



# VENA Views

September 2009

Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment—Volume 1

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## Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

### VENA Views brings you the VENA News!

Welcome to the first edition of VENA Views! This newsletter is designed to keep WIC providers and staff up to date on Alabama's VENA implementation and training. Each volume will give you insight, tips and counseling tools to continue improving your VENA skills.

So.... What do you remember about VENA? Are you still using the philosophy and techniques provided in the initial training? If so, your participants should seem happier and friendlier. Everyone (staff and participants) should love all the positive changes. If this doesn't sound like your clinic, read on to find out the benefits of VENA and how you can use it to better serve your participants, as well as give you a greater sense of job satisfaction!

Let's review what VENA is and what it can do for you:

### VENA is.....

- ♥ an initiative that the USDA "requires" every state to implement into practice by October 1, 2009.
- ♥ better known as the "I CARE" method in Alabama: **I Collect and Assess with Respect and Empathy**  
This acronym is not only the basic philosophy of VENA, but it is also a description of the impact VENA brings to your position.
- ♥ a shift from nutrition education being counselor-driven to being participant-driven.
- ♥ the reason why we now have "presumed" nutritional risks (401 and 428) for most participants. Therefore, taking your focus off of deficiencies in order to qualify participants for WIC.
- ♥ a timesaving, more positive approach that helps participants to achieve more desired health outcomes.
- ♥ a personalized, goal-oriented service that still provides a complete nutrition assessment.

## SO WHAT IS VENA TO YOU???

## I CARE Exchange



**What if?**

**How come?**  
**How come?**

**Next time I'll...**

**Have you tried...**

During a counseling session, have you ever felt like you weren't communicating with your participant as well as you had hoped? Or wondered if you could have done something differently to help? Each VENA Views newsletter will feature a (VENA-related) clinic question or success story for anyone to submit or share.

Please send your question or story to: [mandy.jones@adph.state.al.us](mailto:mandy.jones@adph.state.al.us)

**Question:** How do you transition from the questions you have to ask to complete the assessment form over to the participant's concerns and goal setting? It doesn't seem to flow well.

**Answer:** This can be addressed in different ways. But the bottom line is you must set the agenda early in the session—like during the rapport building. Welcome them, introduce yourself, say something complimentary and then let them know what to expect.

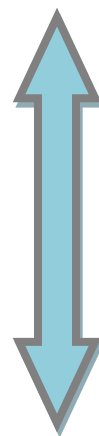
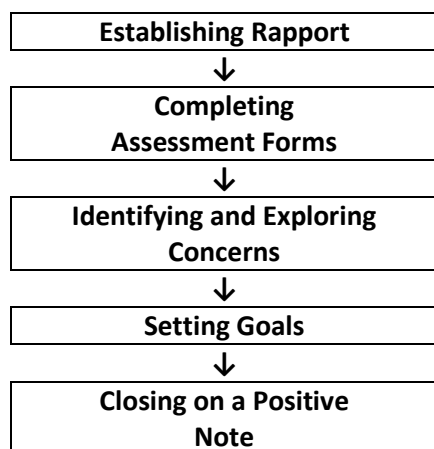
For example:

"Today, I need to ask you some questions that will help me get the big picture of your health. Then we can use these along with your interests or concerns to help you set goals to stay as healthy as possible. Is that okay?"

They should appreciate that you are valuing their time, their input, and their concerns. They are the drivers, you are their guide.

Complete the assessment before counseling. You may identify potential interests or concerns to explore by using your active listening skills throughout the assessment. If the participant gets off on a tangent, ask them politely if you can come back to that. Then remember or jot down that concern especially if it could be a part of their goal setting. A new counseling tool that will be introduced in this newsletter may help give you a place to jot down this and other topics that the participant may want to choose from when goal setting.

