

Using Positive Deviance in Counseling - Topic of the Month

JUNE 7, 2023

This Topic of the Month was written by Krista Nagel, MPH Nutrition Student & Dietetic Intern from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

What are positive deviance videos?

As introduced in the May 2022 [Positive Deviance: Topic of the Month](#), Positive Deviance (PD) is a problem-solving approach that recognizes that some people deviate from the norm in a positive way. After conducting interviews with Minnesota WIC families, successful behaviors related to child-feeding practices were identified. Many of the conversations with families included strategies they use to encourage healthy eating behaviors with their children. This information can help CPAs provide culturally specific peer testimonials to participants, which are hypothesized to have a greater impact.

Learning from this experience, key themes and parental quotes are being used to create short videos that show **asset-based messages** to promote behavior change. These videos are being made in multiple languages and incorporate families of diverse cultures, with the goal of providing messages that are relatable to all WIC participants. *Thank you to all of the WIC staff across the state who have been involved in the development of these videos by providing ideas and feedback!*

Currently, two videos have been filmed in Spanish on the topics of **“Weaning from the Bottle”** and **“Regular Mealtimes”**, and the Hmong versions will be filmed next. These videos have been pretested with WIC Peer Counselors and are in the process of being edited and finalized. Upon completion, they will be pilot tested with select WIC participants to ensure the messages are effective. Stay tuned for more information on when these videos will be available to use with participants!

How can these videos be used with participants?

These videos can be used as a visual and engaging way to provide information to participants. The goal of using peer stories is that participants may connect with the information and feel more comfortable with the behavior change. Later in this memo, we will explore some examples of how these videos may fit into a counseling session with participants.

These videos may be helpful when participants have specific concerns about the topics shown, though they can also be used for anticipatory guidance! If a participant has no questions or concerns during an education session, CPAs could offer guidance on future concerns they may have. Topics could include discussing the importance of weaning from the bottle or how to notice and reduce picky eating with toddlers.

Participant-Centered Discussion Using Counseling Videos

Participant-centered skills should be utilized when having discussions with parents about their child's eating and their family's feeding practices. **Validating** that it is difficult to feed a child will help the parent feel understood and comfortable.

It is important to **ask permission** to discuss the family's feeding practices and to introduce the topics in these videos. If these strategies are advised to the parent without permission and understanding of the family's situation, they may feel forced to change and lose trust in WIC. They may even leave thinking, "that WIC person doesn't think I'm a good parent" and WIC will lose credibility and community trust.

The videos can be implemented in sessions while providing Participant-Centered Services (PCS) by using the "**explore, offer, explore**" counseling method.

Explore what the participant has tried and what they already know:

"What have you tried to wean your baby off the bottle?"

Offer to share a video showing how some WIC families deal with the same issue:

"May I share a video with you that shows some strategies other parents have used to wean their babies?"

Explore what the participant thought of the video, and answer any questions they have:

"What do you think of the information in this video?"

By inquiring about the participant's prior knowledge, asking permission, and answering lingering questions, you will be able to individualize these videos to each of your participants.

Putting it into Practice

Although these videos may be best used in person with participants, they can still be used over the phone either during an appointment or after! The scenarios below demonstrate how you may be able to best use them in conversations.

During a phone call visit

During a phone appointment, assess if one of the videos may be helpful and utilize the PCS skills above to incorporate them into your discussion. The link to a video can be sent over text, for the participant to watch with you while still on the line. Follow up with the participant after they are done watching to see how they liked the video and how they think it could be applied to their situation.

Example counseling script:

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Renee: Lately, I worry that I won't be able to get Mason to stop drinking milk from his bottle. His pediatrician told me we need to stop giving him a bottle, but he isn't able to fall asleep without it!

CPA: I can see how that would be difficult! It can be common for toddlers to struggle with weaning from the bottle. It's a source of comfort for them!

Renee: Yes, it's so frustrating! We're all losing sleep over this, but I'm worried about his teeth development since I keep giving in during bedtime.

CPA: That's an understandable concern. Could you tell me more about how you have tried to wean Mason from his bottle?

Renee: Well, I just sort of just stopped giving him his bottle altogether when he turned 1. He gets his milk in a cup instead, but he just doesn't like it the same and constantly asks for his bottle.

