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. This week we will cover best practices for using the Nutrition Education Tab.

What is the difference between Nutrition Assessment and Nutrition Education?
As we talk about best practices for Nutrition Education Documentation, it is important to remember that Nutrition Assessment and Nutrition Education are two separate functions.

- Assessment is the process of obtaining and synthesizing information about a participant’s nutrition status in order to provide the most appropriate individualized WIC services.
- Nutrition Education is an interaction between a CPA and participant designed to inspire positive change in diet and/or physical activity, to improve health.

What is the difference between the Nutrition Assessment Tab and Nutrition Education Tab?

- The two tabs allow staff to document the assessment and education functions separately. The results of your assessment are documented in the Nutrition Assessment Tab (or in notes if that is your agency’s procedure) and include the assignment and justification for risk codes. Education provided is documented in the Nutrition Education Tab (or in notes if that is your agency’s procedure) and includes those topics/areas for which education was provided. Both assessment and education can be documented in notes, but should be distinct.
- Documentation of your assessment is critical for directing education and determining follow-up. But CPAs are not required to provide education on every identified risk. Therefore, a nutrition/health concern may be documented in the Nutrition Assessment Tab (or in notes) for which education is not provided. That is why it is important to keep documentation of assessment distinct from documentation of education.

The nutrition education tab is like a checklist:
- Use the tab to quickly document nutrition education topics, materials, peer referrals and goals. The tab provides a simple system for documenting required topics such as “the risks of using drugs and other harmful substances” or items covered to orient new families to the program.
• Use the tab to document low-risk nutrition education contacts.

Best Practices for using the Nutrition Education Tab:

• **Document only items that were actually discussed.** Don’t document items that were assessed but about which education was not provided. For example, if you do a blood draw and determine the value is normal, there is no need to document that in the participant’s Nutrition Education Tab. Likewise, if you ask about a child’s milk intake and determine it is probably appropriate, do not select that topic in the Nutrition Education Tab.

• **Limit the number of items “checked”**. A long list of topics, materials and/or goals is not helpful and actually detracts from our goal of documenting for Continuity of Care. The next CPA to see that participant will not be able to discern the primary topics of discussion from a long list.

• The lists in the tab are statewide -- not agency-specific -- so they are general in nature. This means CPAs cannot individualize the topics or goals to the participant. If you would like to include more specificity about a nutrition education topic or about a goal that was set, use notes.

**Suggested Activity**

If your agency uses the Nutrition Education Tab for nutrition education documentation, review your documentation procedures and ask the following questions:

• Do staff use the Nutrition Assessment Tab for documenting assessment and the Nutrition Education Tab for documenting education? If your agency uses notes for documenting both of these functions, can you distinguish between the assessment documentation and the education documentation?

• Are “just the topics discussed” documented in the tab or are multiple items frequently checked? When you open the Nutrition Education Tab in a participant’s folder, are you able to quickly discern the education provided at the last visit?

• How might your agency enhance the use of the Nutrition Education Tab so it is more effective and facilitates continuity of care? Is there enough information to make the next contact with the participant meaningful and substantive?

**Next week, best practices for nutrition education documentation in notes.**