## VENA Framework and Skills for Effective Nutrition Counseling



### VENA SKILLS

**Active Listening**  
**Critical Thinking**  
**Collaboration**  
**Encouragement**

**to be used throughout counseling session**



## “Active Listening...”

### Means listening with ....

- **C**onfidentiality and concern
- **A**cceptance and attention
- **R**espect and recognition
- **E**ars, eyes, and expressions

### Key Element of Active Listening

- \* Establishing eye contact
- \* Sitting in a relaxed but attentive manner
- \* Response with warm, pleasant tones and expressions

### Listening effectively requires....

- Facing the speaker with an open posture
- Showing interest by maintaining eye contact
- Reducing environmental distractions
- Sitting in attention and allowing silence for accurate response
- Using minimal encouragers as an invitation to continue talking (“Mm-hmm, Go on, I see, Really? What else?”)

## How do your skills stack up?

- Are you focusing on what you’re going to say next rather than listening?
- Are you responding to an emotional statement with a factual answer?
- Are you making judgments about what the speaker is saying?
- Are you offering the solution before the speaker finishes?
- Are you pretending to or are you really being an....



Active Listener?

## MIND MATTER

A Critical Thinking column to help keep your minds sharp. Enjoy! 😊

### The Farmer

A farmer buys a horse for \$60. He sells it to his neighbor for \$70. Then he discovers he could have made a better deal. He borrows \$10 from his wife, and buys the horse back for \$80. He then sells it to another neighbor for \$90.

How much money did he make?

Answer key: On Page 4

### The Hotel


Three people check into a hotel. They pay \$30 to the manager and go to their room. The manager finds out that the room rate is \$25 and gives \$5 to the bellboy to return. On the way to the room the bellboy reasons that \$5 would be difficult to share among three people so he pockets \$2 and gives \$1 to each person. Now each person paid \$10 and got back \$1. So they paid \$9 each, totaling \$27. The bellboy has \$2, totaling \$29.

Where is the remaining dollar?

**MIND  
MATTER**

**The Farmer** –The farmer made \$10 from the first neighbor’s sale. He also made \$10 from the other neighbor’s sale. **Total was \$20 profit.** What the silly farmer doesn’t realize is that he **still** only made \$10 if you count the \$10 he **should** pay back to his wife.

**Answer Key:** **The Hotel**—Each person paid \$9, totaling \$27. The manager has \$25 and the bellboy \$2. The bellboy's \$2 should be added to the manager's \$25 or subtracted from the tenants' \$27, not added to the tenants' \$27.

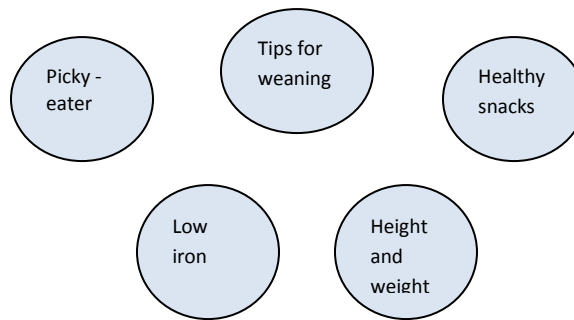
 <b>TOOLS of the TRADE</b>	<b>This will be a column that introduces new tools that will help you during your counseling sessions. This month’s tool is...</b>
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## Circle Charts

A circle chart is an agenda setting tool designed to help guide discussions with participants. This tool helps you transition from the assessment forms to exploring the participants’ concerns. Use the circles to represent topics of interests identified during the assessment. You may also want to add some topics that you choose (maybe the participants’ nutritional risks) to assess if this is something that is important to them. The tool also provides a way to personalize their session by having a place for you to record the participants’ goal. They may want to take this home to remind them what they’re working towards. Please learn to use this tool. If you like these charts and would like to use them regularly, they can be sent to you via email in whole sheets or half sheets. Contact for requests: [mandy.jones@adph.state.al.us](mailto:mandy.jones@adph.state.al.us)

**“Here are some topics we’ve discussed.”**

**“What would you like to talk more about today?”**



<b>My Goal:</b> _____
<b>I plan to:</b> _____
_____



Stay tuned... Next VENA Views...Tips for goal setting and probing questions