Nutrition Education Documentation Series: Minnesota WIC policy allows different options for documenting Nutrition Education. This provides flexibility for each local agency to determine what works best for them. However, we often hear questions about what is expected and what is recommended. Over the next few weeks, ideas and information for Documentation Best Practices will be included in the WIC Wednesday Update.

What is the purpose of Nutrition Education Documentation?
Documentation assures that education was provided as required. But more importantly, the purpose of nutrition education documentation is to facilitate the delivery of meaningful nutrition services and to ensure continuity of care for participants. It is the primary means by which WIC staff communicate with each other about individual participants. Documentation should:

- Capture a picture of the participant’s visit in way that is easy to retrieve and review.
- Facilitate CPAs following-up and reinforcing education previously provided.

How do we enhance continuity of care?
Local agency documentation procedures should facilitate continuity of care. That means documentation procedures should:

- Be followed consistently by all staff in the agency to minimize duplication of information. Plus if documentation is done consistently, staff don’t waste time searching for information!
- Be clear so that other staff can easily understand what the author is communicating. Use established terminology and abbreviations.
- Describe the services provided to help other staff understand the plan for future services.
- Be concise so that it contains pertinent information and minimal extraneous information. For example, including that a healthy 8 month infant “started crawling” or “likes to play peekaboo” is extraneous information since it covers typical milestones for a child of that age. Such information doesn’t contribute to the nutritional care of the infant. Instead document only those things that are significant and relevant to follow-up. A parent of an 8 month old may have developmental concerns if the child is not attempting to crawl yet or doesn’t interact with others. Documenting this information can contribute to the care of the participant.

Where should we document Nutrition Education?
Local agencies have options on where to document nutrition education. The following options are available in the Minnesota WIC Information System:

- **Nutrition Education Tab** – Use the nutrition education tab to document *general topics* discussed, materials given, peer referrals and goals. The tab works well for documenting low-risk topics.
- **Notes** – use the “notes” functionality for narrative documentation. Notes work well for nutrition education documentation for both low-risk and high-risk participants.

**Suggested Activity**

At a staff meeting, review your documentation procedures and ask the following questions:

- Are all staff consistently following the same procedures for documenting?
- When you open a participant folder, are you able to quickly find the nutrition education documentation from the previous visit?
- When you review documentation from a participant’s previous visit, can you quickly determine the plan for follow-up? How can staff more clearly communicate the follow-up plan?
- What extraneous information do you see documented in participant folders? Talk about opportunities for documenting more concisely.

**Next week: ideas on how to use the Nutrition Education Tab more effectively.**