

Facilitator Guide

Talking with Families about Nutrition

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Note to facilitator:

The online training module "Talking with Families about Nutrition" provides an excellent opportunity for home visitors who appreciate the flexibility of distance learning.

The pairing of the online training with a facilitated discussion (a proven more traditional method of education, whose efficacy is widely recognized) is innovative and provides for added value. The discussion allows for the sharing of personal experiences that help to illuminate the information in the module. It also provides opportunities to use the basic skills that are so essential for communication – “serve and return”, listening, facial expressions, vocal intonation, eye contact - things that are absent from today’s communication using technology. (In these days of emails, text messages, "selfies", and social media, it’s nice to meet face-to-face once in a while!) Also, laughter, stories, music, and role-plays as part of the discussion, injects an emotional component to the learning opportunity. These types of elements are incorporated into this Facilitator Guide.

Home visitors spend time with families that have an array of gifts, skills, cultures and many times challenges. The opportunity to share experiences, strategies, solutions, and successes with other family workers is much more powerful than completing the online education alone.

This Guide provides some ideas for a trainer or supervisor wishing to facilitate a follow-up discussion with a group of home visitors who have completed the module. It assumes that the facilitator has also completed the module and is familiar with its contents and resources. You don't necessarily have to be a content expert to lead the activities and discussions. Feel free to adjust and add your own creative ideas.

We hope you enjoy the process!



Introduction/Icebreaker

Begin the session by organizing participants into small groups. Ask each of them to share within those groups their responses to this question:

- *What were your family mealtimes like when you were a child?*

Ask them to consider what factors might account for the similarities and differences in their experiences.

As a follow-up, provide this prompt for large group discussion:

- *How have feeding practices changed since you were a child?*

Review Learning Objectives

After having completed this module, home visitors should be able to:

- Define important healthy eating habits from pregnancy through the first few years of life
- Understand the impact of the environment on health
- Effectively support breastfeeding mothers and know when to recommend additional help
- Identify infant hunger and satiety cues and assist families to avoid over-feeding babies
- Explain the importance of responsive feeding practices for infant and toddler healthy growth and development
- Describe best practices of when, what and how to introduce solid foods
- Identify ways to eat healthy on a budget
- Understand how cultural practices, economic considerations, and other factors influence eating behaviors
- Feel comfortable engaging families in respectful conversations about healthy eating

Review Vocabulary

“Roll the Die” Vocab Review Game

In order to review some of the key concepts, break into small groups. Give each group a number cube and put a list on the board of what each number represents. Some options are:

- 1 = tell what it means
- 2 = use it in a sentence
- 3 = give a synonym
- 4 = give an antonym
- 5 = draw it
- 6 = act it out

Display a list of terms from the module glossary. The first person in the group rolls the die, takes the top word on the list, and acts accordingly. When the group decides the challenge has been met, it moves to the next person. They each roll the die in turn and take the next word on the list...

If any group gets stumped on a term, provide the definition and do a quick review with the whole group.

Whole Group Discussion

Prompt home visitors to share what’s working:

- *What are some things you are doing to encourage healthy eating?*
- *In what ways are families doing well in this area?*

Invite home visitors to share their favorite recipes, stories about bringing food into homes, and/or other food related activities they incorporate into their home visits.

Walkabout

Write each of the following items (next page) on a chart paper and provide markers. Post each chart on walls throughout the room. Divide the group into 4 and have each group begin at a different paper. Allow 5 – 10 minutes for each discussion then rotate. Have each group add their responses/ideas to the paper as they go. Do one final rotation so the groups end up at their initial question. Allow a few minutes for each group to read the list of responses. Then ask each group to choose one idea to report out on.

❖ Breastfeeding

For new moms without ongoing daily support, breastfeeding can be a very frustrating – even painful experience. Without a “village” to support her, it likely will falter. A home visitor telling “breast is best” and giving a handout about it is not sufficient to provide what a mom needs to succeed.

Explore some of the reasons why even those mothers who plan to breastfeed don't stick with it for very long. (Trauma history; medications; return to work...) How might you go about helping a mom identify natural supports? What are some of the community supports in your area?

❖ Infant satiety and hunger cues

Human beings have certain signs and sensations that come from within our bodies that tell us when we are hungry and when we are full.

What are some ways that infants communicate these signals? How do you support families to learn to read their infants' cues? Is this a new idea for them? If so, how do you approach the conversation?

❖ Introducing foods

Some reasons mothers might give for introducing solid foods before 4 months of age:

1. My baby has a medical condition that might be helped by eating solid food
2. My baby is old enough to begin eating solid food
3. My baby seems hungry a lot of the time
4. My baby wants the food I eat
5. A doctor said my baby should begin eating solid food
6. It will help my baby sleep longer at night

Choose one of these reasons, and discuss how you might respond in that instance.

