

WIC Research: The WIC Nutrition Education Study

May 24, 2016

Linnea Sallack, Altarum Institute

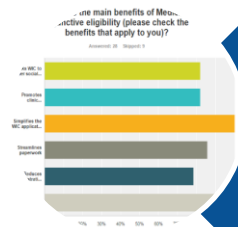
Sheryl Cates, RTI International

Georgia Machell, National WIC Association





Why is research important to WIC?



Your role in WIC research



The WIC Nutrition Education Study

Why is research important to WIC?



Another reason...



Exploring, describing and explaining



2016 NWA WIC Research Needs to Support an Effective and Efficient WIC Program

Overview
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has benefited greatly from program evaluation and high quality quantitative and qualitative research focused on program impact. It is crucial that such research continues to update, reinforce, and expand the food package. Currently, the WIC food packages are under review by the National Academy of Medicine (formerly called the Institute of Medicine) with recommendations expected in January of 2017. USDA is required to review the food packages every ten years so that they align with the most current nutrition science and the latest Dietary Guidelines.

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, WIC is a cost-effective, sound investment—ensuring the health of our children.

NWA'S MISSION
Providing leadership to promote quality nutrition services, advocating for services for all eligible women, infants, and children, and assuring the sound and responsible management of WIC.

2016

Appendix A: USDA FNS Currently Funded Research and Evaluation

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION
National and State-level Estimates of WIC Eligibles and WIC Program Reach Contractor: Urban Institute Expected Publication: Annually, every Winter	FNS publishes annual estimates of the number of people eligible for WIC and the rates of participation for the U.S., for each of the 7 FNS regions, and for each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories: the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The analyses include rates by subgroups: pregnant women, postpartum women, infants, and children.
WIC Breastfeeding Policy Inventory: Contractor: Mathematica Report Publication: January 2015	The WIC Breastfeeding Policy Inventory (WIC BPI) collected data on breastfeeding policies and practices, as well as the breastfeeding measures in use by State Agencies (SAs) and Local Agencies (LAs). The WIC BPI was a census of the 90 WIC State agencies (including Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and U.S. Territories) and the approximately 1800 local WIC agencies.
WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Study Phase II: Contractor: Abt Associates Report Publication: October 2015	This study updates a 2010 survey of WIC State Agencies' Peer Counseling Practices for three reasons: 1) funding for the Loving Support Peer Counseling Program increased from \$15 million in FY 2008 to \$80 million in FY 2010 and subsequently declined to \$60 million in FY 2014, 2) FNS made changes in the WIC food packages, in part to promote breastfeeding among WIC participants, and 3) there has been an evolution of best practices to support breastfeeding which have been adapted by many State and local WIC agencies more generally as well as specifically for Loving Support Peer Counseling. In the spring of 2014, a web-based survey was administered to the 50 State WIC agencies and the District of Columbia to gather information about how State agencies used the Loving Support Peer Counseling funding and supported the implementation of the program.
WIC Food Package Policy Options Study II: Contractor: Insight Policy Research Report Publication: October 2015	In 2011, FNS published a report on the choices each WIC State agency had made in 2009 in exercising the flexibilities allowed under the new WIC food packages. Since this early implementation, the WIC food package final rule has been published and States have made numerous adjustments to their policy choices. This study will update the previous study with an examination of which foods States offer in their food packages after 5 years of experience with the new food packages.
WIC Participant and Program Characteristics: Contractor: Insight Policy Research 2014 Report Publication: November 2015	This biennial census provides detailed information on the demographic characteristics, economic circumstances and health conditions of WIC clients, along with information on the operational characteristics of State and local WIC agencies. The data are used for policy development, budget projections and regulatory impact analyses. Information about WIC participation characteristics has been prepared biennially since 1992 from administrative records provided by State agencies.

**FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PLAN – FISCAL YEAR 2016**

January 27, 2016

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 2

IMPROVE PROGRAM ACCESS AND REDUCE HUNGER 2

IMPROVE NUTRITION AND REDUCE OBESITY 4

PROMOTE PROGRAM INTEGRITY AND REDUCE IMPROPER PAYMENTS 6

OTHER SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE 7

Please Note: This plan is a forecast of projects FNS expects to pursue in fiscal year 2016, but it is subject to modification without notice based on funding availability and program priorities.

1

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/2016nwawicresearchneedsassessment.pdf>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/study-and-evaluation-plan-2016.pdf>



**“ Research is
creating new
knowledge”**
Neil Armstrong

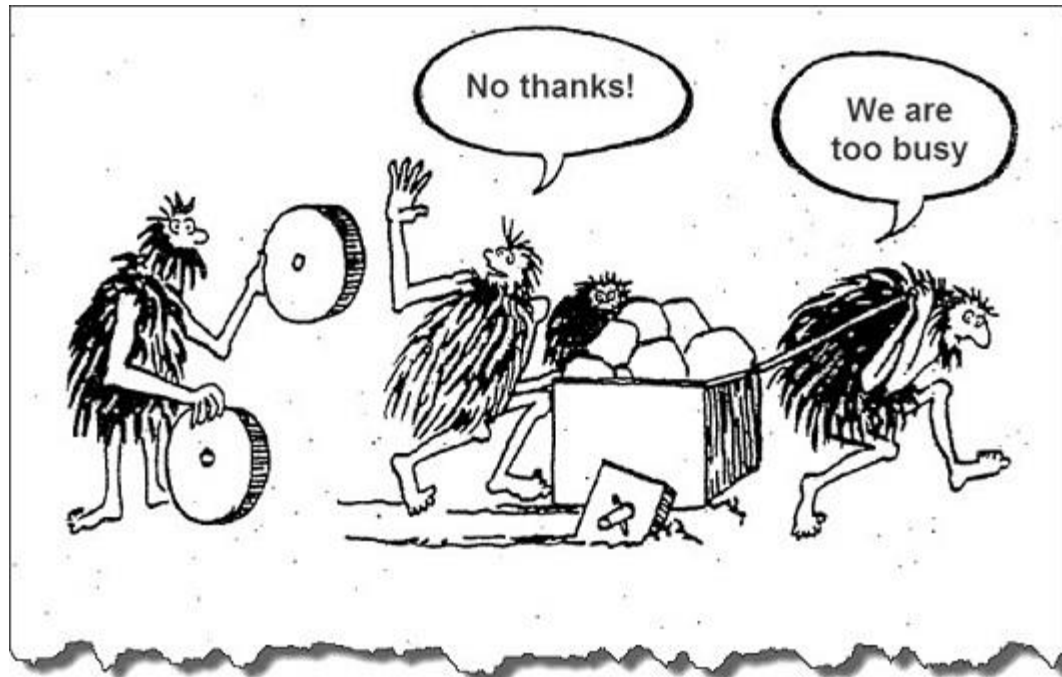
Do you have a few minutes to complete a survey?



1. SO

2. MANY

3. THINGS



There is a reason YOU are asked to participate

- Your experience, your voice matters.
- Nationally representative samples.
- Stronger the sample, stronger the findings, stronger the impact.
- Participation is not just completing a survey – helping to develop a study approach, testing a survey, engaging local agencies in studies.

The WIC Nutrition Education Study: Purpose

- Provide a nationally representative description of how nutrition education is currently being provided.
- Obtain an understanding of nutrition education methods and practices that have evolved from the national initiative to Revitalize Quality Nutrition Services.
- Assist with gaining an understanding of optimal nutrition education practices that support participants in adopting healthy behaviors.
- Conduct a study in six sites to design an evaluation of the impact of nutrition education on behavior.
- Develop methodology for conducting a future national evaluation of WIC nutrition education.

