

INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING COUNSELLING: AN INTEGRATED COURSE

Guidance on the use
of counselling cards



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Infant and young child feeding counselling: an integrated course. Guidance on use of counselling cards

ISBN 978-92-4-003556-0 (electronic version)

ISBN 978-92-4-003557-7 (print version)

Director's guide, second edition – Trainer's guide, second edition (including Web Annex A. Guidelines for follow-up after training; Web Annex B. Supportive supervision/mentoring and monitoring; and Web Annex C. Toolkit for supportive supervision/mentoring and monitoring) – Participant's manual, second edition – Counselling cards for health workers – Guidance on the use of counselling cards – Course handouts

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Suggested citation. Infant and young child feeding counselling: an integrated course. Guidance on use of counselling cards. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

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Design and layout: Christopher Yuen

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Acknowledgements

The Counselling cards have been adapted from the *Community infant and young child feeding counselling* package and form part of the updated *Infant and young child feeding counselling: an integrated course, second edition*, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The *Infant and young child feeding counselling: an integrated course* includes a *Director's guide*, *Trainer's guide* and *Participant's manual*. Additional tools include: *Course handouts*; *Guidelines for follow-up after training*; *Supportive supervision/mentoring and monitoring* and an accompanying toolkit; this set of 24 Counselling cards and *Guidance on the use of counselling cards*. These materials can be found online to facilitate their dissemination and adaptation.

The following deserve special recognition for the roles they played in the development of this course: Ruth Bland, Consultant, Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies, who was the primary author and who also acted as Director of the course in all the field-tests for the first edition; Randa Saadeh, WHO, who oversaw development of the first edition; Peggy Henderson, Nigel Rollins and Constanza Vallenias, WHO, who contributed to the revision of the first edition; Carmen Casanovas, WHO, who contributed to the development and revision of the first edition; Juan Pablo Peña Rosas, Pura Rayco-Solon and Lisa Rogers, WHO, who led the initiation, development and production of the second edition, respectively; Mary Lungaho and Maryanne Stone-Jimenez, consultants, who contributed to the development and testing of the course materials; and Maaïke Arts and France Begin, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), who reviewed the course and provided comments.

Special thanks are due to Helen Armstrong, Genevieve Becker, Hilary Creed-Kanashiro and Felicity Savage King, who were the authors of the original training courses on breastfeeding counselling, complementary feeding counselling, and HIV and infant-feeding counselling; and to Adelheid W. Onyango and Mercedes de Onis who were authors of the training course on child growth assessment. Thanks are also due to Ilgi Ertem and Cutberto Garza, for their technical input, and to Patricia Whitesell Shirey and Florence C Johnson, for developing the modules for the training course on child growth assessment.

The contribution of the many individuals from the countries where the course and counselling tools were field-tested, namely Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the staff of the UNICEF and WHO regional and country offices concerned, is also gratefully acknowledged.

Thanks are due to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Government of the Republic of Korea, for providing financial support for updates to this second edition.

Introduction

Orientation to the Counselling cards

The Counselling cards depict key infant and young child feeding concepts and behaviours for health workers to share with mothers, fathers, grandparents and other caregivers. (The term “caregiver” will be used for the rest of the document to refer to any one of these persons in charge of the care of the infant.) These job aids are designed for use at specific contact points, based on priorities identified during each individual counselling session.

Designed as job aids without accompanying written material on the reverse side, the cards allow the health worker to respond to the caregiver’s particular situation without relying solely on “messaging”.

It is important for participants to become familiar with the Counselling cards by examining their content. For example, at the start of training, orient participants to the cards by asking them to find:

- a health worker talking with a caregiver
- a sign or symbol that indicates that something should happen during “the day and at night”
- a sign or symbol that indicates that the child should have “a meal or a snack”
- a sign or symbol that indicates that a young child should eat three times a day and have two snacks
- a sick baby aged less than 6 months
- the card with the message that “hands should be washed with soap and water”.

Throughout the training, participants will continue to use the cards as they learn and consolidate key information and practice, discussing it with caregivers.

The food groups displayed at the bottom of the complementary feeding COUNSELLING CARDS 18–20, and included in COUNSELLING CARD 17, are used to elicit responses from caregivers as to what foods they have in their home that day; OR a counsellor might ask: “What foods are you planning to prepare for your family meal today?”, OR “What foods will you purchase at the market today?”. The food images at the bottom of COUNSELLING CARDS 18–20 are grouped into the same seven categories used to construct the World Health Organization infant and young child feeding indicator for minimum dietary diversity. Thus, these cards can be used for training interviewers as well as counselling caregivers. Note that “oils” are not included as a food group for the indicator. However, an image of “oils and fats” has been included at the extreme right side of the seven food groups, so that the addition of oil/fats to a child’s food can be discussed, as appropriate, for an individual child (or all children).

Order of the Counselling cards

The cards are ordered to allow health workers to find individual cards easily. Since the cards are meant to be used **flexibly**, it is important that workers know where to find the images and card content relevant to the issue being discussed with a caregiver.

The images on each card summarize and prompt a worker to remember key information that is relevant to the feeding and care of mothers or children at a particular age or stage of life. While messages and information could be included on the back of each card (and some countries have opted to do so), during individual counselling it is preferable to discuss with a caregiver those issues most relevant to their child’s feeding and nutrition at that time. The images on the card can be used to focus and illustrate that discussion, as opposed to delivering all the key messages on the back of the card.

Positive counselling skills

The set of Counselling cards was developed for health workers to help counsel caregivers about infant and young child feeding. Appropriate counselling skills are important for your success. Some basic counselling skills presented next include LISTENING AND LEARNING SKILLS, as well as SKILLS FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND GIVING SUPPORT.

LISTENING AND LEARNING SKILLS

1. Use helpful non-verbal communication:
 - Keep your head level with the mother/caregiver
 - Pay attention
 - Remove physical barriers
 - Take time/allow the mother or caregiver time to talk
 - Use appropriate touch
2. Ask open questions
3. Use responses and gestures that show interest
4. Reflect back what the mother/caregiver says
5. Empathize – show that you understand what the mother/caregiver feels
6. Avoid using words that sound judging

SKILLS FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND GIVING SUPPORT

1. Accept what a mother/caregiver thinks and feels
2. Recognize and praise what a mother/caregiver and baby are doing right
3. Give practical help
4. Give a little, relevant information
5. Use simple language
6. Make one or two suggestions, not commands

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