

# 8-2 Writing Next Steps

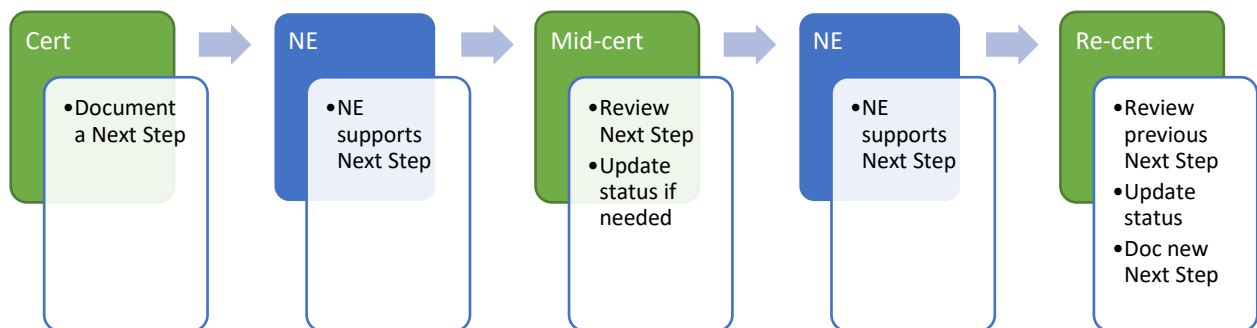
## Documenting next steps helps guide future nutrition-focused counseling

In [Lesson 5-2 Checking for Understanding](#) we talked about the importance of writing a good next step so we are clear about what the participant is working towards. It is also important because it helps the next certifier who sees the participant to provide the best support for the family.



### Considerations:

- Next steps identify the participant-selected nutrition-related behavior change.
- Documenting a next step in the participant’s record is required at every certification.
- Reviewing and updating the status of the next step should happen at the mid-certification health assessment.
- Reviewing and updating the status of the next step from the previous certification should happen at recertifications.
- Scheduled quarterly nutrition education should support the desired next step.



### Learning activity



If you read the following next step in a participant’s record during the mid-certification health assessment, what would you know about the participant? What would you follow-up on?

**Next step:** Mom will start putting water in the bottle instead of milk, starting with nap-time.

## Writing SMART next steps

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It is much easier to follow-up on next steps that are very clear about what action the participant is working towards taking. One way to make sure they are clear is to remember **SMART: Specific-Measurable-Actionable-Realistic-Time**.

### **S** Specific

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- Is the next step defined as much as possible with no unclear language?
- Does it include details like who is involved, what they want to do, where it will be done?

### **M** Measurable

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- Does it include how much, how many, how often?
- Can you track progress? Can you tell how close they are to succeeding?

### **A** Actionable/Achievable

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- Is there a verb that shows what action is being taken?
- Is the action something that they are able to complete within a reasonable time?
- Is this likely to bring success?

### **R** Relevant/Realistic

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- Is the action something the participant wants to work on?
- Is the behavior nutrition-related? Is this something that WIC can help with?
- Are barriers addressed?

### **T** Time frame

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- Does it include a time limit, e.g. will complete this step by next month?
- Can it be accomplished within a certification period?

## Learning activity

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During an observation of a participant appointment, review the previous next step in the participant's record. How did the certifier use the next step during counseling? What did they document about the previous next step? Was it a SMART next step?

## Learning activity

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Use the information about SMART next steps to evaluate this next step.



**Next step:** MOB will start putting water in the bottle instead of milk, starting with nap-time.

Specific	
Measurable	
Actionable/ Achievable	
Relevant/ Realistic	
Time frame	

## Learning activity

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Take the actions below and write examples of **SMART** next steps.

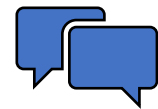


For this action	Write SMART next steps	✓
Exclusive breastfeeding to 6 months		S M A R T
Increase calories for underweight child		S M A R T

For this action	Write SMART next steps	✓
Accessing prenatal care or prenatal vitamins		S M A R T
Increasing physical activity		S M A R T
Following up on a referral		S M A R T

### Talk it over

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Talk with your training supervisor about any questions you have related to writing next steps or documenting updates to previous next steps.