “We can’t,” instead follow the adage of telling people what you can do, not just what you can’t do. For example, if a participant wants an appointment at a time when you are closed, you can respond with, “While our office is closed then, what we can do is give you the last appointment that day, or would you prefer the first available appointment?”

**“You have to”** – Using this phrase can make you come across as dictatorial and authoritative. While what you are asking the participant to do may be fine, it is better to use different wording. Try stating, “We would like for you to bring the following information in so your visit/appointment can be completed.”

**“Why didn’t you”** – Starting a sentence with this can make a participant defensive, as it has a negative connotation. Instead, use less negative language. Always use positive and encouraging words. Try saying, “If you have any concerns prior to or during your visit, we will be happy to address them.” This will encourage them to ask questions, and your responsibility will be to provide affirmation or validation. In other words, “the ball is in their court.”

**“The problem is”** – Using this phrase at the beginning of your statement comes across negatively. That’s not to suggest that what you are stating is not a problem. However, look for alternatives such as using the word “challenge.” Or you can re-phrase your statement to something like, “If we don’t have the weight of your daughter, we won’t be able to compare it in subsequent visits.”

Avoiding the above words and phrases will enhance your communication with participants!

#### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Do you think about what you are about to say before you say it?
2. Do you try to use positive language with participants?