The WIC Nutrition Education Study: Phases

Phase I:
Provide a comprehensive, nationally representative description of WIC nutrition education

Phase II:
Conduct a pilot in six WIC sites to demonstrate and refine an evaluation of the impact of WIC nutrition education

Phase III:
Design a national evaluation of the impact of WIC nutrition education

Phase I Study Methods



Local Agency Survey

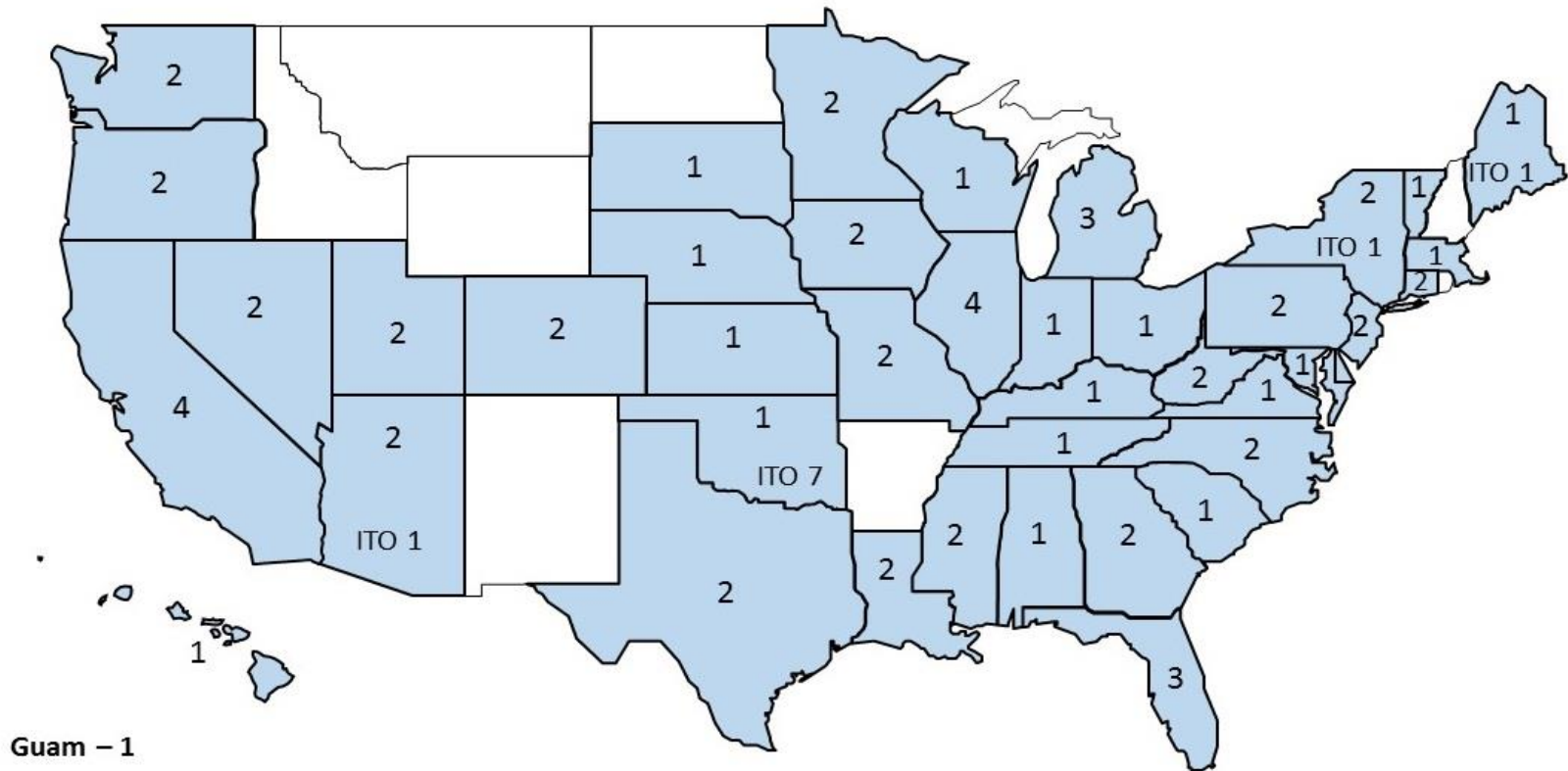
- Collected information on nutrition education policies and practices applicable *to all sites* managed by the local agency (LA)
 - Number and types of sites
 - Nutrition education contacts and methods
 - Reinforcement practices and sources
 - Policies on staff qualifications and training
 - Types and amount of staff training
 - Design and oversight of nutrition education
 - Coordination with other programs and services
 - Participant feedback and evaluation
 - Respondent characteristics
- 45-minute web-based survey (paper version available)
- 893 respondents; 89% response rate

Site Survey

- Collected information on nutrition education delivery and staff specific to each selected site
 - Nutrition education contacts and methods (both versions)
 - Number of staff and job roles (both versions)
 - Staff characteristics (V1)
 - Site characteristics (V1)
 - Participant characteristics (V1)
 - Nutrition education practices for one-on-one and group sessions (V2)
 - Goal setting (V2)
 - Types and amount of staff training (V2)
 - Respondent characteristics (both versions)
- 45-minute web-based survey (paper version available)
- 1,401 respondents (about 700 per version); 82% cooperation rate among responding LAs

In-depth Interviews (IDIs)

- Conducted 80 telephone interviews (30 minutes) with subset of Site Survey respondents



Blue shading indicates State Agency for IDI respondents with number of respondents in each

What did we learn?

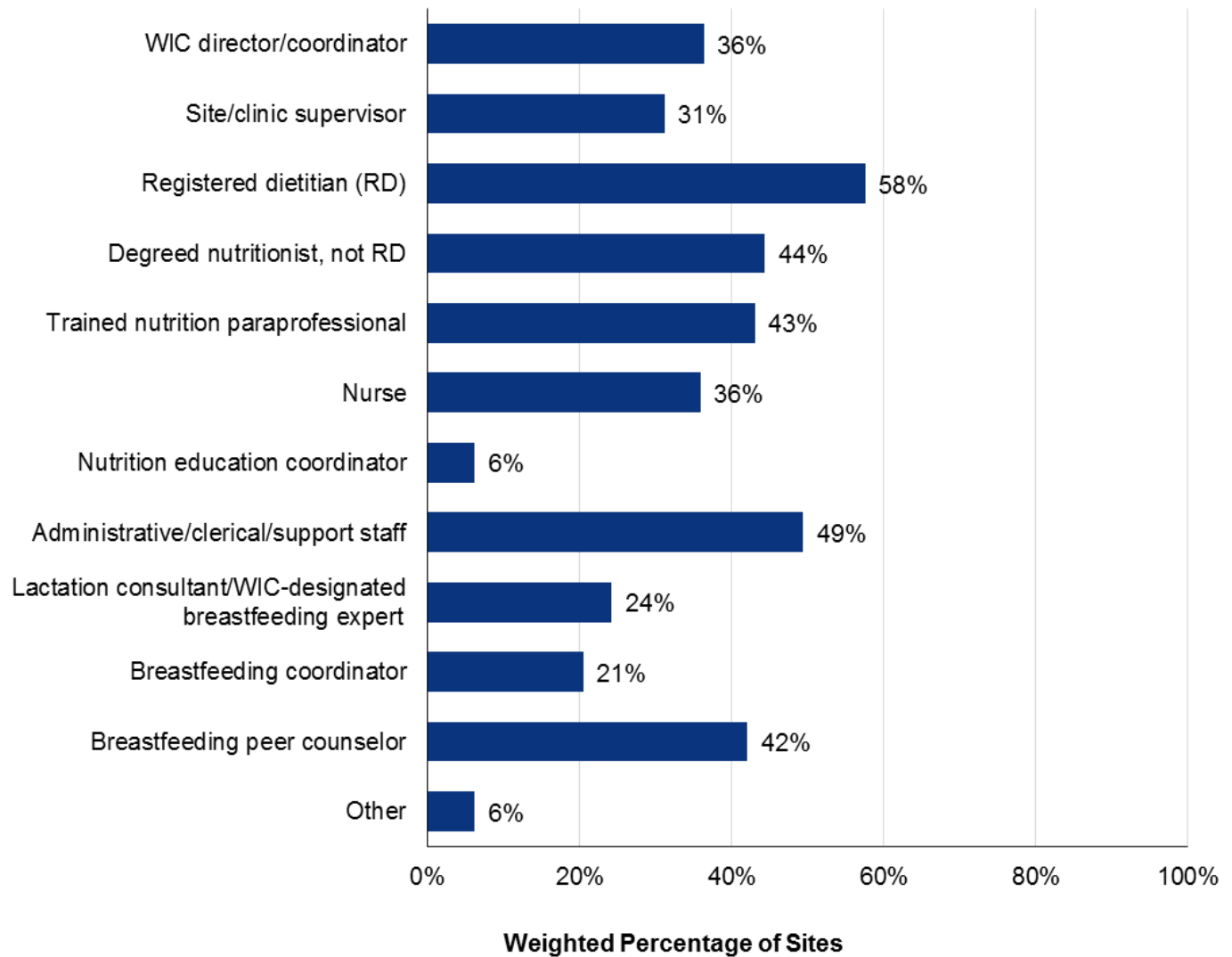


Nutrition Education Staffing

- A wide range of staff have a role in providing nutrition education.



