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news

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Customer Service:
It's for Everyone!

Defining "Exceptional Customer Service"

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not a single act, but a habit." -Aristotle

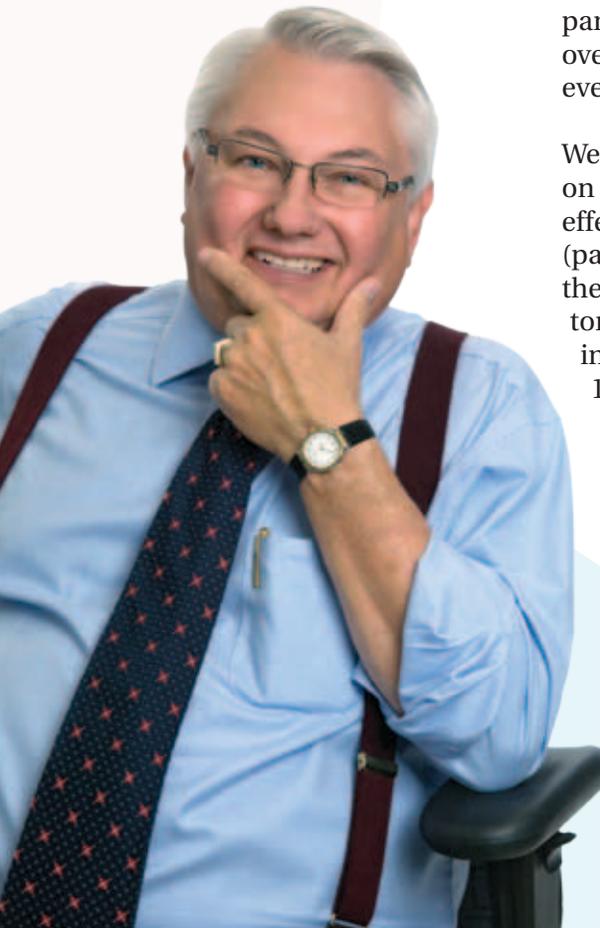
At Texas WIC, our mission is to deliver the highest quality services in the nation with integrity and respect. In 2011, we assisted, on average, more than 200,000 women, 200,000 infants, and 500,000 children a month. Each interaction we have with participants and their families is a chance to offer a meaningful and pleasant experience.

In this issue, we focus on the styles, examples, and tools that define the phrase "exceptional customer service." Customer service is not just for participants; it is a skill that develops over time. We can practice it with everyone, every day.

We begin the issue with information on customer service trends and the effects they have beyond the clinic (page 4). In the articles, "Targeting the Whole WIC Family for Great Customer Service" (page 6) and "Following the Spirit of the Policy" (page 11) you can read about local agencies who are leading by example.

In the fast-paced world we live in, the technology, attitudes, and needs of our participants are always changing. In order to deliver the best possible service, we have to adapt. On page 12, read about what the future holds for WIC service in "Providing Better Service Through Technology." On page 14, learn about how good customer service translates to more effective counseling in "Tools for Influencing Clients Toward Healthy Habits." On page 8 read about the *Texas Power of Influence* training which focuses on using emotional connection as a conduit to effective customer service. Lastly, learn more about the exciting speakers coming to the Texas WIC Nutrition and Breastfeeding Conference in Austin, June 18-21 (page 10).

I am constantly amazed by the knowledge, communication, and compassion demonstrated by our staff not only to participants, but to one another. Without the happy and healthy work environment fostered by each of you, we would not be able to provide such outstanding service to Texas women, infants and children.



From the Texas WIC Director
— Mike Montgomery



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Mike Montgomery
Texas WIC Director

Linda Brumble
Manager
Nutrition Education / Clinic Services Unit

Patti Fitch
Manager
Clinic Services Branch

Shirley Ellis
Manager
Nutrition Education Branch

Hildreth England
Publication Coordinator

Clare Wolf
Managing Editor/Designer

Betty Castle, Joseph de Leon, Renee Mims
Contributing Editors

Chris Coxwell
Photographer

Betty Castle, Irma Choate,
Lorise Grimbball,
Karina Prado
Kanokwalee Pusitanun
Contributing Designers

Health and Human Services
Printing Services
Printing

Leticia Silva
Subscriptions



Department of State Health Services
Nutrition Services Section
P.O. Box 149347, Austin, TX 78714-9347
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/default.shtm>

Comments may be sent to the managing editor at Publishing, Promotion, and Media Services, P.O. Box 149347, Austin, TX 78714-9347, or by e-mail to WICNewsEditor@dshs.state.tx.us.

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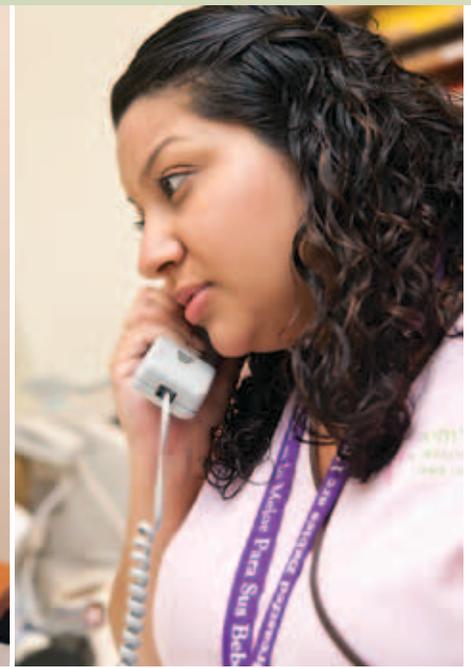
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Customer Service Trends

by Liz Bruns, R.D., L.D.
Nutrition Training Specialist

We're living in a world where good customer service should be the norm, not the exception. That's just the way it is. In your own business dealings, you expect good customer service, and you should receive it. WIC participants expect good customer service, and they should receive it too.

Providing good customer service involves evaluating what you are currently doing and determining how you can do it better. You can always do it better. Read through the following article and decide if there are some things that you and your agency can do to improve customer service at your clinic.

Participant Input

Everyone wants to believe their ideas and feelings are of value. This includes participants in our WIC clinics. How often do you ask participants what they think about the certification process, nutrition classes, their ability to find the clinic, the waiting room and their wait time? Ask and listen. Take notes to help you remember their suggestions and then share their suggestions at staff meetings. Not all, but some suggestions will improve participants' experiences at your clinic.

When receiving negative criticism from a participant, remember to not take it personally. Validate the participant's criticism



by saying something like “I can see how that could be frustrating” or “I’m sorry that your experience wasn’t good,” and thank them for their input. Constructive criticism isn’t always going to feel good, but use it to your advantage. Use it to work on continuous improvement.

