

HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE® AT HAWAII WIC

Background/Introduction

Hawaii WIC staff must be nutrition educators and change agents for program participants. Approximately 50% of Hawaii WIC women had high maternal weight gain (2011 Pregnancy Nutrition Surveillance System); data from 2009 and 2010 were consistent with the 2011 findings.

Project Goals

The goal is to avoid high maternal weight gain and improve post-pregnancy health by assisting women to return to their pre-pregnancy weight.

Methods

Dana Sturtevant, a dietitian and owner of Be Nourished, presented on the topic of Health At Every Size® (HAES). Ms. Sturtevant reviewed the five basic tenets of HAES - health enhancement, size and self-acceptance, the pleasure of eating well, the joy of movement and an end to weight bias. Staff training was provided to assist with intervention ideas during the 2013 biennial state conference. After the conference, the staff held brainstorming sessions to incorporate the training received into daily practice at their clinics. By using language that supports an individual's commitment to health and adopting effective communication strategies to improve interactions with people who have higher body weights, WIC hopes to impact participants' motivation for behavior change without solely focusing on weight loss for success.

Results

Staff responded positively to the information presented; they felt the HAES tenets offered new strategies to address the sensitive topic of weight. At this point in time, it is too early to measure the impact of the counseling strategies on maternal weight changes.

Summary/Discussion

Discussing weight with WIC participants is a sensitive issue. Counseling participants without judgment and working towards the end of weight bias would help WIC staff establish rapport. Communication strategies that focus on actionable goals, such as the tenets of HAES, instead of long term outcome goals, may have a greater impact on facilitating behavior change.