Type of Staff Providing Nutrition Education



Sources: 2014 Site Survey, Versions 1 and 2. Number of respondents = 1,287 and number of nonrespondents = 114.
Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the combined Site Survey weights.
Respondents could select multiple responses.

Nutrition Education Staff Credentials and Characteristics

- 38% of WIC nutrition educators have 11 or more years of WIC experience, 17% have 7 to 10 years of experience
- 60% of WIC nutrition educators have at least a 4-year college degree
- Many WIC nutrition educators have credentials
 - Registered Dietitian (24%)
 - Certified Lactation Consultant, Educator, or Counselor (24%)
 - Registered Nurse (16%)
- 18% of WIC nutrition educators are Hispanic or Latino
- 75% of WIC nutrition educators are white

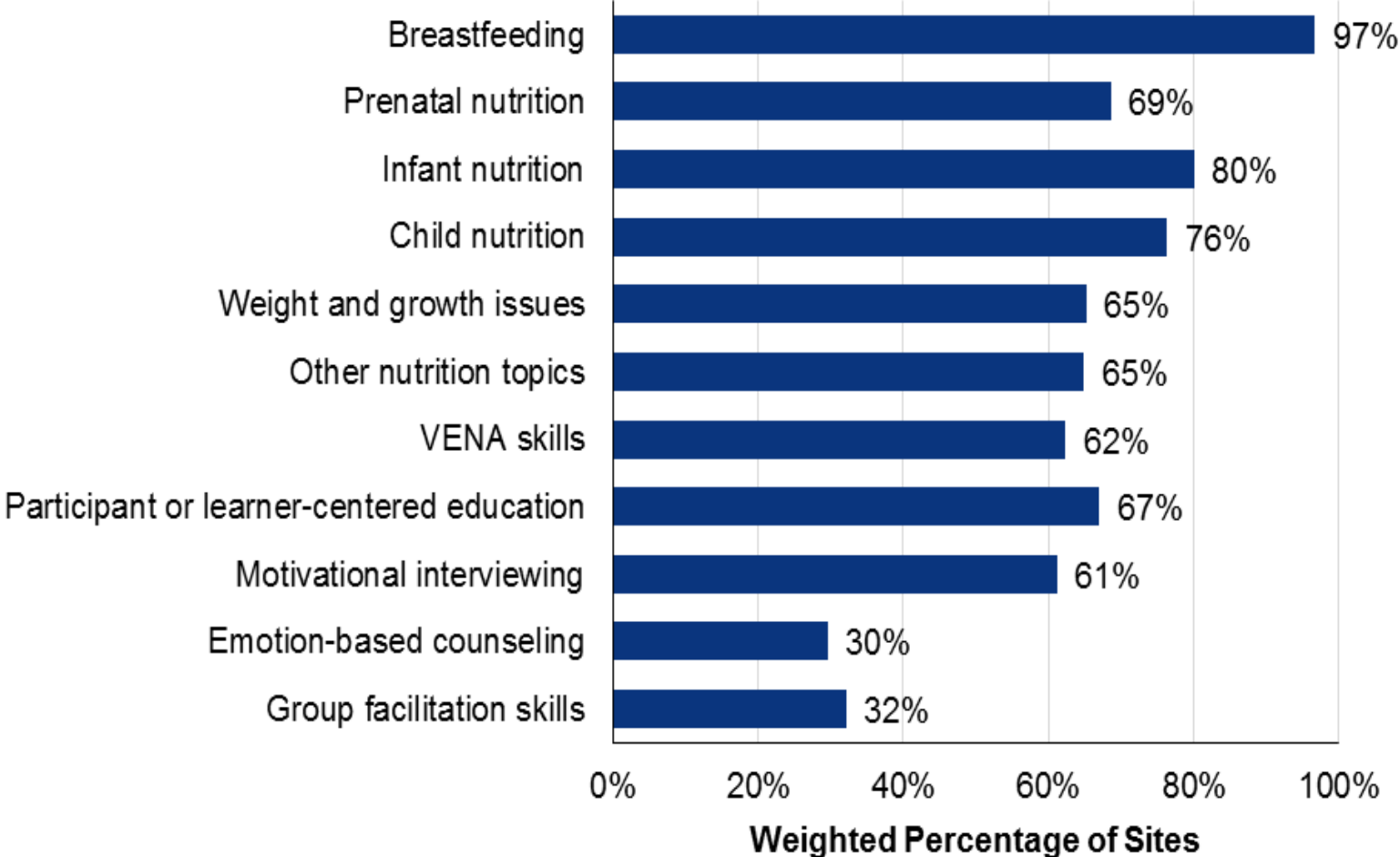


Nutrition Education Staff Training

- Training for staff who provide nutrition education includes a wide array of topics related to participant-centered skills and approaches, as well as nutrition topics (e.g., breastfeeding).



Nutrition Education Staff Training: Topics Provided during the Past 12 Months



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Version 2. Number of respondents = 700 and number of nonrespondents = 5.
Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the Version 2 Site Survey weights.
Respondents were instructed to include all types of training (e.g., workshops, conferences, presentations at staff meetings).

Training for WIC Nutrition Educators: Interview Findings

Support for Change

- Ongoing support helps nutrition educators integrate new approaches and prevent slipping back into old, comfortable habits.

“Each of our offices has a WIC Connector who is responsible for quarterly activities to help us improve our skills. It is definitely an ongoing process. It doesn’t come super easy if you have been ingrained in a different way of doing things. Definitely we are all learning and practicing.”