Handing out participant surveys is a required function, but a lot of information can be gleaned from these surveys. All too often, these surveys are collected and then shelved. Your clinic should appoint someone to be in charge of collecting and reading the surveys and making suggestions when appropriate. Use suggestions in these surveys when possible to improve your way of doing business, and thereby improve your customer service.

Universal Expectations

Think about your own dealings with businesses and organizations and what you expect and what you find frustrating. When it’s possible, do those things for your clients that you expect others to do for you, like:

1. Answer the phone. I’m sure you’ve experienced the voicemail/answering machine reception to your phone calls. Annoying isn’t it? Or the “Fill-in-the-blank business. Can you hold please.” And that’s not a question. Grrrr.... It’s understandable that someone is not always going to be available to answer each and every phone call. But when someone is available, answer the phone, pu-lease!
2. Do what you say you are going to do. This builds trust and respect. If you tell a participant that you are going to call them back this afternoon, call them back this afternoon, even if you have to tell them that you don’t have an answer for them yet. They will know that you are working on their issue and that you haven’t forgotten about them. They will remember your name and appreciate the call.
3. Engage the whole family. We all come from somewhere, and unless you are living in a vacuum or the witness protection program, you have friends and family. It’s the same for our participants. They often arrive at the WIC clinic with their children,

their husband, their mother, their friend, their neighbor. Don’t ignore these people. Children must be accompanied through the clinic with their parents, but it’s different for husbands, mothers, and friends. Be sure to ask the participant if they are OK with these folks tagging along through the process. If not, and that may happen, you could ask if there’s anything you can bring these folks — a book, a magazine, perhaps change the TV to another channel. They are people with feelings and they should be acknowledged.

Trickle-Down Customer Service

Customer service is not just for customers anymore. It’s for everyone. Remember, we’re living in a customer service world. Good customer service should be given to your co-workers, your supervisor, your employees, the janitor, the mailperson, the doctor’s office, the WIC vendor, state office staff, and anyone else you come in contact with through your day. A smile, a cheery “Good morning,” a compliment — all go a long way. Helping your co-workers to get through a log-jam increases the likelihood that they will help you when you need it, and creates team customer service. It also helps time pass more enjoyably and your workday faster.

Good customer service is the right thing. It’s reacting to things positively and doing your best. In our customer service world, if you aren’t going the extra mile, you will be left behind. That’s just the way it is.

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Targeting the Whole WIC Family for

Great Customer Service



by Leona Duong, R.D., L.D.
Clinical Nutrition Specialist

Customer service training for WIC clinics has changed its focus in the past few years. Previous training focused on the person providing the service and reinforced what that person should do to provide excellent customer service. Smiling, chatting with customers about their day and saying thank you were emphasized. These are still important, but VENA has introduced new concepts in customer service that focus more on the clients and making a difference in their lives. It starts during a counseling session where you can get to know the family, understand the challenges they currently face, and put yourself in “their shoes.” Below are several examples of ways to provide “excellent” customer service.

Medina County Health Department

The first example comes from Linda Fillinger, RN, WIC director for Medina County Health Department (LA 64) and her LVN, Caryle St. John, who went “above and beyond” the services of WIC to assist a family.

“We had a family of a mom and two daughters who all had severe speech impediments. One of the daughters was pregnant. Unfortunately,

only I and one other nurse could understand what they were wanting/trying to communicate. The mother had a boyfriend who was wheel chair bound. He could speak clearly but was not always with the girls. The other staff could only assist them whenever he was present. The child was born and had to be hospitalized for poor weight gain. CPS was called to address their case. No one at the hospital could quite understand what or how the infant was being fed because of the speech impediments. To make a long story short, Caryle and I became their spokesperson for a lot of their services. This assisted the family in being able to stay together. When they moved to Fort Worth, they ended up calling us to help assist them with obtaining WIC services as it was difficult for others to understand what they were trying to communicate. The family has since gone back to Michigan but still call us at times to translate. Whenever they are back in Texas for visits, they come by or call to keep us updated on how their family is doing. We have become their lifelong friends.”

Customer service is caring about our participants as if they were members of our family.

It is about providing quality care and referrals to individuals whose only form of health care may be what they obtain from you. Below is a situation where Caryle St. John, LVN at LA 64, was proactive and possibly saved the life of one of her clients.

“We had a mom with severe postpartum depression and admitting that she was suicidal. Caryle called the doctor to make him aware of this situation. Caryle and the mom corresponded over a course of several days to make sure that the medication was helping. Caryle eventually referred the mom to the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.”

City of Dallas Housing and Community Services Department

Some local agencies looked into other nutrition education approaches to improve their internal as well as external customer service. The City of Dallas Housing and Community Services Department (LA 07) adopted the Power of Influence strategy as a means of promoting behavior change through an emotion-based methodology.

This has provided LA 07 “...the tools to not be afraid of this — counseling sessions turning a corner and heading toward an emotional cliff — but to embrace it because these are great opportunities to use emotion and to know again and again that we are in the life changing business,” states Alli Borrego, area nutrition education coordinator for LA 07. This concept of “targeting what matters most to families to open doors to conversation” has created an atmosphere that makes participants feel like they are your number one priority. Below is a testimonial on how the Power of Influence has changed a WIC staff member’s, as well as a participant’s, outlook on life.

“I just talked to one of our new supervisors, Viviana Reyes, public health nutritionist at Site #39, and she told me about a participant who changed her. This pregnant mom, with a toddler, was coming to WIC for the first time. Viviana noticed that she looked overwhelmed when she came into her office. Having reviewed the chart, Viviana was suspecting that she would talk to this mom about weight loss during pregnancy and giving suggestions as to how to increase weight gain. Viviana let emotion trump logic. She said to this mom, ‘How are you doing today?

I know that this can all be a little overwhelming, especially the first time.’ The mom looked up and told her, ‘Well, I started to cry when I was filling out the health history because it asked about my dental care. Three of my bottom teeth fell out last week, and I tried to super glue them back on because I can’t afford to go to a dentist.’ Viviana could have steered past this emotional cry for help, but instead she embraced it telling this mom that she is not alone. Viviana immediately began the 211 calls to help her get all the resources she needed. Viviana told me she couldn’t believe that in spite of all of the heart-breaking problems this mom had in her life, how sweet and patient she was anyway. I could tell Viviana’s truth of who our participants are is even deeper than it was before she met this mom. This mom is going to be coming back in two months to see one of our counseling RDs. Whoever this RD might be will meet an already changed mom, and whatever she chooses to share with this mom will fall on a touched heart!”

At the City of Dallas WIC Program, Freddie Cox, senior community service worker, displayed how her unconditional and genuine caring for WIC participants has greatly impacted their overall health. Below is a perfect example of her kindness as told by Alli Borrego.