❖ The food environment

We are often surrounded by unhealthy food options. Researchers have called this living in a “toxic” food environment. That is one of the reasons why our children are not eating as healthy as they should be.

How does the food environment influence the food choices families are making? What strategies do you use to help them develop healthy habits despite this challenge?

Whole Group Discussion

Responsive Feeding

Responsive feeding refers to a reciprocal relationship between an infant or child and his or her caregiver that is characterized by the child communicating feelings of hunger and satiety through verbal or nonverbal cues, followed by an immediate response from the caregiver.

Have home visitors consider how this idea fits with their overall goals of supporting responsive parenting and healthy attachment.

Think-Pair-Share

As research yields new information about healthful feeding practices, recommendations change. This might impact a family's willingness to trust the wisdom of authorities on these issues. (For example, we are presently advised to give babies potentially allergenic foods early. Until recently, parents were told to wait.)

Prompt each participant to think about the following and then share with a partner:

- *Given that these shifts in what's considered best practice occurs, how might you address a family's perception that the "experts can't get it right"?*
- *Furthermore, How do you respond when the advice parents receive from family and friends is different from the information you bring?*

Invite a few teams to share their insights with the group.

Small Groups

Provide the worksheet included in this guide (page 9) and have groups brainstorm a list of factors that might affect a child's eating behaviors related to each the following: Health, Developmental, Mental Health, Sensory, Cultural, and Physiological.

Then for each area have them consider how the information shared with families would be affected by the reason(s) why a child may be difficult to feed. Have each group share one of their ideas.

View Video

In the module it is recommended to focus on teaching children to learn to recognize their own satiety cues instead of telling to “clean your plate.”

Show video “Finish Your Plate” from Part 5 of the module.

What are home visitors own feelings about this? Ask them to:

Reflect back on your own early experiences. How might your own histories, and those of the parents you work with, affect current views?

Whole Group

Stress Related Eating

Researchers have linked weight gain to stress, and many parents, (and home visitors!) report having high levels of stress.

Some strategies were included in the module for relieving stress without overeating. Invite home visitors to share some of the ways they have been successful in helping families find alternatives to eating when stressed.

Personal Reflection

Provide an additional minute for home visitors to ponder whether they are reducing stress in healthy ways themselves.

Role Play

Challenging Conversations

Write each of the following reasons families might give for not eating healthier on an index card.

"I don't know anything about nutrition."

"I don't know how to cook."

"I can't afford to eat healthy."

"I don't have time to cook."

"I wasn't brought up eating this way."

"I don't agree with that idea."

(continued on next page)



Lay the 6 cards out on a table. Group participants into small groups. Invite each to send one member to choose a card and bring it back to their group.

Invite 2 members from each group to role play a conversation between a home visitor and parent. The other group members can observe and take notes and/or take on additional roles, such as a 2nd parent, grandparent, or provide the perspective of the child. Encourage the groups to come up with some talking points that might be the most supportive and encouraging.

After providing ample time for this activity, debrief with each group and invite them to share their insights.

Individual Reflection

Self-Care

Ask participants to take a few quiet moments reflecting on how well they are meeting their own nutritional needs, then invite a sharing of their strategies for healthy eating on the go.

Action Plan

Have participants develop an Action Plan. Ask them:

- *What 3 things from this session will you try?*
- *Also, set one goal for your own self-care.*

Closing

Show the “Introduction to Nutrition” video from the beginning of the module.

Acknowledge that this topic is only one of many important things that home visitors focus on with families. Commend them for supporting families to make healthy choices despite the myriad of challenges they face. Remind them that healthy habits begin early and that they are in a unique position to prevent childhood obesity and encourage positive change.

Activity Worksheet - Feeding Issues

Issues:	Effects on Eating Habits:	Considerations for Sharing Info with Families:
Health		
Developmental		
Mental Health		
Sensory		
Cultural		
Physiological		

Additional topics for discussion

Family Mealtimes

Research has shown the benefits of sharing meals together, including better academic performance, higher self-esteem, and lower risk of depression and obesity. Provide an opportunity for home visitors to describe their strategies for encouraging this practice.

Fathers

Engage in a discussion regarding fathers' involvement when mothers breastfeed.

- What do some dads think about breastfeeding?
- What can dads do to support breastfeeding?
- What do moms say about dads' support?

Explore Culture

Have home visitors share their observations of the impact of families' cultures on eating habits.

- Did some of the families eat healthier in their countries of origin? If families miss the ability to plant vegetables, what strategies could be used to support that practice?
- Are there differing expectations when feeding children depending on parent's own histories?
- Explore the practice of adding cereal in the bottle. Is there a cultural influence here? How do home visitors counteract the myth that it will help baby sleep better?

This document was created for the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood by the Center for Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University with contributions from Doug Edwards. The document is meant to support facilitated discussion groups for home visitors who have completed the online learning module.

