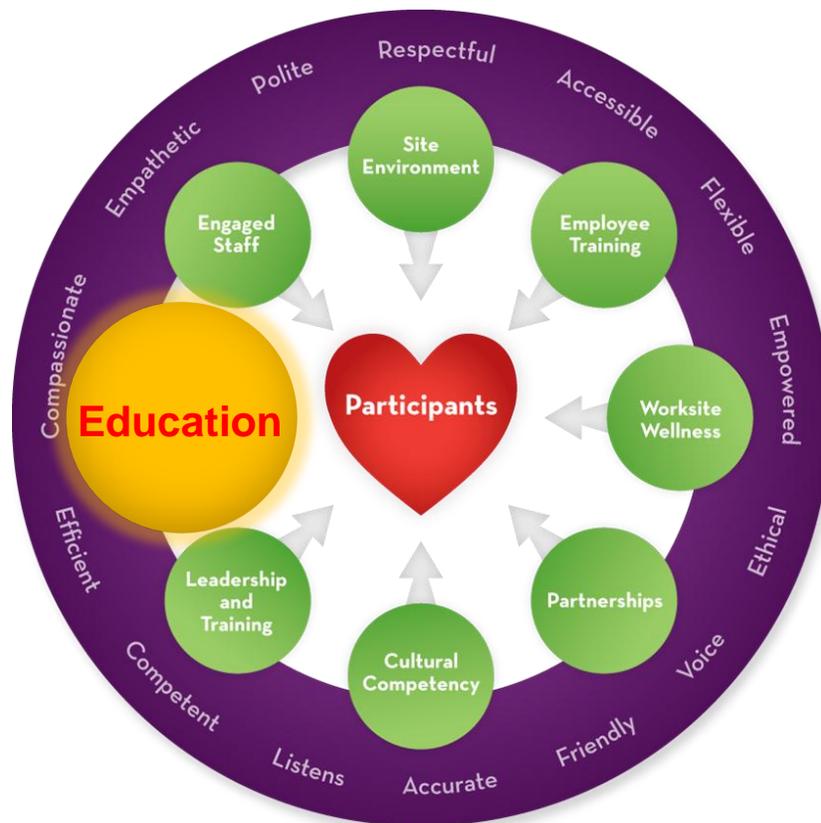


# Affirmation

## Participant Centered Education

### Facilitator's Guide



This module is one in a series focusing on Participant-Centered Education (PCE). PCE is a key component of California WIC's effort to offer *Platinum WIC – Participant Centered Services (PCS)*. The California WIC PCS approach puts the WIC family at the center of everything we do and focuses on the strengths of participants, employees and community.

PCE places the participant at the center of the education process. PCE focuses on the participant's capabilities, strengths, and their nutrition, health, and referral needs, not just problems, risks, or unhealthy behaviors. PCE includes working collaboratively, eliciting and supporting motivation to change, and respecting participants as the ones who decide if and when they will learn and/or make a change.

## **AFFIRMATION**

Affirmation helps participants feel respected and safe to explore sensitive issues and tap into areas of strength they may need when considering trying to make difficult changes. Affirmation is a key PCE principle that can be used throughout the session.

The concept of affirmation closely relates to other participant-centered principles and techniques, such as safety, voice and strength-based approach. Training on these additional topics will help reinforce the learning from this module.

### **Trainer's Notes**

#### **Purpose:**

To improve WIC staff understanding of affirmation, and to practice effective ways to affirm participants

**Objectives:** By the end of the session, staff will have:

- Shared their own experiences being affirmed
- Reviewed the concept of affirmation and tips for effective affirmation
- Practiced affirming each other
- Identified ways to affirm participants

#### **Materials:**

- "Affirmation" Trainee Workbooks
- Video clip "Validation" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbk980jV7Ao>

#### **Room Set Up:**

- Staff seated at tables or in small groups

#### **Note:**

Usually we think of affirmations as statements acknowledging positive attributes – a person's strengths, achievements, etc. It can be just as affirming, however, to acknowledge the challenges or difficulties that someone is dealing with. Recognizing someone's struggles can help that person feel heard, validated, and respected.



## 1. What is affirmation?

**Say:** *Affirmation is a key part of participant-centered education. Affirmation can be defined as "a statement of appreciation for someone and his or her strength". Affirmations can be for qualities, behaviors, feelings, or accomplishments.*

### **Instructions: Activity 1**

Invite staff to **think** about a time recently when someone affirmed them.