“She has become the expert in giving referrals to all sorts of resources when the need is mentioned. She tells us about how she has actually set up appointments for participants needing mammograms because there happens to be a facility for that near her clinic. What does this have to do with a participant who has a two year old still on the bottle? A lot, if this is a woman in need of a mammogram. This is reciprocity (gift giving). It melts hearts. When Miss Freddie sends the message that she is very concerned about this woman and her health and goes the extra mile to even give her the gift of an appointment...any message about weaning from the bottle either at this visit or maybe at the next visit falls on a changed heart. It uses emotion instead of logic.”

These examples exhibit how great customer service can change the lives and health of our participants. This is as important in May during National Women’s Health Month and in June during National Men’s Health Month as it will be in the many months and years to come.



Texas Power of Influence

*—beyond the
basics of
good
customer
service*

by Frances Diep, R.D., L.D.
Nutrition Education Consultant

Humans are emotional creatures. The decisions that we make each day are often based on how we feel about a product or service, not always on facts and logic. The places where we shop, dine, and the things we buy are all largely based to some extent on the feelings and emotions that places and products elicit. By making an emotional connection with customers, companies can have the greatest impact on customer loyalty and retention.

How does an “emotional connection” apply to WIC?

Being in the business of WIC is no different than being in an industry that provides the sale of a good or service. Like organizations and companies, we too strive for the best customer service to keep complaints low, and keep clients participating in our program. The “best” customer service always includes an emotional connection.

The *Texas Power of Influence* principles incorporate this emotional connection as they empower staff with science based knowledge to more effectively influence behavior change and gives staff the freedom and tools to emotionally engage and connect with participants. By incorporating these principles, we have the opportunity to raise WIC services to a new level that will allow us to provide the highest quality services and be more effective promoters of positive behavior change.

“This training opened up my eyes to a new way of doing my job. It gave me excellent ideas to put emotion into everything that I do which in return will enrich participant’s lives and make me feel like I’m doing a great job”

“The information reinforces good VENA practices. Discourages ‘scripts’ and reinforces being genuine and warm with participants”

“This training was a reminder of why I chose this job—to make a difference”

– City of Dallas WIC Program

The November/December 2011 issue of *Texas WIC News* discussed how Texas began its journey with the *Texas Power of Influence* at Local Agency 7 — City of Dallas. The training was developed and presented by the Chickasaw Nation WIC Program. Here, we will take a look at how Texas WIC plans to develop and implement a

Texas Power of Influence training tailored specifically for the rest of Texas.

The *Texas Power of Influence* training is anticipated to pilot in July-September of 2012 and will target the areas of 1) participant and staff satisfaction, 2) participation and retention of participants (particularly up to age five), and 3) duration of breastfeeding. This training has been developed as a one-day training for all staff at the pilot agency and will be rolled out to other agencies based on interest.

Throughout the training, the following principles and how they can be applied to Texas WIC will be discussed.

- **Likability** – People are more influenced by those they like and by those who are like themselves. Being likable is about being real, authentic, and fully present.
- **Consensus** – People will follow the lead of others when deciding how to act.
- **Reciprocity** – People feel obligated to give back to others who have given to them. Gifts can come in the form of respect, full attention, encouragement, listening, empathy, cheerfulness, laughter, genuine interest, and understanding.
- **Consistency** – Once people have taken a stand they are likely to be consistent with their decision, especially if it’s made verbal,

written, and visible.

- **Authority** – People are influenced by those who are credible. What we say about ourselves through word, environment and appearance can affect how influential we will be with participants.
- **Scarcity** – The likelihood of taking action is increased when opportunities appear scarce.

To support the influence principles and the Texas WIC focus areas, each of the following materials will be developed for use in the clinics.

- WIC Graduates *consensus* boards to support retention of participants through age 5 – agencies will be provided with bulletin board materials to design a clinic board featuring children who stayed on WIC until 5 years old.
- Breastfeeding duration pledge cards – agencies will be provided cards for mom to make a pledge between herself and her baby to breastfeed for her desired duration of time. This pledge card supports the influence principle of *consistency*.
- Staff biography posters to allow participants to get to know the staff while they are in the clinic waiting area — agencies will be provided with three different templates, each with a unique set of questions to get to know the staff and begin the *likability* process in the waiting area.

For participants, the opportunity of having someone there to listen and support them in achieving their hopes and dreams is an experience at the heart of WIC that should not be lost or forgotten. As the use of online classes and acquiring information from the web becomes increasingly popular, reaching beyond basic customer service in the clinics in order to promote behavior change and retain participants seems more important now than ever before.

If you have questions or would like to share your excitement with us, please contact Frances Diep at frances.diep@dshs.state.tx.us or Erin Thornberry at erin.thornberry@dshs.state.tx.us. If you would like more information about the *Texas Power of Influence* you can also visit the Chickasaw Nation WIC’s influence website at www.wicinfluence.com or see page 12 of the November/December 2011 issue of *Texas WIC News*.

2012 Texas WIC Nutrition & Breastfeeding Conference – Better Health Through Collaboration

Come to Austin this Summer for the NBF Conference. Don't miss out on the fun! While you are in Austin for the conference you also have to see:

- ❖ Barton Springs – spring fed pool
- ❖ Mount Bonnell – one of the highest points in the city
- ❖ 6th Street – live music, restaurants and clubs
- ❖ Bats Underneath Congress Bridge
- ❖ Texas State Capitol
- ❖ Food Trailer Restaurants – awesome and all over town
- ❖ Domain – new outdoor shopping center

by Lisa Rankine, R.D.
Clinic Services Program Coordinator

The spotlight is on “collaboration” at the next annual WIC Nutrition and Breastfeeding Conference. Plan on coming early! The conference kicks off with preconference workshops including Peer Counselors: Train the Trainer; Breastfeeding Competency Skills Checklist; Discover QA: Are You on the Right Trail? (QMB); and Nutrition Assessment of At Risk Infants.

The program begins with welcoming remarks from Linda Brumble, Nutrition Education/Clinic Services Unit Manager, followed by State WIC Director Mike Montgomery and Assistant Commissioner Evelyn Delgado, Division for Family and Community Health Services. Luanne Southern from the commissioner's office will also provide opening remarks.

You will hear great ideas for successful partnerships within your area when you learn more about the collaboration between hospitals, WIC clinics, mental health facilities, the Medicaid program, doctors through the Healthy Texas Babies Initiative, and the outreach linkage between the San Antonio Food Bank and

WIC. Women's Substance Abuse Services and March of Dimes will provide referral resources to local agencies.

The Clinic Services track will feature topics such as Post-Discharge Nutrition in Preterm Infants and information on Neonatal ICUs. The latest information on Neonatal ICUs features a dynamic speaker known for her effective humor.

