



## Welcome

Michigan WIC Program  
Client-Centered Webinar Series  
Webinar 2: Approaching Difficult Conversations

Karen Deehy, MS, RD  
Senior Associate  
Altarum Institute

## Guidelines

- ▲ Phones on mute
- ▲ Raise hands
- ▲ Chat box



## The Plan

- ▲ Topic area: Having Difficult Conversations
- ▲ The Challenges
- ▲ Strategies / Techniques
  - CCS Strategies
  - Crucial Conversations

## The Challenge - Difficult Conversations



## Examples of Difficult Conversations

- Time management issues
- Team dynamics
- Performance issues
- Disagreements with policy/vision
- Appearance / image issues
- Refusal to attend to advice

## Difficult Conversations – Why Do We Avoid Them?



## Consequences of Avoidance

- Problems never get resolved, poor department communication and morale.
- The situation will grow and fester and not get resolved. It will also bring down morale with other staff if issues are not addressed right away.
- Mistakes will continue to be made if staff is not aware that they're not doing something correctly. Client could quit coming to appointments if they feel our clinic staff is rude.
- The issue that needs to be discussed "festers" and becomes an even bigger issue by avoiding it.

## Costs of Avoidance



- Morale
- Productivity
- Staff turnover
- Caseload

## Strategy: Have a Goal



- Maintain focus
- Examine your motives
- Ask questions

## What is My Intent?



## Suggestions for Difficult Conversations

- Create a plan before you start the conversation, stick to the facts and no personal feelings or emotions. Create a follow-up meeting and plan on how the issue can be resolved in a timely matter.
- "Tell me about" should be the lead in question as you listen very carefully between the lines of the response.
- Starting the conversation by saying how well they're doing with another aspect of WIC, and then lead into something they could improve on.
- Listen to all sides of the story, be open minded.
- Getting to know each team member.

## Making it Safe



## Suggestions for Making it Safe

- Explain in advance if not a disciplinary meeting that they are not "in trouble" and that we need to have an open/honest conversation about a topic.
- Say can you help me with solving this problem or let me know what I can do to help you.
- Letting them know you want to work on this together as a team. Ask them if there's anything you can do to help them improve this situation.

## Crucial Conversations

- Share your facts
- Tell your story
- Talk tentatively
- Ask for their story

## Poll Question



### Introduction: Making It Safe

## Reading the Signs



- Silence
- Sarcasm
- Anger
- Blame
- Labelling

## Addressing Resistance



- Address their concerns
- Clarify your purpose
- What you are NOT intending
- What you DO want

## What are Your Signs?



## CCS Strategies for Difficult Conversations

- Listening
- Asking
- Reflecting
- Normalizing
- Asking for input
- Goal setting

## Listening



## Asking

- Open-ended questions
- Invite different view points
  - Please let me know if you see it differently.
  - I really want to hear your thoughts.

## Reflecting



- Understanding their position
- Encouraging discussion
- Reflecting does not equate to agreement
- Potential for finding an area of agreement
- Agree and build

## Poll Question



## Offering a Reflection

## Normalizing



- “Many of us struggle with providing good customer service when we are so busy.”
- “You’re not alone in that struggle to find the sweet spot – the balance between having a meaningful conversation and being efficient with our service delivery to reduce wait time for the other participants.”

## Goal Setting

- Asking for input, ideas
- How you will decide?
- Be specific
  - By when
  - How
  - Method of follow-up

## Things to Consider

- Before the conversation
  - Prepare
  - Focus and stay positive
- During
  - Facts, asking for input, goal setting
  - Benefits of ideas – connect to importance
- Disengage
  - Back to the normal or positive

## What if There is Not Agreement

- If you disagree, let them know.
  - I think I see things differently, let me describe how.
  - Then share your facts, stories, and ask for input
- Bringing in a 3<sup>rd</sup> party



## An Ounce of Prevention

AN OUNCE OF  
PREVENTION IS  
WORTH A POUND  
OF CURE.

- Benjamin Franklin

- Hiring strategies
- Set expectations early
- Approach situations timely

## Setting Expectations

- “I created my list of expectations that I hand and review with all new staff about gossip, customer service, arriving to work on time. It is titled how to be successful in WIC. That has been very helpful as I can refer back to that as needed with staff. It was clear and they signed a copy. “

## What Expectations to Set?

### Expectations about communication

- Department mission and how they fit into mission.
- That communication both ways will be open and up front.
- Work as a team in a positive manner, be responsible to talk for own self, request meetings to share concerns and perspectives.
- Open-mindedness, plan to continue to learn new things.
- If there is an issue with your coworker, take it directly to them first and if not resolved then bring it to supervision.

## What Expectations to Set?

### Expectations about job performance

- WIC takes a while to learn and figure out.
- What exactly the staff person will be reviewed on and how.
- ...we will offer continual feedback to staff, not to be mean, but so that we can all improve as a team.
- New staff should watch videos, attend training ,watch other old staff. Because how to deal with difficult situations comes with the longer the staff has been in program.

## What Expectations to Set?

### Expectations about CCS

- In addition to their basic job duties, supervisors can let new hires know that we expect exceptional customer service and client-centered care.
- That you will encounter rude/ungrateful people. Most are very polite and appreciative, but be ready for the few bad eggs.
- Stress the CCS mind set of meet the client where they are at and always be respectful of what they know.

## Setting Expectations

- Setting shared expectations
- Involving everyone
- Asking for input / creating buy-in

## Time to Share



- Questions
- Strategies
- Tips for difficult conversations