**Say:** *This would be a time when someone else told you how they appreciated you and one of your strengths.*

*What did they say?*

*How did it make you feel?*

**Say:** *Now share your thoughts with a partner.*

### **Instruction:**

**Allow** staff two or three minutes to discuss their experiences being affirmed.

Then **ask** a few staff to **share** some of their experiences in the large group.

### **Instruction:**

**Ask** staff what they think makes for an effective affirmation. **Take** a few answers.

Ask staff to **read** about affirmation on page 2 of the workbook.

Ask them what questions they have about this information.

### Tips on Affirming

#### Focus on specific behaviors

- “You’ve done a lot of things with your diet and activity to make sure you don’t gain too much weight.”
- “Sounds like you really want to help your child get off the bottle.”

#### Focus on positives – what the person is doing well

- “You’ve spent a lot of time reading and thinking about the benefits of breastfeeding.”
- “You’ve worked hard to keep your family healthy by trying out different fruits and vegetables”
- “You want what is best for your child.”

#### Be careful using the word “I”

Focus on what matters to the person you are affirming, not what just what matters to you! If you affirm someone for something they do NOT value - they may feel you are trying to manipulate them.

Avoid condescending phrases like: “I’m proud of you”. If you think a participant is proud of herself - let her know by saying “This is something you are really proud of”.

NOTE: An Affirmation is NOT a compliment. Many compliments, such as “I like your daughter’s dress”, or you can be nice, but do not help someone change a behavior. It would be more helpful to say something like: “You care about your daughter and dressing her well is one that it shows”

## 2. Validation Video (optional)

### Instruction:

Show the video on “validation”

## 3. Effective ways to affirm

**Say:** *Now we will look at a few effective ways to affirm someone.*

### Instructions: Activity 2

**Ask** for a volunteer to **read** aloud to the rest of the group the “Tips on Affirming” on page 3 of the handout.

**Ask** for other volunteers to **read** the rest of the handouts.

**Invite** staff to **circle, underline, or highlight** anything they found especially **interesting** or have questions about.

**Ask** what questions staff has about this way of affirming someone.



#### 4. Practice affirming

**Say:** *Think about the things you would like to be affirmed. These can be:*

- Experiences
- Skills or abilities
- Struggles or difficulties

*(Note these are listed on top of page 1 of the handout.)*

#### **Instructions: Activity 3**

**Invite** staff to **write** down at least 3-5 things for which they would like to be affirmed.

Encourage them to **include** at least:

- 1 experience,
- 1 skill/ability, and
- 1 struggle or difficulty.

Working in groups, invite **ONE** person to **share** with the group one thing on their list (experience, skill/ability, or struggle/difficulty).

**Ask** the rest of the group to **practice affirming** this individual by following the tips on giving affirmations handout. After everyone in the group has a chance to affirm, ask the person being affirmed which affirmation s/he liked best and why.

**Ask** the rest of the group to **share** something on their list and have everyone else **practice affirming** them. After each set of affirmations, invite the person being affirmed to say which affirmation she liked best and why.

(After everyone has shared at least one thing at their tables, you may invite the groups to practice affirming the other things written on their lists.)

**Ask** the entire room how the activity went and what they think about the tips on affirming.



## 5. Affirming Participants

**Say:** *Now think about things our participants might like to have affirmed.*

*These can be:*

- Experiences
- Skills or abilities
- Points of view
- Struggles or difficulties

### **Instructions: Activity 3a**

**Ask** staff to have their groups list at least 4-6 things for which participants might like affirmation. Encourage them to **include** at least one:

- Experience,
- Skill or ability, and
- Point of view, struggle or difficulty

**Ask** staff to use the tips on how to affirm (from the handout) for this activity.

**Invite** all the groups to share their ideas.

## 6. Imagine Affirming Participants

**Say:** *Think about a participant you have seen in the past, or may see again in the future. Image what kinds of things you may have a chance to affirm in them. Think about how you would affirm them.*

**NOTE:** You can affirm participants at any point during a session.

### **Instructions: Activity 3b**

**Invite** staff to **write** the name of a participant on their handout and something they could **imagine affirming** in this participant.