Julie Stagg, state breastfeeding coordinator at DSHS, will share information about Mother Friendly Worksites. This will include reports from the WIC Local Agency staff and their efforts to develop Mother-Friendly Worksite policies and environments for their employees as part of the Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite Policy Initiative. Panel members are scheduled to discuss outreach strategies to increase worksite lactation support in local communities and present New Mother-Friendly Worksite resources.

The QUICKWIN track will provide up-to-the-minute information regarding status of hardware changes, Sharepoint, TexasWIC.gov/TexasWICstaff.gov, and scheduling appointments software.

Activities include a WIC Intern reception, networking, exhibitor and poster sessions, awards, and a surprise motivational speaker. Don't stay in the hotel in the evenings. Pick one of the activities from the list or take a look at this website for <http://www.austin360.com/> where you can check out what is happening in Austin during your stay. You don't want to miss the reason that people say “Keep Austin Weird.”

We can't wait to see you in Austin!



Bringing Yourself Back Into Balance

Your alarm sounds at 6 a.m. and as you question the time and reach for the snooze button you recall the pressing deadline at work or the fact that you forgot to pack the kids' lunches the night before and didn't get a chance to go to the grocery store. Feeling depleted by the amount of stress you might react one of two ways: you bury your head in the pillows and try to escape all your daily tasks, or you jump up at the speed of light and rush to work, using every minute of your day to complete your project by exactly 5 p.m. — just in time to hit rush hour on your way to the grocery store. After all, how would you get anything done without stress? Debilitating or motivating, stress has not only become part of your day, but it has consumed you. Stress might be inescapable, but it is manageable.

The key to managing stress is to incorporate self-care techniques in your daily routine that allow you to handle a busy and even complicated life. These skills allow you to feel capable when handling whatever life throws you and to meet challenges without feeling overwhelmed. Being aware of your emotions will help you identify stressful situations and allow you to transform your reactions, internal or external. Manage stress by changing the way you respond, making time for relaxation, and adopting coping techniques. Even the simple act of breathing correctly can help you cope with stress. Meditating and yoga are also simple self-care techniques that allow you to manage stress.

Breathe Right

Before you hit the snooze button or jump up at the speed of light when your alarm clock sounds, pause and focus on your breathing. Are you taking in short and shallow breaths? Shallow breaths deprive your brain of oxygen, leading to poor concentration, restlessness, depressed and anxious thoughts, and a lack of energy. Most importantly, shallow breathing handicaps your ability to self-manage. Breathing

is one of the most important functions the body is required to do but is still a voluntary action. This fact alone deserves some undivided attention, at least for a few minutes a day.

Breathing correctly calms you and tames your stress. The next time you are in a stressful or emotional situation, focus on taking slow deep breaths, inhaling through your nose until you can feel your stomach swell outward and grow tight, and then exhaling gently and completely through your mouth.

Check to see if you are breathing correctly:

- Place one hand upon your sternum and the other on your stomach while you breathe.
- Observe the comparison of motion between both hands.
- If the hand on your stomach is moving more than the hand on your sternum then you know you're getting enough oxygen and fully inhaling your lungs.

Practice this proper breathing technique until it grows comfortable and becomes a habit. This will come in handy when you find yourself in the middle of a difficult situation. Additional beneficial effects of deep breathing include:

- Releases tension
- Relaxes the body and brings clarity
- Relieves emotional problems and pain
- Improves the quality of the blood
- Strengthens the lungs
- Boosts energy levels
- Elevates mood

Breathing techniques are used in forms of meditation and yoga to help the body reduce stress and remain in a relaxed state.

(continued on WIC Wellness Works - Insert B)

Back Into Balance

(continued from WIC Wellness Works - Insert A)

Meditate

Although the concept of meditation may be new or seem a bit “out there,” it is actually a very ancient ritual that has been around for thousands of years. Once thought of as a time-consuming practice reserved only for the spiritually devoted, meditation is now being rediscovered as a practical and highly beneficial practice. Reported beneficial effects of meditation include:

- Reduces stress
- Clears the mind
- Improves sleep
- Increases relaxation
- Enhances immune & nervous system functioning
- Creates positive mood
- Improves coping skills with psychological & physiological imbalances
- Stabilizes emotional health
- Heightens spiritual experience

In today’s fast-paced society, chronic stress is on the rise and can have an incredibly negative impact on the psychological and physiological wellbeing of individuals. The simplicity and ease of meditation make it an ideal counter for stress. Additionally, meditation doesn’t require any prior knowledge, equipment, excessive time, or money.

Outlined below are basic guidelines for beginning meditation, but certainly feel free to make it your own and be creative in whatever way feels right:

1. Set aside time: anywhere from 2 or 3 minutes up to 60 plus minutes. Many people start with smaller amounts of time and find it beneficial to slowly increase the time until they find what is ideal for their schedule and current needs.
2. Find a place: ideally a quiet place, but even in your car or at your work desk will work. Turning your cell phone to silent is suggested to avoid disruptions. It may also be necessary to set an alarm to decrease anxiety of missing later commitments.
3. Sit comfortably: the traditional cross-legged position works well for some, but isn’t ideal

for many. Sitting in a chair with good, upright posture is a great option as well.

4. With your eyes closed, clear your mind: let go of all stress, tension, negative thoughts, judgments, anxiety, future plans; and try to be in the present moment and enjoy the experience. This takes practice so don’t get discouraged.

Helpful tips:

- Mentally concentrate on a particular thought, relaxing image, or the rhythmic sound of your breathing.
- Starting with your feet, relax each muscle, working all the way up your body until all muscles (including eyes and jaw) are relaxed.
- Let incoming thoughts come and go without giving them much thought or judgment; just let it be and let it pass.
- Try guided meditation. This is an audio form of meditation that guides you into a relaxed state. There are many different guided meditation options, such as words, music and the sound of relaxing environments.

The state of meditation should feel natural and not forced. Additionally, it should be peaceful, calming, restorative, and relaxing. You may notice your breathing slowing down or that your mind “chatter” ceases over time. There are different meditation techniques that can be explored, depending on your purpose for meditation. Purposes for meditation include:

- Lowering or dealing with stress and anxiety
- Managing or feeling at peace with health conditions or life in general
- Enhancing concentration and productivity
- Increasing communication effectiveness
- Improving emotional health

There are various ways that meditation can be incorporated into the day. For some, it is part of a daily routine; for others, it is a practice that is called upon in times of need. For example, since meditation can effect one’s reaction to a situation, when stress rises it may be helpful to take a moment to clear your mind and re-evaluate how to respond to bring about a positive outcome rather than waiting until negativity

and stress have piled up. One of the numerous benefits of meditation is that it can be tailored to an individual's particular needs with the ultimate goal of calming the mind and managing stress.

Practice Yoga

Ever heard of the saying, “two birds, one stone”?