CPA: I see, well I want you to know that many parents struggle with this, you're not alone! If you'd like to learn more, I have a short video of another parent sharing a strategy they use in that situation. I can send it over text, and we can watch it together right now. Would that be okay with you? You can stay on the line and then we can discuss what you think after.

Renee: Yeah sure, I'm willing to try anything! And I'm interested to see what other parents have done.

CPA: Alright, I sent you the link over text, let me know if you did not receive it. Feel free to mute yourself if you would like and let me know when you are finished watching it.

Renee: Ok, I got it! I'll watch it right now.

~Participant watches video separately (or with CPA if in-person)~

Renee: Wow, I can't believe that worked for them! And that Mason's not the only toddler like this!

CPA: That's so great to hear! What did you think about the strategy that the parent used, of offering milk in a cup part of the day, but still offering the bottle occasionally, to get them used to it and slowly wean their child?

Renee: I guess I didn't know that was an option! I thought if I kept offering the bottle he would just continue to want it, but I can see how it's important to get him slowly used to using a cup instead.

CPA: That's understandable, many parents think they have to fully remove the bottle at once. While that may work for some children, others respond better when they are slowly weaned and the bottle is replaced with something else. Do you think this may work to wean Mason?

Renee: Hmm, I'm not totally sure, I still worry if I bring the bottle back he may become more attached. But I'm eager to try since it seemed to work for that parent!

CPA: It may not work right away, as all kids are different. But I think it could be a good thing to try, and over time you may find he becomes used to a cup instead. If you would like, I can also text you a handout that explains this more, which will help to remind you of what we talked

about. The handout even has a QR code you can scan to watch the video again or share it with others that may be involved with feeding Mason. Let's check in next time, to see if this has been helpful to wean Mason from the bottle!

During an in-person visit, you can use your computer to show the video to the participant, and then share the corresponding handout with the QR code so they may take it home to review or share with others.

After a phone call visit

After the visit, the link to the video can be sent over text. Follow up with the participant at the next appointment, to see how they liked the video and how it may have impacted their child's eating.

This approach may be best for participants who appear more motivated, and have prior knowledge of the subject, as they will be watching the video on their own.

Example counseling script:

Kourtney: Lately it's so hard to get Emma to eat her dinner. She is always asking for snacks throughout the day but then doesn't eat much when we have family meals. I don't want her to only be eating snacks; do you have any tips for how to get her to eat at mealtimes?

CPA: That's a common habit that kids get into, preferring snacks over meals. Could you tell me how often Emma eats throughout the day, including both snacks and meals?

Kourtney: Well it definitely varies each day, depending on how hungry she is. I guess whenever she asks for a snack I give her one, which could be 2-4 times between meals. She also gets 3 meals but doesn't always eat much of them.

CPA: That's understandable. As a parent, you want to feed your child when they say they're hungry! But the constant nagging for snacks can be tiring. I have heard from other WIC parents that have found themselves in this same situation. Would you like to hear about a strategy some have shared?

Kourtney: Sure! I'm glad to know that other parents deal with this same issue.

CPA: Some parents have shared that having regular mealtimes throughout the day helps their child eat more regularly and ask for snacks less often. This includes offering balanced meals around the same time every day and a healthy snack in between. Making sure the meals and snacks are balanced with carbs and protein helps them stay full. Plus, children benefit from regular schedules, which helps them anticipate when they will get food next.

Kourtney: Oh wow, I guess I didn't think of adding a schedule to meals; it sounds kind of like a nap schedule. That makes sense that a regular meal schedule will help them know when food is available. I bet that would prevent Emma from constantly asking for snacks.

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CPA: You're absolutely right! I also have a brief video of a parent showing this strategy with their child. If you'd like, I can text you this video after we are done here, and you can watch it later.

Kourtney: That would be great! I'd love to see how they did that and try it myself. Could I even share it with my parents? They watch Emma a lot, and I bet it would be helpful for them to follow a similar mealtime schedule.

CPA: Of course. Feel free to send the video to anyone who takes care of her. When we meet again next time, let's discuss what you thought of the video and if it has helped with Emma's eating.

~Participant watches video on own~

Be sure to document in your notes what was discussed to ensure accuracy in a future follow-up.

Next Steps: Watch for the Positive Deviance videos coming out later this year!

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks:

Positive Deviance: Topic of the Month

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/2022/topic/0504to picmonth.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.