

3-1 Introduction to Participant Centered Education (PCE) or Counseling (PCC)

Why participant centered education or counseling?

So far, you have been learning about what the WIC program does and your role in the program. Now you need to learn how to do that job.

Most of your job will be interacting with WIC participants.

- Sometimes you will be finding out information from them.
- Other times you will be offering ideas to them based on what you learn from them.

This back and forth conversation is called participant centered counseling or education. We call it that because it is always centered on what the participant needs and wants rather than on what you think they should do.

We use participant centered counseling in the WIC program because participants know best about what they need and what will work for them. Our job is to actively listen to them, find out why things are going the way they are, and then respectfully offering them suggestions to select from.

Active listening is so important that we want the participant to talk more than the certifier. We call that **talk time balance**.



Learning activity



Think about a time when you went to the doctor, either for yourself or for a family member.

- How did you know if the doctor was interested in you and that the doctor understood what your concerns were?
- How did you know they were listening to you?
- Who did most of the talking? How did that feel?



Don't Panic! You will get more information on the skills you will need to provide participant centered counseling when you complete the remaining modules of the PCE online course in lesson [3-2](#).

The 4 processes of counseling



Every counseling session will include these 4 processes, as the certifier actively guides the conversation with each participant. Let's take a look at how each of these processes relate to counseling.

Engaging the participant

The first process is engaging the participant. This includes everything we do to establish rapport with the participant and start developing a safe relationship with them. Participants won't be open to listening to us unless they trust us.

Ways to engage the participant:

- Show them the spirit of participant centered counseling
 - Show acceptance of who they are
 - Be non-judgmental
 - Express empathy
 - Support their autonomy
 - Have compassion
 - Build a partnership with them
 - Be curious
- Be aware of your state of mind, facial expressions, and body language
- Set the stage at the beginning of every appointment (Use AIDET to remember)
 - **A**cknowledge everyone at the appointment
 - **I**ntroduce yourself and show them where they will be
 - Tell them the expected **d**uration of the appointment
 - **E**xplain what will be happening and ask if they have any questions
 - **T**hank them for being there
- Ask permission at every step
- Be transparent about what to expect
- Use plain and simple language

Learning activity



Think again about the visit with the doctor.

- What did they do to make you feel at ease?
- If you were the doctor, what would you do differently, if anything?

Focusing the conversation

The next process is focusing the conversation. It is always nice to talk with people, but ultimately, we need to figure out what is going on with the participant and narrow down the discussion. Focusing is all about doing a complete and thorough assessment so we have a good understanding of what is going on with the family and can then prioritize what has the biggest impact. We could think of this as unpacking – taking a look at what they are carrying around and why it is important to them.

Ways to focus the conversation:

- Review information from the last visit in the participant record
- Review information captured at the front desk (income, homelessness, residence, participation in SNAP or TANF)
- Active listening
 - Listen with curiosity
 - Listen with your eyes as well as your ears
- Use critical thinking
- Use OARS skills (See the **Participant Centered Education** online course)
 - Open-ended questions
 - Affirmations
 - Reflections
 - Summaries
- Complete the assessment (See **Chapter 4** of this guide)
- Prioritize what to explore
 - Identify what are the key issues and focus on those
 - Avoid getting off track
 - Prioritizing what has the biggest impact on the health of the family
 - Decide what issues are nutrition-focused

Evoking more insights

When we say evoke, what do you think of?

Other words that mean the same as evoking are suggesting, reminding, bring to mind, or to draw out. In counseling the word means to call forth the wisdom, experience, and expertise of the participant. The skills needed here are the ones you would use to encourage the participant to come up with their own ideas for change. What you learn from them will help you guide the conversation.

Ways to evoke more insights:

- Listening for the participant's ideas of what they want to change
- Reflecting those ideas back to the participant to see what they think
- Exploring what that change might look like or how it might work
- Asking permission to share ideas then asking what they think of the ideas you offered
- Observe the participant's body language and guess how they are reacting
- Consider what might be coming soon for the family based on the child's age and developmental stage
- Determine what is in your scope of practice versus something that requires a referral

Learning activity



Think again about the visit with the doctor.

- How did the doctor gather information about you?
- What did the doctor focus on during the visit? Besides the reason for your visit, what else did the doctor ask about?

Planning next steps

The last process is guiding the participant towards planning their next steps. This is when you work with the participant to come up with a concrete action that they can take, no matter how small it might be. The plan will come from them and will be based on what you hear them say they want to try.

Ways to help participants plan their next steps:

- Review the plans in the participant's record from their last visit and check-in with them about how that is going
- Summarize the ideas you have heard from the participant and ask which one or two they would like to work on
- Help them think about the steps they will need to take to make the change
- Reflect back the specific steps they planned, even if it is a small one
- Document the next step in the data system so the next WIC staff person to see them can follow-up
- Summarize their hopes for a healthy outcome for their child