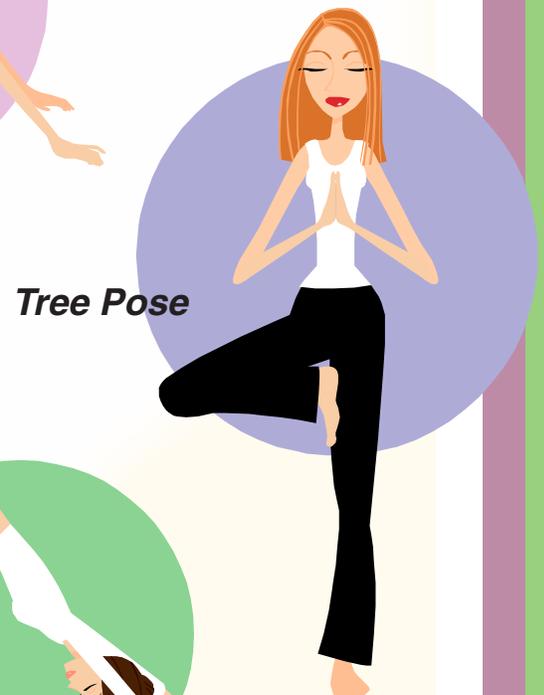
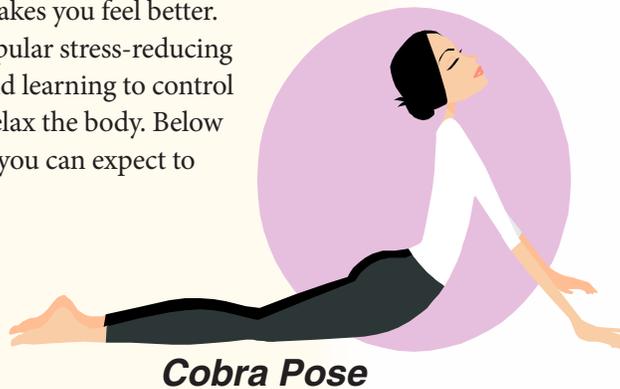
This statement refers to the use of only one action to complete two tasks. Yoga not only tackles your daily physical activity recommendations but also helps to prevent, reduce, and cope with stress. You may have heard that yoga is good for you or you've tried yoga yourself and discovered that it makes you feel better. This practice combines many popular stress-reducing techniques, including exercise and learning to control the breath, clear the mind, and relax the body. Below are some specific health benefits you can expect to enjoy.

- Stress reduction
- Increase strength
- Mental calmness
- Pain prevention
- Body awareness
- Increase quality of sleep

Yoga is for everyone. A gym membership or group class is not mandatory to practice yoga; this can be done in the comfort of your own home or during your lunch break with coworkers. Practicing yoga can be as simple as incorporating a few basic poses in your physical activity routine, breathing properly and allowing time to reflect. Start with a 15 minute yoga activity then increase the duration or your routine and the level of difficulty based on your body awareness and the style that works best for you. Follow these practical tips for incorporating yoga into your everyday life:

- Sit on the floor in your favorite position when watching TV.
- Stand up tall when using a computer or on the phone
- Sit with a towel rolled up behind your back to support your spine
- Utilize every opportunity to walk
- Relax your head, neck and jaw

(continued on WIC Wellness Works - Insert D)



For additional poses, descriptions and sequences, visit www.yogajournal.com

Back Into Balance

(continued from WIC Wellness Works - Insert C)

- Take three deep breaths every hour
- Take stress breaks as often as possible

Deciding when to practice yoga can also benefit those with a hectic schedule. Choose to practice in the morning, afternoon, or night depending on your needs and schedule and tailor your style appropriately. A list of poses with a therapeutic focus are on the previous page. From stress and anxiety to neck and back pain, these poses can help relieve a number of problems. Try the basic poses to determine your favorites and include them in your next physical activity routine.

Breathing correctly, mediating and practicing yoga are simple self-care techniques to keep in your pocket and utilize at your convenience. Incorporating one or more of these activities into your daily routine will help you manage stress when it is inescapable and lead you to a healthy, balanced life. These emotional and physical changes will support your effort to avoid, adapt and accept stressful situations without causing disruptions to your day.

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recipe

Balsamic Chicken with Roasted Tomatoes



Ingredients:

- 1 pint grape tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 ½ teaspoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- 4 (6-ounce) skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Cooking spray

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Combine first three ingredients in a small bowl; place tomato mixture on a foil-lined jelly-roll pan. Bake at 450° for 12 minutes or until tomato skins burst and begin to wrinkle, stirring once. Transfer tomatoes to a bowl, scraping juices into bowl. Stir ¼ teaspoon salt into tomato mixture.
3. Place each chicken breast half between 2 sheets of heavy-duty plastic wrap; pound to ¼-inch thickness using a meat mallet or small heavy skillet. Sprinkle chicken evenly with ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper.
4. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add chicken; cook 3 to 4 minutes on each side. Place chicken on individual plates; coat each breast half with 2 to 3 sprays of balsamic spritzer. Spoon tomatoes evenly over chicken.

Following the Spirit of the Policy

by Kristina Arrieta, M.P.H., I.B.C.L.C.
Peer Counselor Coordinator

Beginning October 1, 2011, all Texas WIC programs were required to have peer counselors work outside of clinic hours and outside of the normal clinic environment. Tarrant County WIC wanted to determine the best way to meet the needs of their clients, work with hospitals in the community, and not over-burden their peer counselors.

“I wasn’t sure how we were going to accomplish the new after-hours policy. A coworker commented that I could just do the bare minimum to meet the requirements of the policy or I could find a way to follow the ‘spirit of the policy,’” said Shannon Wingo, Tarrant County breastfeeding coordinator. Shannon decided to call a mandatory meeting of the peer counselors and quickly realized how dedicated to helping breastfeeding moms the group was. “I was amazed by how willing the peer counselors are to give up some of their weekends in order to meet the needs of our breastfeeding clients,” continued Shannon. The group brainstormed and voted on how to best meet the needs of their clients.

With the support of Ann Salyer-Caldwell, Tarrant County WIC director, the group was able to find office space at a local children’s hospital to work on Saturdays. This space gives clients who have a baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit immediate access to WIC breast pumps and support. The peer counselors now rotate weekends and work in an office at Cook’s Children’s Hospital every Saturday, including weekends that fall on a holiday.

Shannon announced the idea at a Tarrant County Breastfeeding Coalition meeting. The group was supportive of the idea and communicated the new

resource to medical providers and facilities in the area. The phone was ringing the moment the peer counselor walked in on that first Saturday morning. “It caught on really fast. I am surprised how busy we are,” said Gina Larobina-Lewis, Tarrant County breastfeeding peer counselor, IBCLC.

