



**Welcome to the Minnesota WIC Program
Participant-Centered Webinar Series**

As you enter the room, please mute your phone

Please do not put the phone call on hold (we will all hear the music©)
If your phone does not have a mute function, *6 will mute your phone

Karen Deehy, MS, RD
Senior Associate




Welcome

Minnesota WIC Program
Participant-Centered Webinar Series

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Guidelines

- ▲ Phones on mute
- ▲ Raise hands
- ▲ Chat box



The Plan

- ▲ **Topic area: Telephone Communication**
- ▲ **Effective phone communication**
- ▲ **Dealing with difficult people**
- ▲ **Phone policies & procedures**
- ▲ **Content of our conversations**

The Challenges




- Language issues
- Rude / angry people
- Background noise / distraction



The Challenges

- When someone is upset and they keep talking and you can't explain yourself or the situation.
- Hard to understand due to accent or poor connection or background noise, etc.
- When clients get upset when they lose their vouchers and you can't replace them.
- Bad cell phone reception is bad. Our phones are hard to hear on. Loud background noise.
- Language barriers but we use language line over the phone and sometimes we wait a while so some calls can take a while.



Effective Phone Communication



Effective Phone Communication

- Listen carefully to clients and write down any important info to refer back for clarification and remember the conversation. I let them vent out their frustration and show sympathy towards it.
- Speak politely, calm voice, friendly.
- Trying to return call asap, being pleasant, saying "thank you" to families scheduling appointments.
- Allow the participant to talk and express themselves; be very polite; be friendly.

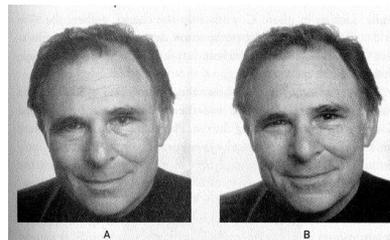


Effective Phone Communication

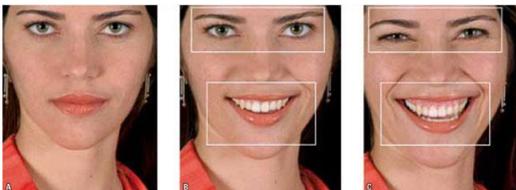
- Speak clearly, don't mumble!
- Be clear and concise. Re-explain things if you feel the client is not understanding. Be friendly, respectful and courteous. Ask clients to write down important things they need to bring with or when their appointment is.
- Speaking slowly, short questions/phrases.
- If you're not sure repeat what the client has said. Have a friendly voice.



Effective Phone Communication



The Duchenne Smile



Effective Phone Communication

- Tell them your name
- Positive tone
- Speak clearly
- Watch for filler words
- Avoid WIC speak
- Adjust your language to fit the listener



Effective Phone Communication

- Writing things down
- Eating, drinking, chewing gum
- Use their name
- Finishing the conversation
- Leaving a message and phone number



Dealing with Difficult People



Dealing with Difficult People

- When people are agitated/irritated
- Clients find it easier to be rude when on the phone vs in person
- Rude clients (not understanding they may need to wait a couple weeks to rescheduled if they missed an appointment/not having appointments that day for them)
- Families getting angry when they can't get an appointment for the exact date and exact time they want.



Dealing with Difficult People

- Do your best to find out what exactly they are upset about and come up with a solution.
- Stay calm, don't raise your voice, listen to them.
- Acknowledge their frustration and that WIC can be a difficult program to navigate. Focus on what you can do for them, not what you cannot.
- I remain calm, attempt to better understand their concern by utilizing open ended questions.
- Sympathize with them.
- I explain to them I understand their frustration and will try to help them resolve the problem.



Dealing with Difficult People



- Listen
- Controlling the emotion
- Apologizing



Listening



- Try to diffuse and make them heard, repeat back to them what they said.
- Listen and empathize
- Let them speak and express themselves; reflect and affirm their feelings; ask how you can help make it better.



Controlling the Emotion



- Staying calm myself by speaking calmly and slowly to participant to allow myself time to think about what/how to respond before I say anything. Ask open ended questions. No judgement. Take their word for it, just ask questions to clarify concern or issue.
- Stay calm. Be as helpful as possible.
- Try to state the facts and not reaction emotionally.



Apologizing



Poll Question



Participants with Limited English

- Sometimes language is a barrier over the phone.
- When participants have a strong accent and/or broken English it can be really hard to understand them.



Participants with Limited English

- Speak slowly
- Speak clearly
- Keep it simple
- Take pauses
- Repeat information
- Avoid acronyms
- Avoid metaphors or idioms



How – Phone Policies & Procedures

- Timeliness of responses
- Consistency of responses
- Steps in the phone system



- Getting them to answer the phone is hard. They keep you on hold too much.
- When you call, you never get to talk to anyone. Even when you leave a message, it takes a couple of days.
- Besides the phone, I would give them a 10 because they are really nice here.



Returning Calls



Poll Question



Taking Calls



The Power of the Check-In



How are We Doing?



What We Say



- Setting expectations
- Preparing participants for success
- Repeating key points



Time to Share



- Questions
- Strategies
- Tips

