

Goal Setting Using the SMART Acronym

Goal setting is a process of determining what the participant's goals are, working towards them and assessing whether their goals are met. A prevalent process for setting goals uses the SMART acronym, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. It's not the only way that participant-centered nutrition and/or health goal(s) could be established.

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable/Achievable

R = Realistic

T = Time Bound

Specific

A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. Provide enough detail so that there is no indecision as to what exactly the participant should be doing. An example of a general goal would be, "*Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.*" But a specific goal would say, "*Increase fruits and vegetables consumption by including a serving at one meal per day.*"

Measurable

Choose a goal with measurable progress, so the participant can see the change as it occurs. A measurable goal has an outcome that can be assessed either on a sliding scale (1-10), or as a hit or miss, success or failure. Based on our example, "*Increase fruits and vegetables consumption by including a serving at one meal per day*" would be a measurable goal because we are measuring if the participant consumed fruits and vegetables one meal per day.

Attainable/Achievable

An achievable goal has an outcome that is realistic given the participant's current social, economic, or cultural resources and time available. Goal achievement may be more of a "stretch" if the outcome is difficult to begin with. Our example of a goal was to "*Increase fruits and vegetables consumption by including a serving at one meal per day.*" Is consuming a serving of fruits and vegetables one meal a day possible for the participant? If not, then this would not be an attainable goal.

Realistic

Start small; with what the participant can and will do and let the participant experience the joys of meeting their goal. Gradually increase the intensity of the goal after having a discussion with the participant, parent or caretaker to redefine the goal. Is our example goal "*Increase fruits and vegetables consumption by including a serving at one meal per day*" realistic for a WIC participant's food budget? If not, then we might want to redefine the goal.

Time Bound

Set a timeframe for the goal: for next week, in three months, by six months. Setting an end point for the goal gives the participant a clear target to achieve. Nutrition follow-up ideally should occur within the 6-month certification period (best practice) but shall occur within one year or two certification periods or prior to the participant's change in categorical status.

Remember that follow-up is an essential component of WIC value enhanced nutrition services provided for the benefit of program participants. Follow Up should be provided to find out how the participant has addressed a nutrition issue, but should not replace a nutrition education contact/intervention.