Tarrant County is working closely with the breastfeeding coalition to help the program evolve to further meet the breastfeeding needs of the community. The breastfeeding peer counselors have been very busy meeting moms that need breast pumps and answering the warm line. Documentation for each consultation is sent to the client’s clinic so that the home clinic peer counselor can follow up with the mom. Tarrant County WIC is bridging the gap between hospitals and WIC for new moms and following the spirit of the new policy.



Tarrant County Public Health WIC, LA 54, Breastfeeding Peer Counselors. Front row from left to right: Kim Dietrich, IBCLC; Martha Guerrero, Maria Guadian, LaTasha Booker, Gina L. Lewis, IBCLC; Cynthia Bah-Traore, Carmen Olvera, and Gina Reyes. Back row: Angie Sandoval, Melissa Martinez, Shannon O’Quin Wingo, R/D, IBCLC; Nuemi Ruiz, and Deda Padilla.

Providing Better Service Through Technology

by Shellie Shores, R.D.
Client Engagement Specialist Emeritus

In the last 10 to 15 years, we have seen a revolution in the way services and information are delivered and received. In the “olden” days, if you wanted to buy a pair of sneakers, you had to go to the sneaker store, try your sneakers on and pay real money (“real cash money” as my grandpa used to say). Now, you can jump on the web from your smart phone, buy sneakers monogrammed with your initials, get an instant \$5 off coupon, donate \$1 to Save the Field Mice, and get your “sneaks” delivered to your house in 24 hours — all while you are riding a recumbent bike at the gym. In fact, we all expect to shop, take photos, pay bills, receive news and information and even socialize from our computers and phones. Our WIC participants and partners should be able to expect the same thing from us too, right? As Mike Montgomery is fond of saying, “*We need to move away from the mentality that WIC is only brick and mortar.*” So, let’s explore how technology can help us take our services to participants.

First Step

Texas WIC took its first bold step about eight years ago with the introduction of online nutrition classes. What a great service these classes provide — allowing participants to take their classes at home, at work, in a park, on their lunch hour or after putting the kids to bed. This option also allows clinics to scale back on classes and perhaps offer more certification appointments or more in depth classes for special populations. Our WIC participants have taken full advantage of these classes, but we can do more.

What’s Coming?

What WIC functions or services could be made available on a cell phone or a computer? Well,

probably just about everything except checking hemoglobin!

- **The Health Care Provider's Guide to Breastfeeding smart phone application** - One project WIC is currently working on is converting *The Health Care Provider's Guide to Breastfeeding* from a booklet to a smart phone application.

Essentially, it will be an electronic book that lives on a smart phone. Not only will the smart phone version be more convenient and user-friendly for health care providers, but it will also save the WIC Program money in printing, storage and distribution costs. We can also do away with limits on available quantities; once it is electronic, we can distribute unlimited quantities. Not to mention the fact that it enhances WIC's reputation as a leader in breastfeeding education and support. If all goes as planned,

this application should be ready for download, for free, from the iTunes store in 2012.

Ideas for the Future

Let's take a peek into the future. How might WIC use technology to provide better services or provide services in a better way?

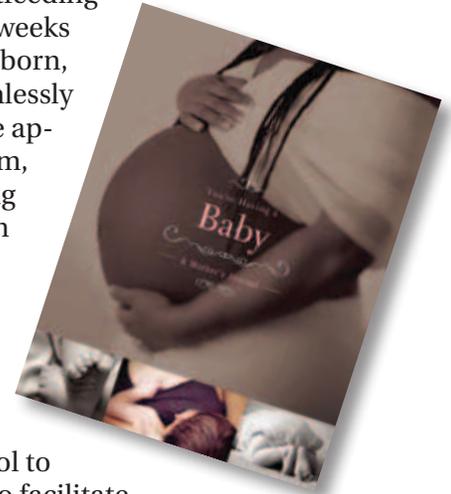
- **A WIC Shopping Application for smart phones** – We all know that shopping for WIC-approved foods can be a challenge and is often frustrating for participants and vendors. We provide our participants with training and approved food lists when they are in the clinic, but they really need the help when they are in the store. What if participants could use their smart phones to view the approved foods, check their food balances, scan products at the store to find out if they are WIC allowable, calculate exactly how much broccoli they can purchase and much more? No more getting to the check-out line with the wrong item or having an uncomfortable or embarrassing interaction with the check-out clerk. It's like a shopping buddy in your pocket.
- **A Journal for Pregnant Women or Parents of Children** – Remember this incredible booklet, *You're Having a Baby - A Mother's Journal*? We are discussing how this could be converted to a phone application and webpage.

Women could use it to keep up with their appointments, track their weight gain and receive nutrition and breastfeeding information timed to their weeks gestation. Once the baby is born, the application would seamlessly move into a baby book style application with a photo album, diaper tracker, breastfeeding tracker, feeding information tied to the baby's date of birth, a special section for Dads and more. The application could also be used to deliver nutrition education to our participants; as an outreach tool to potential WIC clients; and to facilitate communication and sharing between participants and between staff and participants.

• What if?

- What if doctors could look up WIC-approved formulas on their phones? What if they could fill out a WIC formula prescription on their phone and print it out or email it to the WIC office?
- What if participants could schedule or reschedule their appointments online?
- What if participants could fill out their paperwork online and email it to the clinic before their appointment?
- What if participants could load benefits onto their card at a kiosk in the store?
- What if WIC educators could provide targeted electronic newsletters to participants based on their interests, risk codes, category and goals?

As we move forward, technology and new communication tools will be integrated into more and more of our services. The challenge, just like our current challenge, is how to make our interaction and communication with participants meaningful, worthwhile and convenient — even if it is remote. Technology can help us handle the mundane and tedious activities so when clients are actually in our clinics we can focus on them, on their needs on our relationship with them — now, that's great customer service. And, let's not forget about WIC staff — these technologies can be used for staff training, sharing and communication. And, don't be surprised if one day we can check hemoglobin remotely using a smart phone.



Tools for Influencing Clients Toward Healthy Habits

“Research shows that the most important factor in a successful outcome for therapy is a positive therapeutic relationship...as determined by the client.”

-Scott Miller, PhD

by Debbie Lehman, Ph.D., R.D., L.D.
Nutrition Education Consultant

Many nutrition professionals enter the field because they love science and all the biological processes involved. Dietitians often enjoy the psychology behind eating, and they want to make a difference in people's lives. Although thoroughly versed in the science of nutrition, dietetics training in health behavior therapy is oftentimes insufficient. Yet, dietitians are nutrition therapists, “behavior change agents,” as well as educators in the service of clients.

Have you ever felt that when you tell your clients what they should do, many did not change or changed for a short while and then reverted back to their old habits? You are not alone. Current estimates suggest nearly 50 percent of therapy clients drop out and at least one third and up to two thirds, do not benefit from therapists' usual strategies (Duncan and Miller, 2008b). However, most health-care providers can increase their therapeutic effectiveness by (1) keeping clients engaged in treatment and (2) being attentive to client feedback (Duncan and Miller, 2008a).

Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW, well-known psychotherapist, nutrition therapist, and writer, calls the first phase in the client-therapist relationship the “engagement” phase. During the initial moments of the counseling session, you not only set the tone for the counseling session, you quickly form a bond with your client. What you do during these few minutes may influence the outcome of the session, and if it is not formed or is lost, it is difficult to re-engage (Kellogg, 2010).

Kellogg shares a variety of free, insightful *Counseling Tips for Nutrition Therapists* available at <http://www.mollykellogg.com/tips.html>.

In counseling tip #102, *The Very Beginning*, she describes how to engage quickly and effectively.

- If you begin with some small talk, refer to the client's experience rather than yours. For example, ask about the traffic he encountered or whether it has stopped raining yet. Respond to the client's small talk with simple reflections. Even when what is being said is mundane, respond to it.
- Use your body language and eyes to focus on the client. Face the client at the beginning, even if you will need to turn toward your computer later. Keep your eyes on the client rather than your notes.
- Introduce yourself very briefly, maintaining eye contact. Resist adding detail about your credentials or role unless asked.
- If you introduce how you see the first session going, include the client's point of view and ask permission. For example, “I need to find out about your medical history and eating habits today. There will also be plenty of time for you to tell me your perspective and what you want out of this. How does that sound to you?”
- Begin with open questions as early as possible: For example, “What brought you here?” “What do you hope to get?” “Tell me what your doctor has told you.”
- Hold your closed questions for the first few minutes and circle back to them later.
- Roll with any resistance you hear. When you ignore statements such as “My wife made me come,” you reduce engagement. Instead, simply reflect it. “This wasn't your idea.”

Once the client is engaged, you will notice better eye contact, more relaxed body language, and the client may begin sharing or asking

questions. Take a few minutes at the beginning of each session to engage the client — it will be well worth the effort.

Once our clients are engaged, how do we keep them engaged in therapy? Clients are more likely to stay engaged in therapy when they perceive changes early on in treatment — not necessarily when the problem is solved, but when they have a feeling things are getting better. In addition, clients who rate their relationship with their therapist highly are more likely to stay and benefit from therapy (Duncan and Miller, 2008b). When you keep your sessions client-focused, you involve clients in monitoring progress towards their goals, and you determine together how well you are meeting their needs.

In counseling tip #73, *Recording Sessions for Self-Assessment*, Molly Kellogg (2008) states that

“Research on psychotherapists who are consistently more successful than their peers reveals that they push themselves to develop new skills by finding things to deliberately practice in sessions. They request and openly receive real feedback from their clients and colleagues. These therapists maintain a belief that they don’t have it all together yet and can keep expanding what they can do. Feedback and deliberate practice then are the keys.”

Try using questions to solicit feedback from your clients, such as:

- “How are we doing?”
- “What else do you need from me?”
- “What are we doing here that is most useful to you?”

Sessions can also be recorded (with the permission of the client) and viewed by other colleagues to identify areas for improvement. For a sample *Counseling Session Feedback Form*, go to <http://www.mollykellogg.com/PDFs/CounselingSessionFeedbackForm.pdf>.

Another challenge nutrition therapists often face is providing too much advice or knowledge and not listening and reflecting on the client’s thoughts. Remember to let your client drive the counseling session. Ideally, your clients should be talking at least 50 percent of

the time. Your job as a therapist is to draw the behavior change out of the client, and get the client to identify a solution and make a commitment.

And when it comes down to it, there are many fancy words used in counseling training, but they all relate to great customer service. Keep your sessions client-focused and be likeable. Try out some of the following tips from the Stanford Hospital & Clinics, part of the Stanford University Medical Center, to improve customer service in your clinics (Dapelo-Garcia, 2011).

- Have a positive attitude; avoid expressing negative emotions verbally or with body language.
- Acknowledge clients in hallways and waiting rooms by making eye contact and smiling.
- Be “ready/on stage” when in the presence of clients.
- Present a professional image.
- Be open to new ideas and suggestions from your teammates.
- Support other colleagues.
- Greet others, introduce yourself, and excuse yourself when leaving.
- Recognize language barriers, and make efforts to overcome them.

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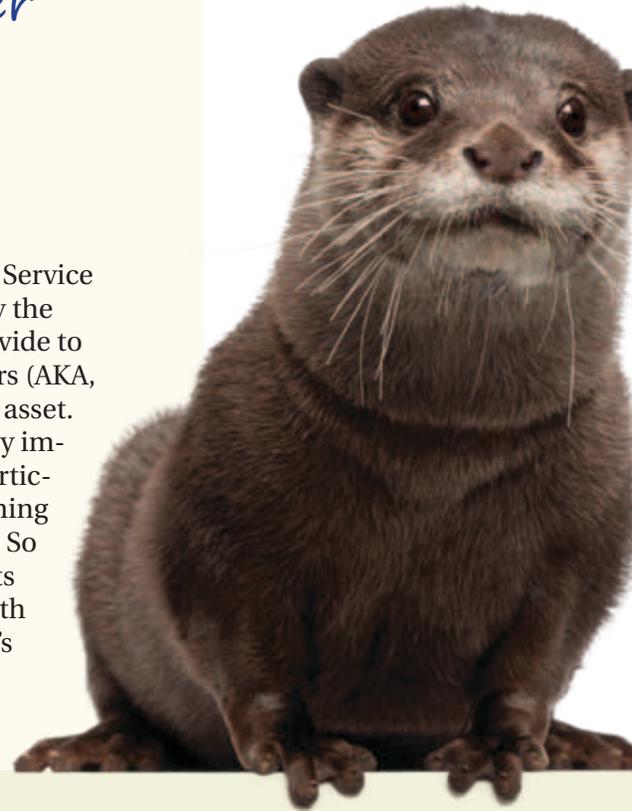
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Test Your Customer Service IQ

Eaton Wright, BS, NUT
Nutrition Expert

Eaton here to test Your Customer Service IQ. Customer service is arguably the most important service that we provide to our WIC participants. Our customers (AKA, participants) are our most valuable asset. Yes, it's true that WIC provides a very important service, but we have our participants to thank for our jobs (something we should think about more often). So keep in mind, when our participants are happy, we grow and prosper. With the warm fuzzies out of the way, let's take the quiz.



Quiz:

1. True or False. People like being told what to do. When a customer misses an appointment, it is best to call and tell them to come into the clinic toot sweet!
2. The proper place to store a participant's information is:
 - a. On the front counter, open for everyone to see.
 - b. The magazine rack in the waiting room.
 - c. Give it to the participant. Let them know that confidentiality is their job.
 - d. Use it to create the border for your new bulletin board lesson "The Importance of Customer Service."
 - e. None of the above.
3. True or False. The Golden Rule says to "Do unto otters as you would like otters to do unto you." If you remember one thing let it be this, you'd be well served being kind to otters.
4. True or False. When communicating with an upset participant, it is best to make your point of view understood. Then, if time allows, let them speak.