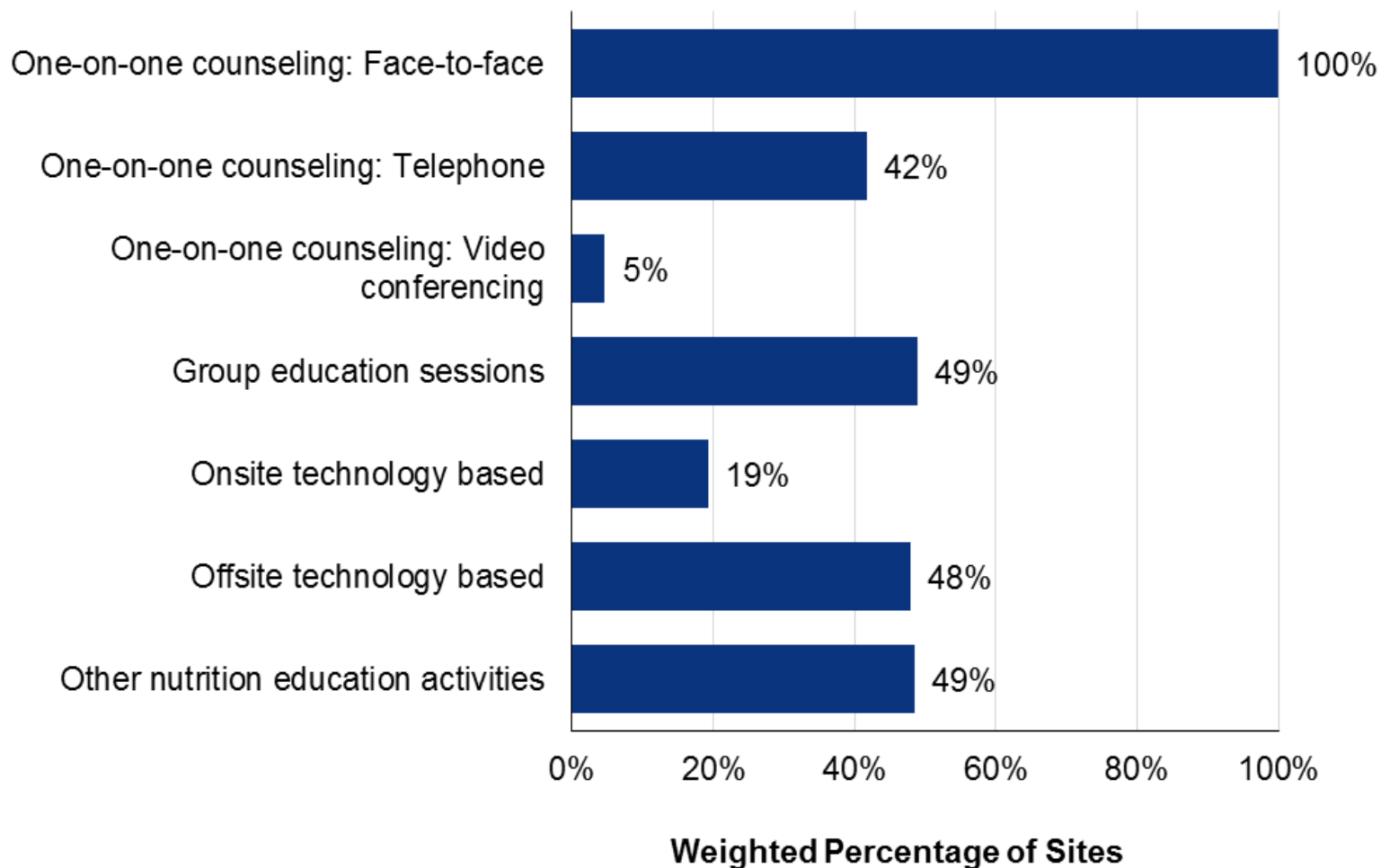
“When you get constructive criticism is when you can say wow, you know what? She is right. I need to do this a little differently. It is fine to learn about VENA and the client-centered approach when you think you are doing it the right way. But it is nice to have someone come in and watch you and say maybe this could be done a different way to make your interviewing a little bit more effective.”

Nutrition Education Modes

- One-on-one nutrition counseling continues to be the primary delivery method for WIC nutrition education followed by group education and technology-based modes.



Modes of Nutrition Education in WIC Sites



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Versions 1 and 2. Number of respondents = 1,401 and number of nonrespondents = 0.

Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the combined Site Survey weights.

Other nutrition education activities were defined in the survey as “includes monthly topics, worksheets, videos, and self-study modules.” Respondents could select multiple responses.

Nutrition Education Methods

- WIC nutrition education has become more individualized and tailored to the needs of each participant, with a higher level of participant involvement throughout the process.



“I came from the old school of here I am, Miss Nutritionist here, and I’m going to help you by telling you what you need to change...we know that doesn’t work. It really doesn’t. We have to sit back in our chairs and listen more and talk less.”

One-on-One Counseling Sessions: Interview Findings

Counseling Approach

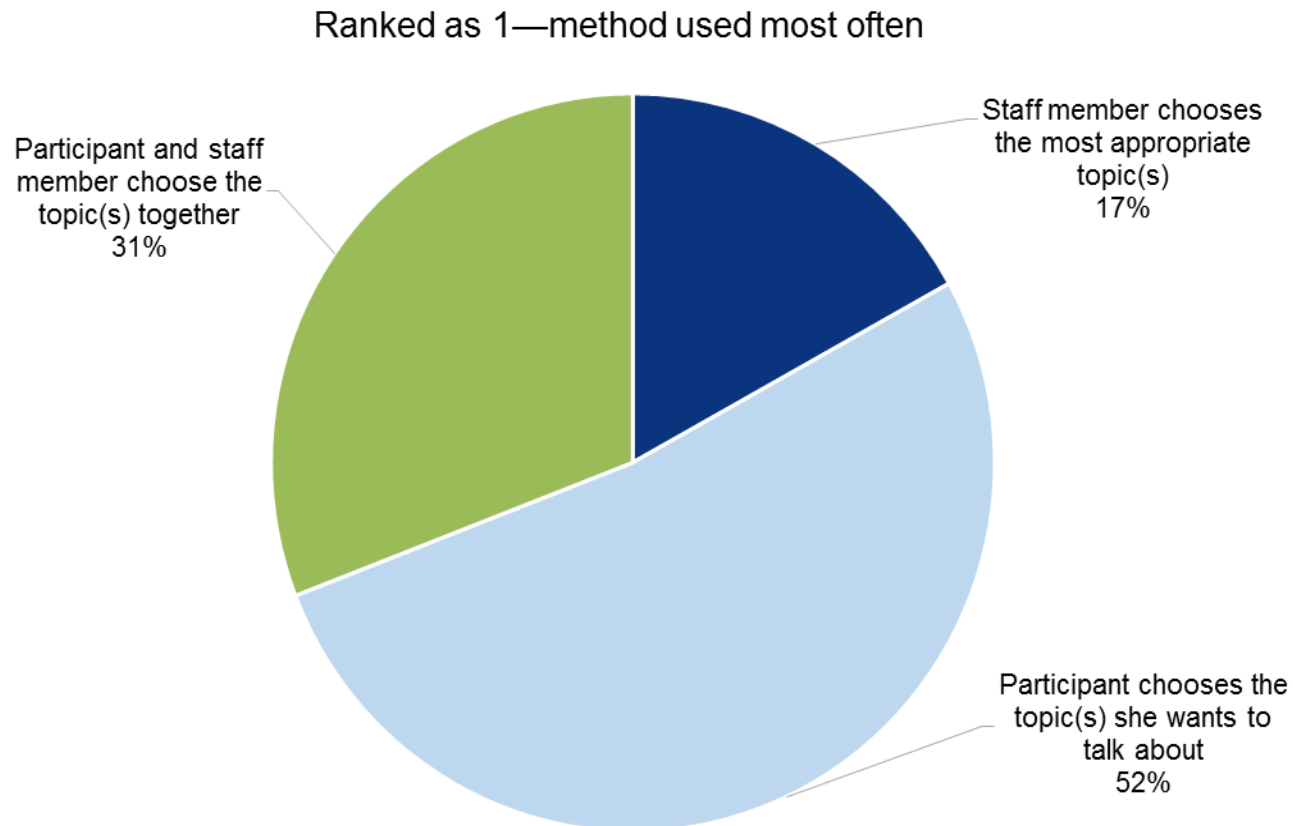
- Counseling is tailored to the needs and interests of each individual participant.

“We treat everybody as an individual. We don’t go into it with this is how it’s done every time for a certain type of appointment. We meet the participant where they’re at.”

“So if you listen to what their concerns are, it might not necessarily be what you think that they need to know about. They might have a different concern and you need to concentrate on that with them.”



One-on-One Counseling Sessions: Methods Used to Determine Discussion Topics



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Version 2. Number of respondents = 584 and number of nonrespondents = 121.
Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the Version 2 Site Survey weights.

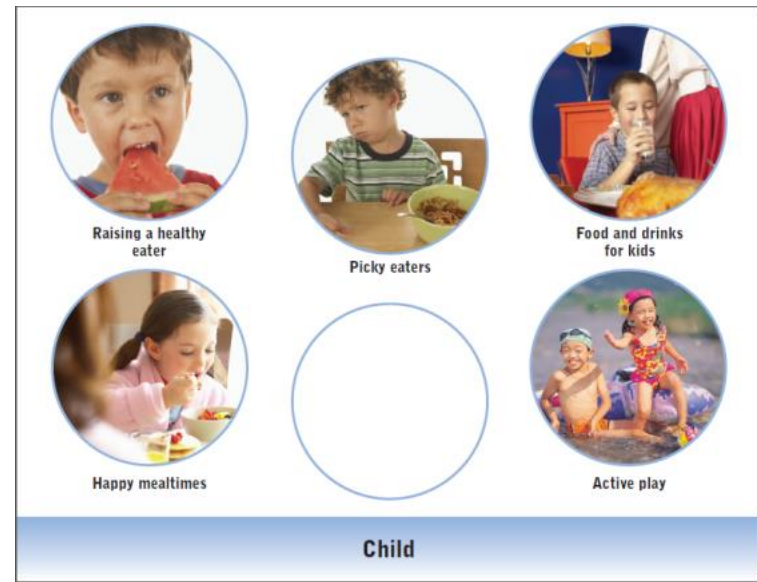
One-on-One Counseling Sessions: Interview Findings

Selecting the Topics

- Topics are determined through combination of participant interests and nutrition risks identified through the nutrition assessment process.

