Essential Staff Competency Tables for WIC Nutrition Assessment

In this Appendix, the competencies identified in the *Essential Staff Competencies for WIC Nutrition Assessment* section are translated into knowledge requirements and expected performance behaviors for WIC personnel completing nutrition assessment tasks and procedures.

The six competency areas for WIC nutrition assessment include:

1) Principles of life-cycle nutrition;
2) Nutrition assessment process;
3) Anthropometric and hematological data collection techniques;
4) Communication;
5) Multicultural awareness; and
6) Critical thinking.

Each competency area is presented in a separate table. The components of the tables and their definitions are listed below:

Competency statement	A particular skill or body of knowledge.
Knowledge required*	A specific topic or content area required to achieve the competency.
Performance expected*	Skills, actions, or behaviors related to a specific knowledge requirement.

*These **examples** provide a starting point for State agencies to use in planning or enhancing training activities to ensure staff competence in the area of nutrition assessment.

1. Principles of Life-Cycle Nutrition

Competency Statement: Understands normal nutrition issues for pregnancy, lactation, the postpartum period, infancy, and early childhood.

Knowledge Required	Performance Expected
Nutrition requirements and dietary recommendations for women, infants, child and children served by WIC.	Analyzes health and nutrition histories based on lifecycle stage.Evaluates the impact of the parent/ feeding dynamics on nutritional status, growth and development.
Federal nutrition policy guidance and its implications for women, infants and children served by WIC (e.g., Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MyPyramid).	Interprets and compares dietary practices of WIC participants to federal policy guidance. Differentiates between safe and inappropriate food and nutrition practices.
Relevant evidence-based recommendations published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dietetic Association, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the International Lactation Consultant Association.	Analyzes and compares dietary practices to evidence-based recommendations. Assesses potential barriers to breastfeeding. Recognizes health and lifestyle contraindications to breastfeeding.
The basic physiology of lactation and evidence-based techniques for lactation management.	Applies knowledge of physiology in the assessment of breastfeeding problems. Completes breastfeeding assessments at critical points in the early postpartum period according to State agency policies. Analyzes breastfeeding problems using evidence-based information as the standard. Evaluates the impact of early formula supplementation and mother/ infant separation on milk supply and the mother's breastfeeding intention.

2. Nutrition Assessment Process

Competency Statement: Understands the WIC nutrition assessment process including risk assignment and documentation.

Knowledge Required	Performance Expected
Purpose of nutrition assessment in the WIC Program and how to collect information.	Uses nutrition assessment information to determine eligibility, tailor food packages, provide appropriate nutrition education, and make appropriate referrals. Provides individualized nutrition assessment for WIC applicants. Uses assessment techniques that consider the varied needs of age-specific populations. Obtains timely and relevant assessment data including anthropometric, biochemical, clinical, dietary, family and social environment information. Uses standardized data collection tools or procedures according to State agency policies.
WIC nutrition risk criteria.	Applies risk definitions correctly and uses appropriate cut-off values when assigning nutrition risks. Evaluates the need for documentation of diagnosis vs. self-report of medical conditions according to State agency policies.
Importance of documenting nutrition assessment results.	Completes tools and forms for documenting nutrition risk according to State agency policies. Maintains appropriate documentation of contacts with participants according to State agency policies. Uses accepted documentation form for nutrition care plans according to State agency policies.

3. Anthropometric and Hematological Data Collection Techniques

Competency Statement: Understands the importance of using appropriate measurement techniques to collect anthropometric and hematological data.

Knowledge Required	Performance Expected
Relevance of anthropometric data to health and nutrition status.	Demonstrates appropriate anthropometric measurement techniques. Reads, records, and plots measurements accurately. Interprets growth data and prenatal weight gain correctly.
Relationship of hematological parameters to health and nutrition status.	Demonstrates appropriate techniques for performing a hemoglobin or hematocrit assessment according to State agency policies. Evaluates blood work results according to State agency policy (e.g., adjusts for smoking and elevation, etc.).

4. Communication

Competency Statement: Knows how to develop rapport and foster open communication with participants and caretakers.

Knowledge Required	Performance Expected
The principles of effective communication for collecting nutrition assessment information.	Uses appropriate techniques to establish a relationship and begin a conversation. Practices active listening and observation skills. Collects information without interrupting or correcting the applicant. Checks for understanding by paraphrasing or reflecting what was heard. Compares client's verbal responses to non-verbal behaviors to assess client's attitude and feelings. Uses an effective balance of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Completes nutrition assessment tasks before providing nutrition counseling. Selects self-administered data collection tools that are appropriate for the target population (i.e., language, reading level, length, format) according to State agency policy. Assesses real and perceived barriers to breastfeeding.
USDA and State agency policies about participant confidentiality.	Obtains release of information according to State agency policy before sharing any participant data. Protects participants' confidentiality in conversations with coworkers and other participants.

5. Multicultural Awareness

***Competency Statement*:** Understands how sociocultural issues (race, ethnicity, religion, group affiliation, socioeconomic status, and world view) affect nutrition and health practices and nutrition-related health problems.

Knowledge Required	Performance Expected
Cultural groups in the target population including their families and communities, values and beliefs, characteristics, and resources.	Respects different belief systems about issues such as bloodwork, immunizations, dietary supplements, alternative medicine, and traditional healers. Evaluates cultural practices for their potential to harm the client's health or nutritional status.
Cultural eating patterns and family traditions such as core foods, traditional celebrations, and fasting.	Includes core foods and recognizes their nutrient contributions in any assessment of eating patterns. Evaluates food selection and preparation within a cultural context.
Differences in communication styles between groups and how these differences may impact the assessment process.	Uses culturally appropriate communication styles to collect nutrition assessment information. Uses interpretation and/or translation services appropriately to collect nutrition assessment information from clients with limited English proficiency. Uses culturally appropriate strategies to assess breastfeeding practices and beliefs.

6. Critical Thinking

Competency Statement: Knows how to synthesize and analyze data to draw appropriate conclusions.

Knowledge Required	Performance Expected
Principles of critical thinking.	Collects all information before drawing conclusions and deciding upon the best course of action. Asks additional questions to clarify information or gather more details. Recognizes factors that contribute to the identified nutrition problem(s). Recognizes superfluous information and disregards it. Considers the applicant's point of view about nutrition and health priorities, needs and concerns. Identifies relationships between behaviors/practices and nutritional risk. Checks the accuracy of inconsistent or unusual measurements and referral data according to State agency policy. Identifies factors that influence the accuracy of anthropometric or biochemical measurements (e.g., uncooperative child, hydration status, faulty equipment) and documents them. Takes appropriate actions according to State agency policy (e.g., rechecks measurements, documents factors that interfere with measurements). Draws conclusions about nutritional status supported by objective data, observations, experience, and reasoning. Prioritizes nutrition problems to be addressed.