Answers:

1. The answer is False. The only person who likes to be told what to do is yours truly. Y'all know my wife, Ms. Always B. Wright. Well, I love it when she tells me to do the dishes, mow the lawn, wash the laundry, and clean the toilet. Otherwise, people generally don't like being lectured.
2. The answer is E — none of the above. Confidentiality of participant information is very, VERY important. So much so, that the USDA saw fit to write a little something about confidentiality into the federal "regs." For a more thorough understanding of just how important this topic is, please read WIC policy GA:01.0 - Confidentiality of Applicant/Participant Information.
3. The answer is True. Well the Golden Rule doesn't exactly say anything about otters, but even my 2-year-old knows that people are nicer to him when he's polite and uses good manners. For a really good read, check out *Do Unto Otters - A Book About Manners* written and illustrated by Laurie Keller.
4. The answer is False. Being an active listener has many benefits. Misunderstandings are avoided because the participant is more likely to open up and fully explain their issue. Another benefit is that your boss might even show you just how much she appreciates your fine customer services skills.

About the author: Eaton Wright is a certified NUT and the father of two well-mannered otters living in Austin, Texas.



Mike Trammell

When Mike Trammell started working for Texas WIC about 20 years ago, it wasn't unusual to find him working after hours or even spending the night at the office on occasion.

After writing and maintaining the software that helps staff manage the WIC program, Trammell became known as the "Father of Texas WIN." The Texas WIC Information Network provides a way to certify participants, issue benefits, and offer nutrition education.

In honor of his work, the Texas Association of Local WIC Directors presented Trammell with a special recognition award for dedicated service on Oct. 12, 2011 in El Paso at the TALWD annual meeting.

"Texas WIN has had a useful life, but technology is moving beyond the point that it can keep up with," Trammell said. "We're doing our best to keep it running until TXIN is up and running, but it's still a while down the road."

Texas WIN, currently in its eighteenth year of production, is scheduled to be retired in 2015 when a next-generation management system called TXIN will take its place.

Margaret Payton, WIC Director for City of Amarillo and a past TALWD president, said the clinics are indebted to Trammell for his years of service.

"A lot of directors may not know Mike because he's in the background and he's an unassuming guy who doesn't seek recognition," Payton said. "It's a huge commitment and huge endeavor that he undertakes to keep Texas WIN working in all the WIC clinics."



Staff Babies



Grandma insists Maci Elizabeth Walley is the cutest, sweetest, smartest, and strongest baby girl in the world. James and Shey Williams Walley increased their family on June 29, 2011, with the birth of their first baby. She has worked for Texas WIC since October 2007 as a Program Specialist.



Smart and curious Robert Zander Klein loves to be the center of attention. Robert is Kelly Klein's first baby. Adopted November 16, 2011, Robert was born December 27, 2010. Kelly, who is a Systems Analyst, has worked for Texas WIC since August 2008.



Alert and calm Scarlett Brianna Harris loves mirrors and stroller rides. Erica Harris and husband Drew had their first baby, Scarlett, on November 3, 2011. Erica, a Nutrition Education Consultant, has worked for Texas WIC for 4 years.



A team player, Jane Shaw Harrington joined the Harrington team (dad — Matt, mom — Sara, and big brother — 2-year-old Finn) on November 8, 2011. Matt has worked for Texas WIC for the past 13 years and is currently the Nutrition Education Coordinator.



Absolutely adorable Lawson Randall was born February 11, 2011, to Nick and Lindsey Randall. Lawson is the newest addition to the Randall family, which includes pit bulls Marley and Kit. Lindsey, the Breast Pump Coordinator, joined Texas WIC in 2007.

Roxanne Robison

After 17 years of sharing her knowledge about children with special health-care needs with Texas WIC, Roxanne Robison retired Jan. 31, 2012.

Texas WIC funded the work Robison did while splitting her time between the Texas Interagency Council on Early Childhood Intervention, now a part of Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, and the Texas Medicaid Program's children with special needs initiative.

Robison, children with special needs dietitian consultant, wrote the first policies for special needs children in Texas WIC.

"WIC treated the children with special needs the same as other children. Now we have policies to make accommodations for children with special needs," she said.

Before Texas WIC, Robison worked in pediatric nutrition at Scott & White Hospital and for the City of Austin's now defunct High-Risk Program, in which she made house calls to children who were born drug-addicted or came from low-income families.

Before that, Robison worked 3 years for Texas Workforce Commission.

These days, Robison spends more time with family. Her daughter Taylor, 21, will graduate in May from The University of Texas at Austin, and her son Adrian, 17, is a junior at Bowie High School where he plays trumpet and performs in stage productions. Robison visits her 91-year-old mother at a nearby assisted living center.

She also plans to take up yoga and visit a friend in Italy for a few weeks next year. She continues to provide early childhood intervention services for Easter Seals Central Texas, something she's done for the past 15 years.

"It's perfect to be able to work part time right now," Robison said. "It's nice not to have to get up at 5 a.m. drive into the office, and have every minute of the day spoken for."



Wyatt Michael Wilburn, born November 5, 2011, loves smiling and cooing at his brothers; snuggling with mama, Casey; and bath time with dad, Michael. Wyatt, Casey's third son, joins big brothers Walker, 6, and Wess, 3, in the mostly male household. Casey, who has worked for Texas WIC for the past 9 years, is a Clinical Nutrition Specialist and Lactation Consultant.



Devin Anthony Barlow is playful, happy, and a natural poser. On March 25, 2011, Tony Barlow and Tamika Hobby added a baby boy, Devin, to their family, which includes sister Destiny Reed, 15. Tamika joined Texas WIC six years ago, and works as a Farmers Market & Drop Ship Infant Formula Redemptions Lead.



Eva Inés García is sweet, laid back and hums while nursing, relaxing and even sleeping. Eva, Daniel and Cristina García's second baby, was born on December 20, 2011. Big brother, Noah, 2, loves to help mommy with Eva. Cristina has worked for the WIC program for more than 8 years, the past four at Texas WIC where she's a Breastfeeding Promotion Nutritionist.



When she gets what she wants, Ella Vittoria Adrian gives sweet chubby-cheeked smiles in appreciation. On November 1, 2011, Melanie and Giovanni Adrian celebrated the birth of Ella, their third daughter, who joins sister Elise, 4, and half-sister Leilani, 16. Melanie started working as a Systems Analyst for Texas WIC about 3 years ago.





WIC, Nutrition Services Section
Department of State Health Services
P.O. Box 149347
Austin, TX 78714-9347

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