“The key techniques are finding a balance between talking about what we as nutritionist see as risks and what the participant wants to talk about and address for their family.”

“We first ask them if they have any concerns and start there. If they don’t have any concerns, we go over the risk factors and see if they want to make any changes or do they have any questions. We go with what the client wants to discuss first.”



One-on-One Counseling Sessions: Interview Findings

What Works?

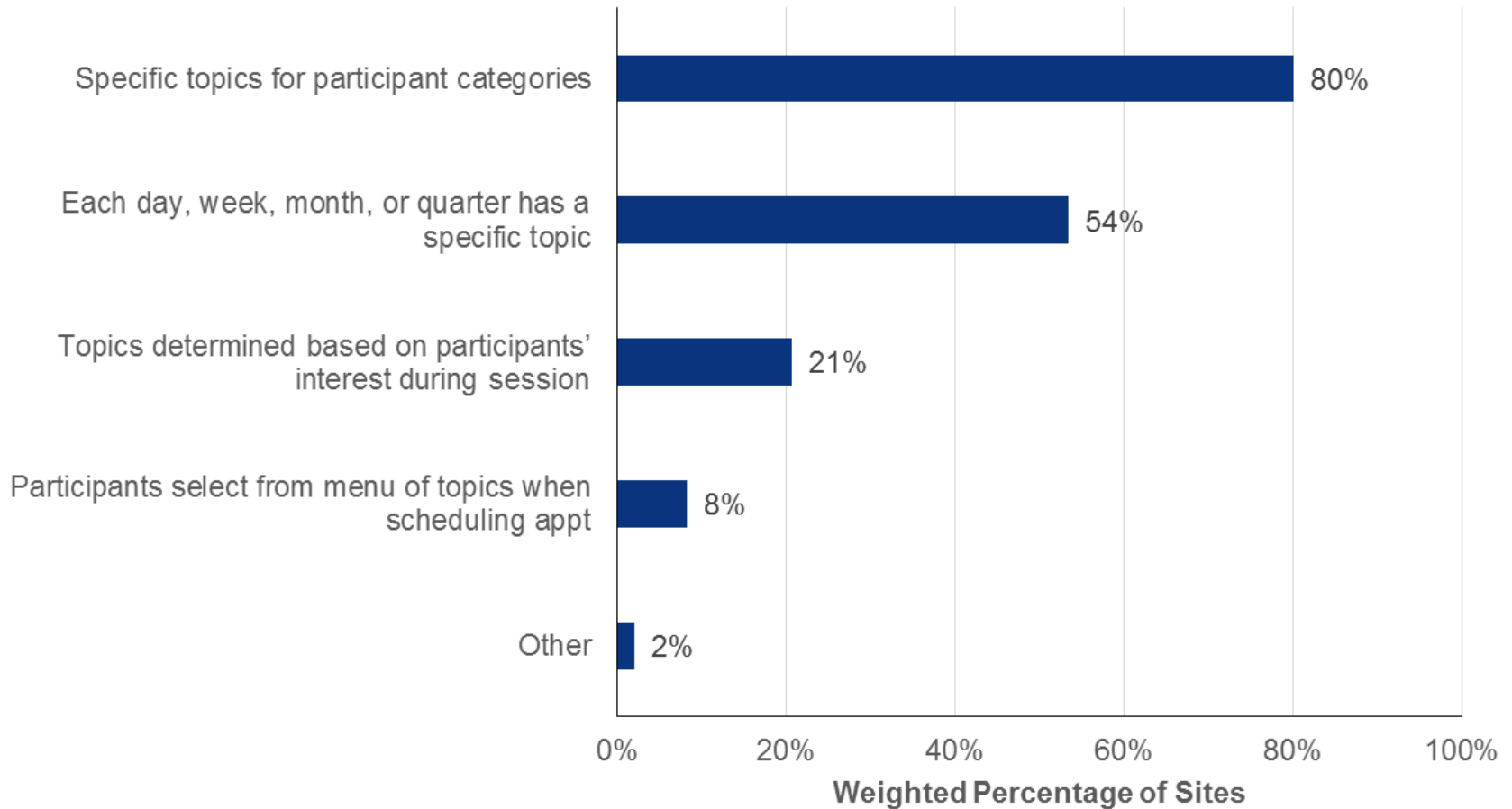
- Key strategies suggested for effective nutrition counseling: listening, building rapport, limiting the number of discussion topics, and affirming positive behaviors.

“Definitely active listening because if you are not listening, then you can’t affirm what they are saying or help them set goals if you haven’t been able to really listen. It makes them feel heard and if they are heard, then it is more likely that they would want to be engaged in setting their own goals...”

“They don’t necessarily tell us, ‘I would like to discuss this, that or the other’ but in their conversation, they kind of reveal themselves to us. We pick up on things that they are saying and we will turn it into a discussion about nutrition or physical activity.”

“Rapport is the biggest. Having a comfortable atmosphere where people can talk about things and feel like they are being heard and being respected for who they are and what information they have to offer as well.”

Group Education Sessions: Methods Used to Determine Discussion Topics



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Version 2. Only sites that provide group nutrition education sessions were eligible to answer this question (n = 384). Number of respondents = 370 and number of nonrespondents = 14.

Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the Version 2 Site Survey weights. Respondents could select more than one response.

Group Education Sessions: Interview Findings

Effective Group Techniques

- Many nutrition educators suggested choosing an appropriate topic, engaging the participants in the discussion, and using visual aids.

“Of course choosing topics that interest them. A lot of people are interested in things that have to do with feeding their children. They usually are willing to participate more in those types of discussions. So finding good topics and getting them involved are key.”

“The main change I’ve made is doing my best to try to get the participants involved and not have me do all the talking. I try to ask questions to grab them and make them want to participate. I think participants learn more when they’re participating and not just listening, probably just being more thoughtful about keeping them involved in the discussion.”

Group Education Sessions: Frequency of Activities or Resources

Activities/ Resources	Never	Rarely (<10%)	Occasionally (11–39%)	Sometimes (40–59%)	Often (60–89%)	Almost Always (≥90%)
Icebreakers/warm-up activities	9.6	12.2	10.9	12.2	19.9	35.2
Discussions between pairs of WIC participants	15.9	23.4	17.6	18.9	14.4	9.8
Educational props	5.7	7.4	11.2	20.2	28.0	27.5
Informational charts or displays	5.8	7.9	16.3	26.5	24.3	19.2
Food sampling/ demonstrations	33.4	25.5	16.5	14.5	4.8	5.2
Hands-on activity or game	21.0	26.0	19.4	14.4	11.8	7.4
Physical activity	37.5	36.6	16.4	6.8	2.7	—(n/a) ^a
PowerPoint presentation	53.5	15.1	7.4	9.0	5.3	9.7
Video/DVD	18.6	16.1	20.3	21.5	17.7	5.7

Source: 2014 Site Survey, Version 2. Only sites that provide group nutrition education sessions were eligible to answer this question (n = 384). The overall number of respondents to this question = 376 and the number of nonrespondents = 6.

Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the Version 2 Site Survey weights.

^a An estimate is not provided because no respondents selected this response.

Group Education Sessions: Interview Findings

Qualities of Facilitators

- Nutrition educators said that effectively facilitating an interactive group education session takes a unique set of skills.

“The person teaching the class has to be very enthusiastic; they have to enjoy doing group sessions. You have to work to get people involved ... it can go hay wire if you don’t have a good control on it.”

