

Counseling the Combo Feeding Mother

Facilitator's Guide



**This material is available free at
www.phfewic.org/Special.htm**

Counseling the “Combo-Feeding” Mother

Outline for Facilitators

I. Introduction (15 minutes)

Our goal today is to give you some tools that can be used to help mothers become more confident in their ability to breastfeed and choose exclusive breastfeeding.

At WIC:

- a) We have an incredible opportunity to talk to moms at a VULNERABLE time during the first and second week after birth. New mothers are emotionally vulnerable and this is the time that will make or break the decision to breastfeed.
- b) How we interact, dialogue, or engage with a mother when she feels so vulnerable is KEY and can make all the difference in her feeding choice.

Let’s start with exploring OUR feelings about our conversations with new moms.

See the **Counseling the Combo Feeding Mother Staff Training Workbook**

Introductory Activity (Pair Work)

You are enrolling a newborn either by phone (EDD call) or at your desk.

You ask the mother, “How you are feeding your baby?” She responds “I am breastfeeding BUT.....”

- a) Please give us three examples of what you hear women tell you. (as a pair)
- b) Share with your partner how you feel about what they say.

Ask for a few people to discuss their FEELINGS. (Please affirm the feelings that are being shared by staff)

Note: The following responses may help you

It is frustrating. You feel you know what's best for the mom and she isn't hearing you. You know she can do it and she doesn't want to try or think she can.

You feel drained. This happens a lot (daily). After some time you feel like you can't make a difference so why should you even try.

At WIC, we are always going to see mothers during this vulnerable period. Many of them are going to CHOOSE to combo feed even though they WANT to breastfeed and know about the benefits. So how do we handle these situations?

During this training, we will share some tools with you that when put in practice can really make a difference in your conversations with the participants.

We are going to be building on concepts that you have been using, you have been exposed to and/or need some practice with.

Explore More, Affirmations and Asking Permission

II. Exploratory Questions (30 minutes)
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Activity #1: Generating Open Questions about Formula Use (10 min)

Our challenge is to find out why each mom feels she wants or needs to use formula. Just asking “Why do you want formula” is a bit too direct.

Individually, ask staff to write 3 questions each exploring the reasons why a breastfeeding mom is interested in using formula without using the word “WHY”.

Ask for a few volunteers to share their questions. List the questions on a flip chart. If these are Closed Ended Questions, have staff in large group re-word them to make them Open Ended Questions.

Activity #2: Reviewing Open Questions (20 min)

In addition to the list you generated, we have provided a list of potential questions; many are Open Ended Questions, Information Gathering Questions and Ways to Ask Permission.

Ask staff to take turns reading the Open Ended Questions on page 4 out loud in a circle (round robin style) in their preferred language. Emphasize that the questions are not *necessarily* in the order they should be used, but that all are appropriate questions for discussing the topics given.

Transition to the next activity:

We want to give you the opportunity to use some of these questions in the next exercise.

Activity #3: Role-Play--Practicing Using Open Ended Questions (20 min)

Ask staff to find a new partner. Each person will take turns playing the role of counselor and the participant.

There are 4 possible role-play scenarios (page 7) and each person will have the opportunity to practice role-playing the part of the participant and staff member.

Staff will be given a few minutes per person, to practice using some of the Open Ended Questions, either from the list they generated or from page 4. The staff is not to “educate”, only ask questions.

Switch roles at the end of 2 minutes for each role play.

Ask for a few people to share the experience:

- *How many questions did you use?*
- *How did it feel using the Open Ended Questions as a counselor?*
- *How did it feel being asked the Open Ended Questions as a participant?*
- *How would you begin to practice using these questions at your WIC Center?*

Close this section with a reminder that often you have to ask many Open Ended Questions to get the mother to really open up and talk about deeper reasons for formula use. This is very valuable DIALOGUE.

These questions are **tools** to aid with probing that can be implemented with practice. It is recommended that staff practice using the questions, until the skill becomes routine.

*(*Note: We did not create activities for Asking Permission or Returning to school do to the time limits, however page 5-6 included as extra information).*

III. Affirming Feelings (20 min)

During previous trainings we have introduced the concept of **affirmations**. Now we are going to continue increasing your skills and apply affirmations to breastfeeding counseling. Specifically, we are going to discuss affirming feelings. This is a helpful technique for any kind of conversation. This technique may also be useful in your daily work and at home with family and friends.

Let's look at the Affirmation of Feelings handout.

Facilitators read Part 1 and have a volunteer read Part 2.

Activity #4: Practice Affirming Feelings

Have staff write one or more affirmations of feelings to the statements # 1-4 on the practice sheet and then ask for volunteers to share.

Acknowledge that this technique might not be new; however, it is a SKILL that needs to be reviewed and practiced.

