

Job Aid

Substance Use Talking Points

WIC staff use trauma-informed, participant centered skills when talking about substance use. These skills can help build rapport with participants and make them feel at ease.

This job aid provides talking points for how to:

- Introduce the substance use screening questions
- Acknowledge participants and offer education
- Affirm participants and offer education
- Refer participants to substance use resources

Introduce the substance use screening questions

Below are examples for how to explain the required substance use screening questions to a participant.

- “One of the ways WIC supports families is by asking questions about substance use and offering education and referrals that may be helpful for you and your family. I am going to ask you some sensitive questions related to alcohol, tobacco, nicotine and drug use. Please know that your answers will be kept confidential.”
- “These next few questions are ones that I am required to ask everyone. Asking these questions helps me determine if there are any extra services or other programs you may be interested in receiving a referral to.”

Acknowledge and offer education

Below are examples for how to acknowledge participants and offer substance use education.

- “I know you shared that you don’t use drugs or alcohol. Part of my job here at WIC is to share that there are possible health risks

associated with different substances. Are you interested in additional information?”

- “WIC promotes a healthy lifestyle for parents and their families. Substance use can have harmful effects on the whole family. WIC provides substance use prevention information and referrals to increase awareness about the dangers of substance use. Would you be interested in more information about substance use?”
- “As a public health nutrition program, we at WIC share with all participants that alcohol, cannabis and other drugs are potentially harmful to you and your baby’s health. We have more information and resources available if you have questions.”
- “As part of the certification process, WIC is required to provide information on smoking, alcohol, and drug use to help ensure that you have a healthy baby (or “help you prepare for future pregnancies” or “help you and your family stay healthy and safe”). Is it okay to provide you with additional information?”

Affirm

Below are examples for how to affirm participants while talking about substance use.

- “It’s great that you are committed to a healthy pregnancy.”
- “I know how important it is for you to have a healthy pregnancy. Your decision to avoid substances is crucial to make sure that you do.”
- “It sounds like you had trouble in the past and it took a lot of courage to kick that habit. You are on the right path now to be healthier for you and your kids. I am proud of you.”

Refer to substance use resources

Below are examples for how you can refer participants to substance use resources.

- “Thank you for sharing that information with me. Your concern for your baby will help you be a great parent. Would it be okay if I gave you some resources at the end of today’s appointment?”
- “We routinely give referral and resource information in case you or a family member wants more information or support with substance use.”
- “WIC routinely provides referrals to connect people to community resources, not just for the participant’s health but the health of the whole family.”
- “Quitting is hard, but we are here to help. You are not alone. I can provide you with a referral today to talk to someone about quitting.”
- “The referral I made today is confidential.”
- “I am going to circle some numbers and websites for you, your family, or anyone who you know who might find them helpful or are looking for some support.”
- “I am going to text you a link for you, your family, or anyone who you know who might find it helpful or are looking for support.”
- “We will focus on getting you the help you need by offering referrals to programs that can help you and your family.”