“The person who conducts nutrition education session should be well versed in VENA techniques, be persuasive and personable. You can’t have someone who is afraid of people or very shy. A person who does nutrition education session for group needs to be friendly, non-judgmental, open, and chatty. Listening skills are very important.”

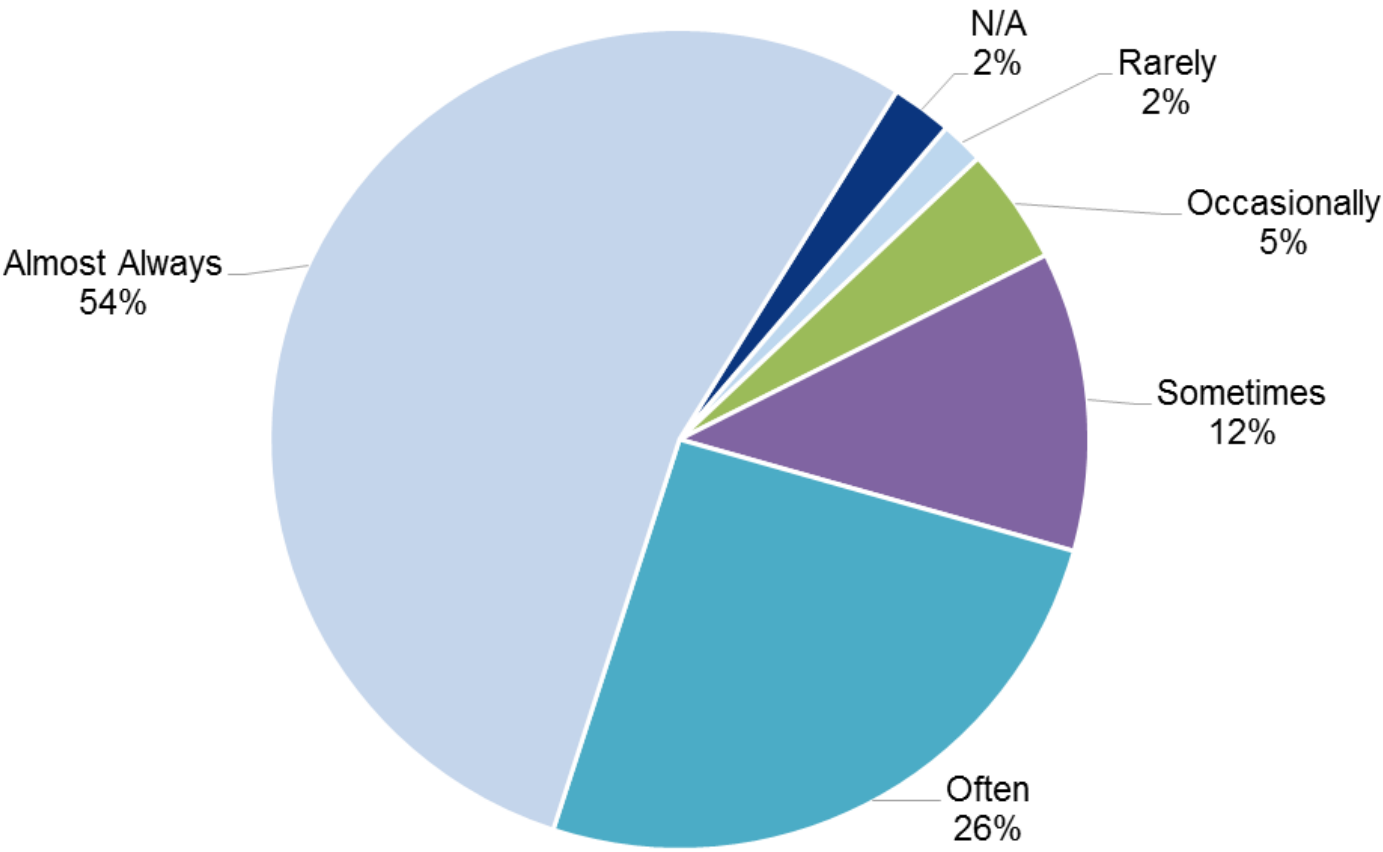


Nutrition Education Methods

- Goal setting is widely used and there is a shift toward guided goal setting with more participant engagement in the process.



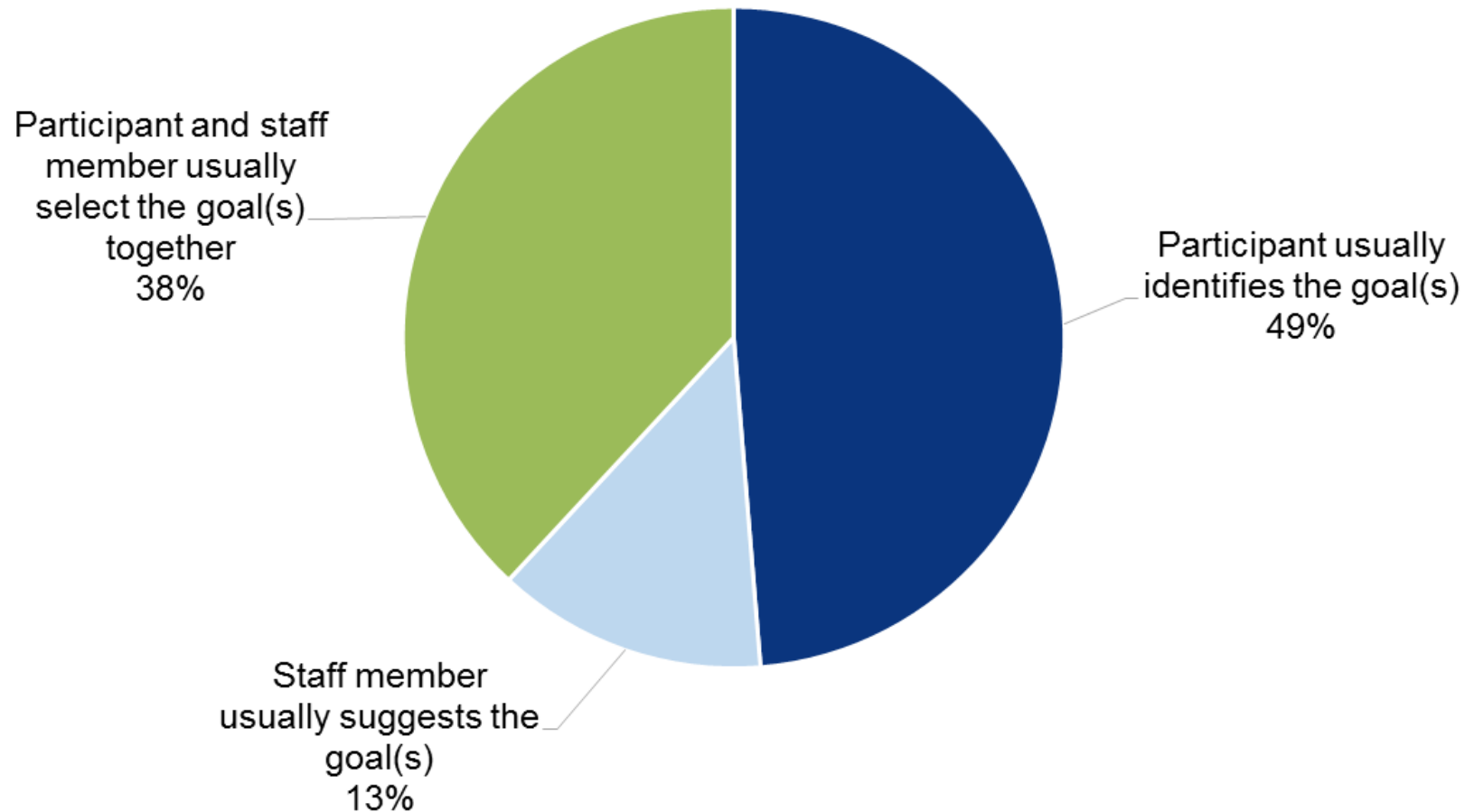
Goal-Setting Strategies: Frequency that Participant Goals Are Set



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Version 2. Number of respondents = 705 and number of nonrespondents = 0.
Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the Version 2 Site Survey weights.
N/A: Not applicable; goal setting is not part of one-on-one counseling sessions.