IV. Consequences of Taking ABM from WIC (40 minutes)

Activity #5 A (10 minutes)

In this section we will explore some strategies for dealing with formula requests, especially from those mothers who ask for just a little formula (1-3 cans). Our goal is to have a conversation using Open Ended Questions probing the reasons for the formula request and helping the mother explore options.

Instruct staff to read, Consequences of Taking Formula from WIC (in English or Spanish) and underline those statements that are new, meaningful, important, or that they want to remember.

- *What did you underline?*

****NOTE: Activities #5 B, C, and D will be read out loud.
Either read yourself or identify good readers (need a total of 3)***

As you read and follow along with the following scenarios, ask staff to notice how the process of **Asking Permission** → **Offering Information** → **Assessing** works.

Activity # 5 B: Evaluating Effect of Formula Use on Breastmilk Supply (10 min.)

Read and model

Then discuss the topic as a group.

- *How are you currently explaining to your clients the effect of formula use on milk supply?*
- *What new information provided here could you add to your dialogues?*

Ask for group sharing

Activity #5 C: Evaluating Effect of Formula Use on the Digestive System (10min)

Read and model.

Then discuss the topic as group.

- *How are you currently explaining to your clients the effect of formula use on the digestive system?*
- *What new information provided here could you add to your dialogues?*

Ask for group sharing

Activity #5 D: Evaluating Economic Values of the WIC Packages (10min)

Read and model.

Then discuss the topic as group.

- *What other ways can you promote the Exclusive Breastfeeding packet?*
- *What new information provided here could you add to your dialogues?*

Ask for group sharing

V. Activity 6: Putting it all Together (20 mins)

Activity # 6: Final Pair Up

Have the staff choose a different partner. Give them an opportunity for role-play putting all the parts together.

Review with staff the following skills. This final exercise (role-play) will give them the chance to put it all together. Role-plays are on the last 2 pages of this Facilitators Guide.

- Use Open Ended Questions to probe more
- Affirm feelings
- Ask Permission to provide information
- Provide some information from what we discussed today
- Assess how the “client” feels about information that was provided

To Begin the Activity:

1. Ask for Counselors to identify themselves. Have them read the *Counselor Expectation List*: page 13.
2. Ask for the Participants to identify themselves. Distribute *Participant Scenario # 1* to them and have them read it. Instruct them that they are to read the designated script and use the remainder of information given to answer the counselor’s questions. Remind them that it is important the provide information that fits their character (i.e. age, behavior, etc.)

Allow for a 5 minute session.

Switch roles and repeat.

1. Ask for Counselors to identify themselves. Have them read the *Counselor Expectation List*: page 13.
2. Ask for the Participants to identify themselves. Distribute *Participant Scenario # 1* to them and have them read it. Repeat instructions for participants as described above.

If there is time, ask staff to share their experience as a counsel and/or a participants.

VI. Optional Activity

Review the counselor Expectation list on page 18.

VII. Summary and Closing (10 minutes)

We recognize that it takes a team effort to make this successful. We are here to support you. It has been found that if everyone at the WIC Centers is providing the same great information and level of support, more mothers will choose to breastfeed exclusively and for a longer time. These techniques and strategies are good, but take practice to become natural. So give yourself time.

- *What is one thing you saw or heard today that can help you in your next interaction with a breastfeeding mother requesting formula?*

Participant Scenario #1

Use background information to answer questions the counselor asks you:

You are a mother of a 5 day old baby. Your plan was to exclusively breastfeed your baby; however, you are having problems. You find that every time you put your baby to the breast she will nurse for 10-15 minutes (on one or both breasts). If you are lucky, she will fall asleep for 1-1 ½ hours before she wakes up again— other times she wakes up after only 30-45 minutes. You are only offering one bottle of 2oz of formula per day. She is wetting at least 4-5 diapers and has 2-4 stools that are yellow and seedy.

Please read the following to express your concern to the WIC Staff:

“I’m breastfeeding my baby, but she falls asleep on the breast and then wakes up right after I finish feeding her. She cries a lot and it seems like she’s still hungry. When I give her a bottle of formula she takes it and then she goes to sleep for a few hours. That at least lets my sore nipples rest for a while. I think I need some formula because I don’t believe I have enough milk for my baby. I am just not satisfying her.”

Participant Scenario #2

Use background information to answer questions the counselor asks you:

You are a mom of a 5 week old baby that has been totally breastfeeding with no problems. You wanted to TBF longer and thought you were not going to have to go back to work, but things have changed and now you need the money so you are going back by 2 months. Your boss would have no problem with pumping but you have not discussed it with him and you had not even thought about the option of pumping. You do not know anyone who has done it, but are open to it.

Please read the following to express your concern to the WIC Staff:

“I have been at home with my baby breastfeeding until now, but it looks like I am going to have to go back to work in a couple of weeks. I guess I am going to have to start getting my baby used to formula now. I figure I will give formula while I’m at work and then breastfeed when I’m home at night and on my days off, since I won’t be around to physically breastfeed.”