

# Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment (VENA) in WIC:

## Creating New Policy and Guidance to Maximize WIC's Role as a Premier Public Health Nutrition Program

**APHA Annual Meeting  
Food and Nutrition Section Scientific Session  
Tuesday, November 6, 2007  
12:30-2:00 PM**

# Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment (VENA)

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## Moderator:

**Lissa Y. Ong**, MPH, RD; WIC Program Western Regional Nutritionist, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service

## Speakers:

- **Patricia N. Daniels**, MS; Supplemental Food Program Division Director, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
- **Brenda L. Dobson**, MS, RD, LD; Nutrition Services Coordinator, Iowa Department of Public Health
- **Patricia Anne Cumiskey-Czeto**, WIC Program Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
- **Michele Y. van Eyken**, MPH, RD; WIC Program Deputy Chief, California Department of Public Health
- **Jan Kallio**, MS, RD, LDN; Nutrition Services Assistant Director, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

# VIENA

VALUE ENHANCED NUTRITION ASSESSMENT IN WIC

## The First Step In Quality Nutrition Services



USDA Food &  
Nutrition  
Service



WIC  
MAKES A DIFFERENCE

# Overview

## Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment

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- VENA – What is it?
- Why VENA ?
- VENA Development & Philosophy
- The Impact of VENA on WIC Nutrition Services
- The Anticipated Results

# What is VENA?

VENA is a new initiative that is part of the continuing effort to improve nutrition services in the WIC Program – Revitalizing Quality Nutrition Services (RQNS).

Other RQNS initiatives:

- **Breastfeeding Support**
- **Revised Food Package**
- **Nutrition Services Standards**
- **Nutrition Education Policy & Guidance**

# What is VENA?

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VENA is WIC nutrition assessment policy and guidance that serve to enhance the collection and interpretation of accurate and relevant assessment information – the first step in providing targeted nutrition services to WIC participants.

# Why VENA?

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VENA is WIC's response to the recommendation and findings in the 2002 Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report - *Dietary Risk Assessment in the WIC Program*.

# 2002 Institute of Medicine Report Findings

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Presume that all women and children ages 2 to 5 years who meet the eligibility requirements of income, categorical, and residency status, also meet the requirement of nutrition risk through the category of dietary risk based on *failure to meet Dietary Guidelines*.



# 2002 IOM Report

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Move away from dietary assessment tools that provide invalid data for certification and for nutrition education *for individuals*, i.e. 24 hour recall and FFQ.

# 2002 IOM Report

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**The IOM recommendation made clear that the intent was NOT to affect the current use of other nutrition risk criteria for eligibility determination.**

# Why VENA?

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Given the IOM recommendation and findings, FNS identified the need to develop comprehensive nutrition assessment guidance for WIC.

# Development of VENA

## VENA Workgroup:

- Ten members from FNS (representing headquarters and regional staff)
- Ten members from NWA (representing State and local level staff)



# VENA Philosophy

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## Guiding Principle:

Strengthen and re-align the primary purpose of WIC nutrition assessment from determining eligibility to personalizing nutrition education in order to maximize the impact of WIC nutrition services.

# VENA Philosophy

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VENA is the bridge that leads to effective and appropriate nutrition education that best meets each participant's needs.

# VENA Policy Statement

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A WIC nutrition assessment is the process of obtaining and synthesizing relevant and accurate information in order to:

- **Assess an applicants nutrition status/risk**
- **Design appropriate nutrition education and counseling**
- **Tailor the food package**
- **Make appropriate referrals**

# Use of VENA Guidance

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VENA guidance is intended for WIC *State agencies* to use as a reference when developing nutrition assessment policies and procedures.



# What Impact Will VENA Have on WIC Nutrition Services?

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- FNS policy
- Enhanced Assessment
- Client centered services
- Flexibility in diet assessment
- Implements new dietary risk criteria
- Positive approach to nutrition counseling
- Focus on listening

# Transitioning to VENA by 2010!

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- Summer 2005 – Final VENA Guidance
- Summer-Winter 2005- State Agencies review existing protocols etc.
- FY2006 – FNS VENA Training
- December 15, 2006- State Agencies submitted findings from review
- August 15, 2007 – Implementation Plan submitted as part of State Plan
- FY2008-FY2009- State Agencies implement plans
- October 1, 2009 – VENA Realized!

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