Goal-Setting Strategies: Methods Used to Select Goals

Ranked as 1—method used most often



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Version 2. Number of respondents = 592 and number of nonrespondents = 113.
Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the Version 2 Site Survey weights.

Goal Setting Strategies: Interview Findings

Who Chooses?

- Nearly all nutrition educators said that they work with participants to select goals; most said goal-setting is more effective if the participants pick the goals they want to work on.

“I like to think of it as teamwork. What is important to them and what motivates them to make a change, so just kind of guiding them through that process and making sure they know it is not for me, it’s for them. We want it to be something that they can envision themselves doing.”

“Along the way I’ve developed a better understanding of how to ask questions and how to work with clients to help them feel supported and appreciated and validated for where they are at and where they might want to go and not my own agenda.”



Goal Setting Strategies: Interview Findings

Effective Techniques

- Many nutrition educators suggested limiting the number of goals and making goals specific, achievable, and measurable.

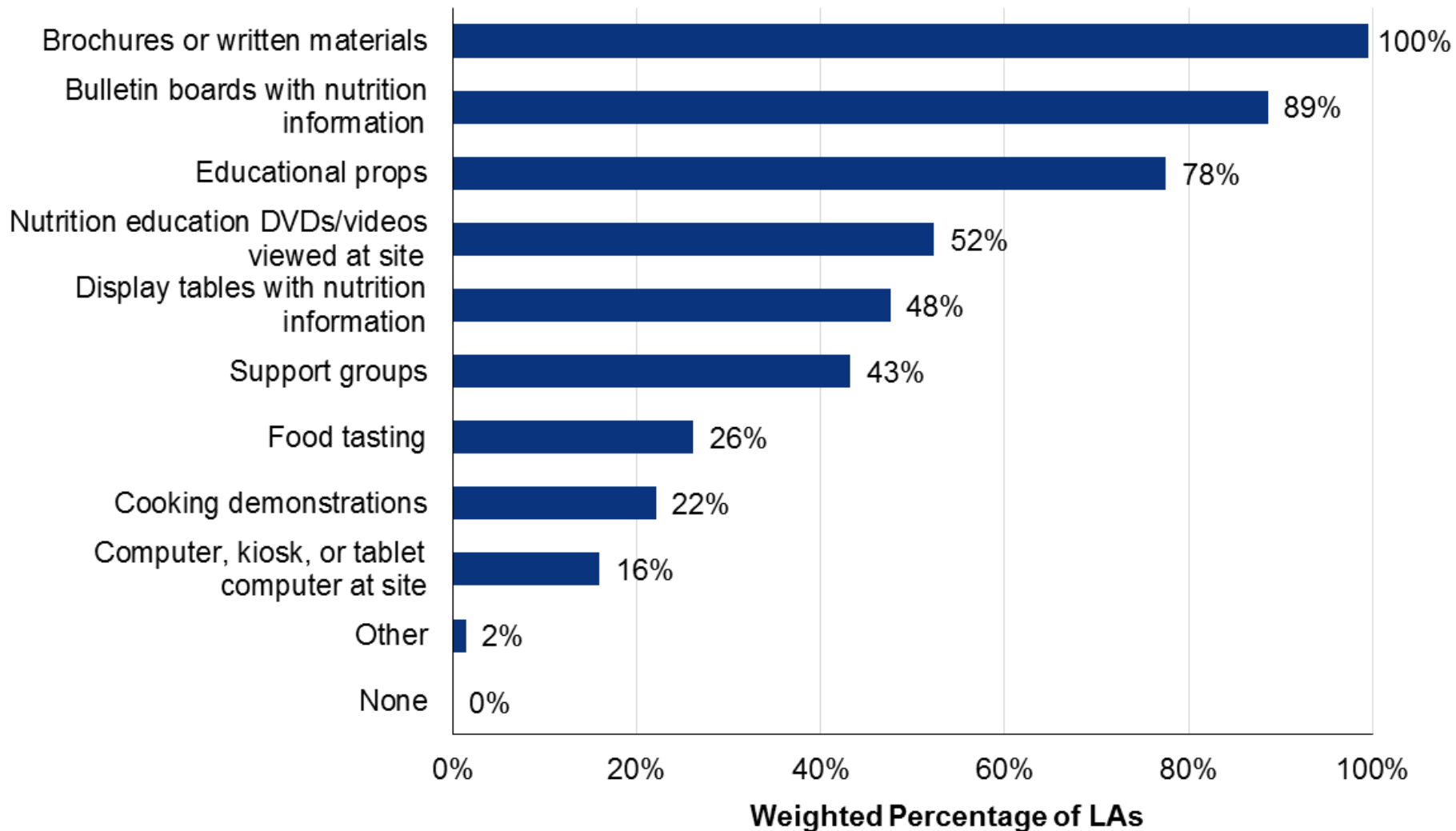
“Most of the goals that we try to set with them will be realistic, measurable, and something that they can complete by the next visit, something they can do over two months.”

“Limiting goals to one or two things and making them achievable so they feel good they’re making the changes and will want to make more changes in the future.”

- The majority of nutrition educators reported following up on goals.

“So half way through their certification is when we hope to do their midpoint wellness checkup and at that time is when we look over the goal that was set during certification and see where they are at with their goal.”

Nutrition Education Reinforcers Used Onsite



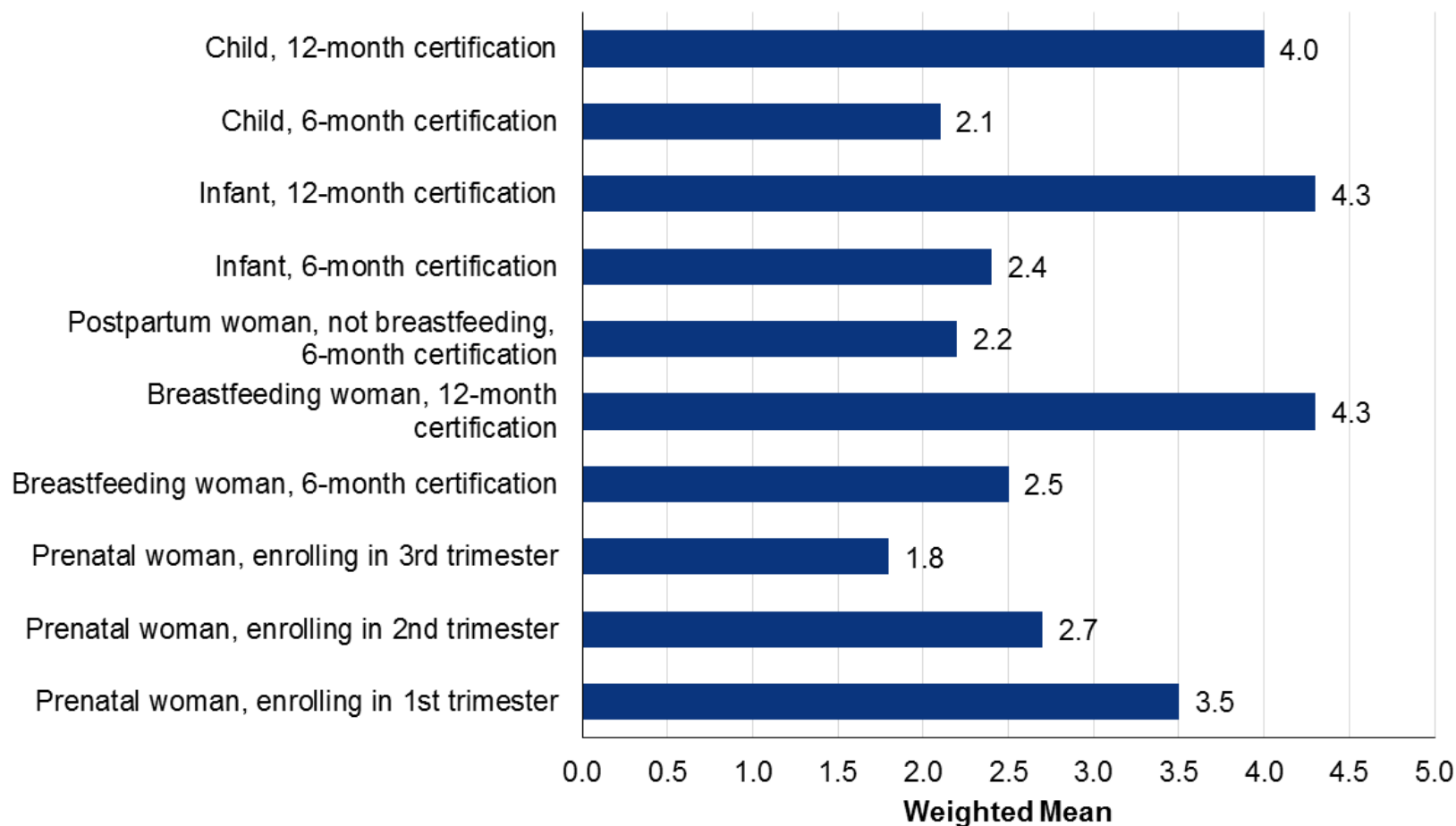
Source: 2014 Local Agency Survey, Number of respondents = 878 and number of nonrespondents = 15.
Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of LAs using the Local Agency Survey weights.
Respondents could select multiple responses.