Learning activity



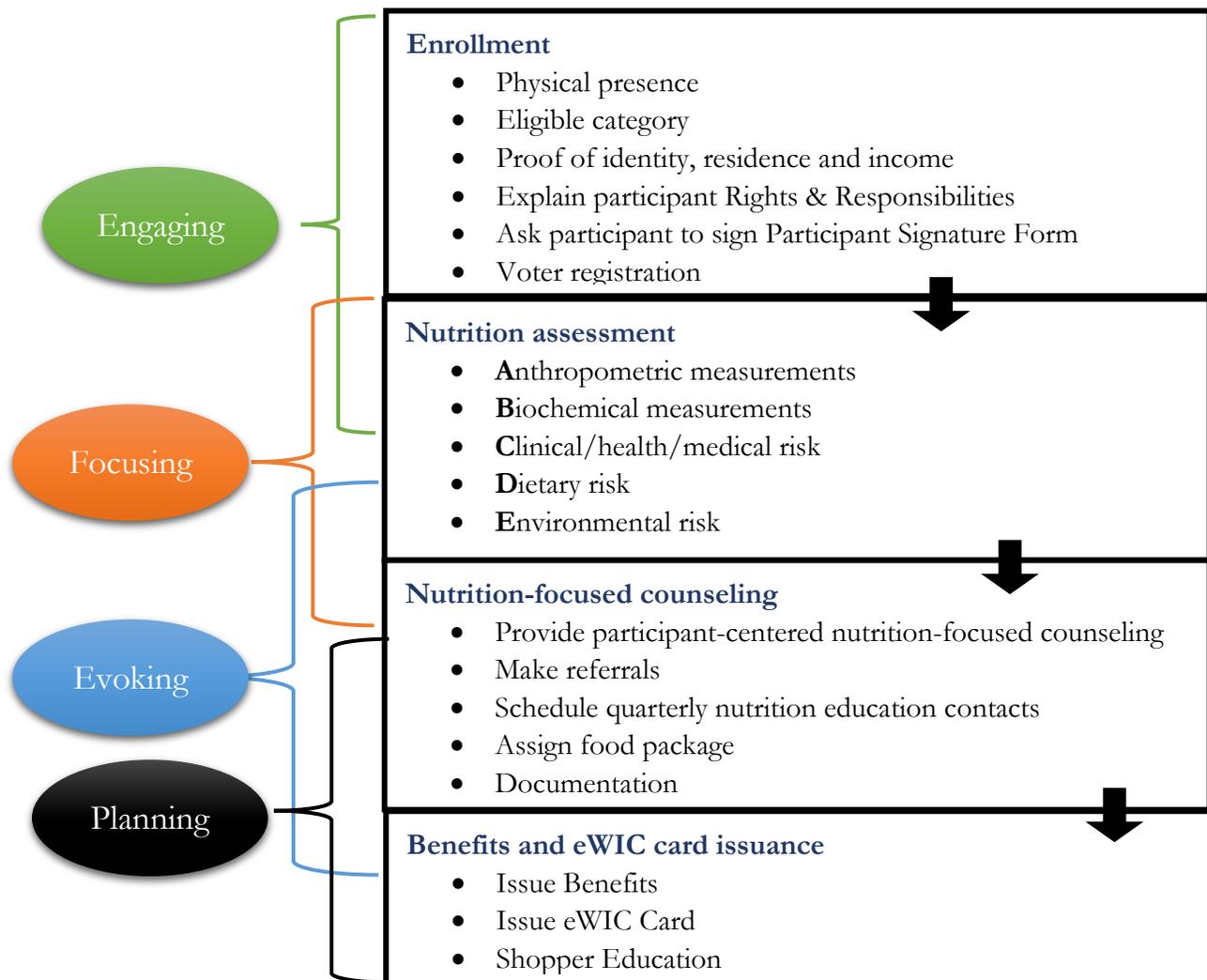
At that doctor's visit, think about what the doctor did to resolve your concerns.

- How did the doctor make sure you understood what actions or next steps you should take?
- After the visit, how confident were you that you could successfully take those next steps? What did the doctor do to make you confident?

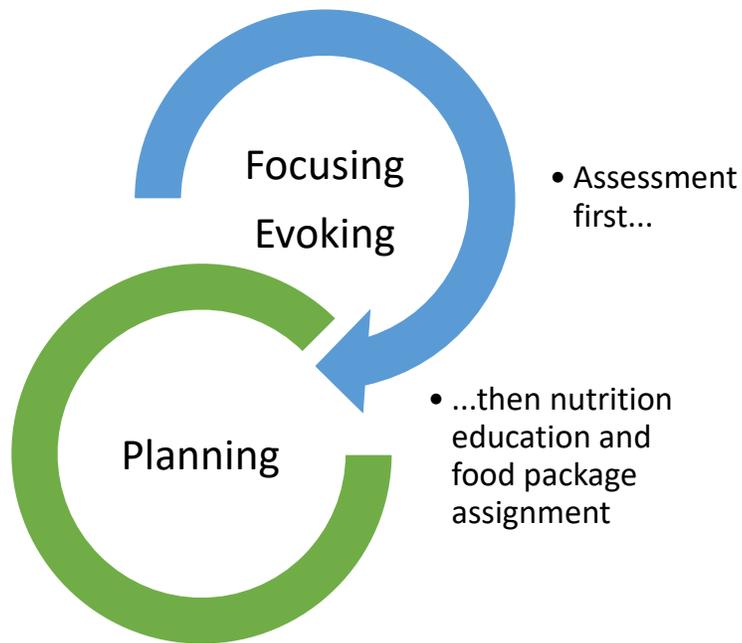
How would this look in a certification appointment?

These 4 processes are not considered sequential, rather they are skills that we use over and over during the conversation with participants. They build on each other and connect to each other. Each process layers upon the other or provides different routes that you can take during counseling. They help make sure we don't miss opportunities to provide nutrition-focused counseling. This focus on the participant makes our counseling more effective and targeted – hopefully saving time.

Looking at the parts of a certification appointment, you can see how the 4 processes might overlap or happen in a different order. Generally, we start with engaging and end with planning.



Just remember



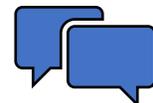
Learning activity



Watch another certifier complete a certification appointment.

- What do you notice about how they engaged the participant?
- How did the certifier focus the conversation and evoke the participant's insights and ideas?
- What plans or next steps did the participant decide upon?

Talk it over



Discuss what you observed with your training supervisor and ask any questions.

Keep engaging, focusing, evoking, and planning in mind as you complete the **Participant Centered Education** online course.