Nutrition Education Dosage

- The frequency and amount of time spent with participants on nutrition education is tailored based on their category, nutritional needs, interest, and level of motivation for adopting healthy behaviors.



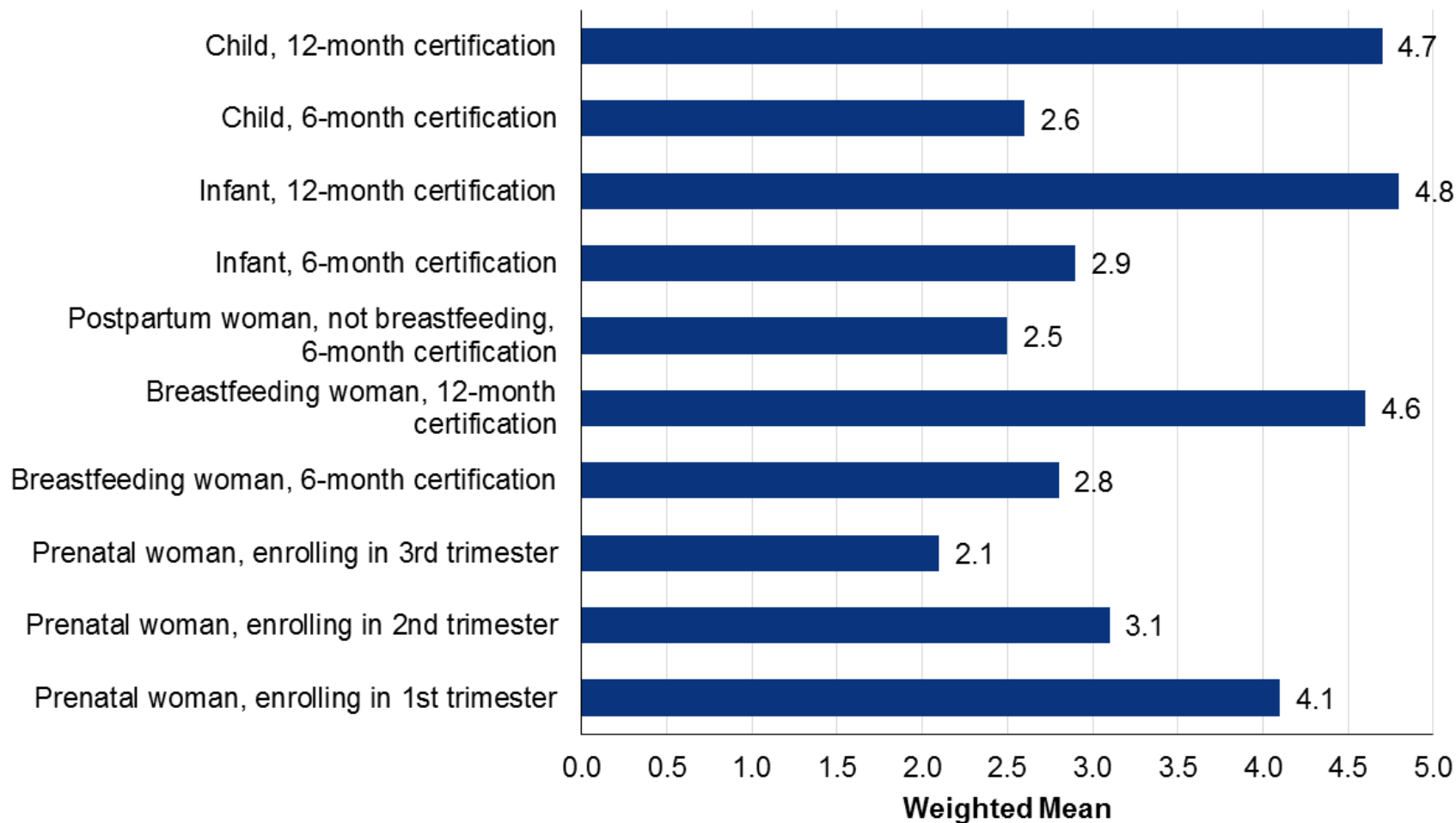
Number of Nutrition Education Contacts Offered by Sites— Not High-Risk Participants



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Versions 1 and 2. Number of respondents varied based on participant category. Overall number of nonrespondents = 38.

Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the combined Site Survey weights.

Number of Nutrition Education Contacts Offered by Sites— High-Risk Participants



Source: 2014 Site Survey, Versions 1 and 2. Number of respondents varied based on participant category. Overall number of nonrespondents = 38.

Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the combined Site Survey weights.

Amount of Time Spent on Nutrition Education

	Mean Minutes
Enrollment certification (n = 1,378)	19.2
Recertification, not high risk, 1 person (n = 1,374)	13.9
Recertification, high risk, 1 person (n = 1,368)	19.3
Recertification, 2 or more family members (n = 1,375)	25.7
Mid-certification (n = 1,304)	14.0
Secondary education follow-up, individual (n = 1,336)	11.7
Secondary education follow-up, group (n = 961)	20.6
High-risk follow-up (n = 1,298)	18.5

Source: 2014 Site Survey, Versions 1 and 2. The number of respondents varied by type of visit and is shown in table. Number of nonrespondents = 0 for each visit type.

Notes: Estimates were weighted to represent the population of sites using the combined Site Survey weights. Respondents were instructed to not include time spent on determining eligibility or conducting assessments.

Frequency and Duration of Nutrition Education: Interview Findings

Nutrition Educators Shared ...

- Frequency is based on the policy for issuance of food benefits, generally 3 months, with exceptions for high-risk or special concerns.
- Certification visits generally take longer, include a nutrition assessment, and cover a wider range of topics, while secondary education and mid-certification visits are shorter and generally focus on priority issues identified during the certification visit.

“The norm is if they are not at huge risk, it is every three months we see them. If there is more need, we can see them monthly, that is no issue. We’ve done weight checks every couple of weeks if that is needed. It is on an as needed basis. We try to individualize because everybody is different and everybody has a different need.”

“During the certification we tend to spend more time with the client, whereas a mid cert is really a mini visit. We still talk about what they want to talk about. We see how they are doing, if they have any questions, or if they want any information, we do that.”

Frequency and Duration of Nutrition Education: Interview Findings

Nutrition Educators also Reported ...

- The length of WIC visits is affected by the engagement level of the participants.

“It has to be individualized. One of the biggest variables is the participant’s motivation for being there. I’m going to talk more to a participant who is interested in hearing nutrition education versus someone who is not interested.”

“Obviously if they are enthusiastic and they want all this information then we are go into more depth and give them what they want. If they express no interest whatsoever then we will make the visit shorter.”

To learn more.....



The WIC Nutrition Education Study: Phase I Report

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/wic-studies>

THANK YOU!

