



TIPS FOR PRENATAL EDUCATION FACILITATORS

When facilitating prenatal education classes for American Indian/Alaska Native women, it is important to take the time to build trust. Treating participants with dignity and respect is an important basic principle. It is good to let her know that this is her pregnancy and we are here for her as part of her circle of support. As the facilitator, please honor the women and embrace the cultural value placed on motherhood. The cycle of childbearing is sacred and we want the women to feel special.

Although the curriculum is designed for group classes, it may be more feasible to share the information with women one-on-one. These tips are important for group or individual education opportunities. Here are some things to think about before you get started:

- **It is best to take the time to prepare for each session.** If you are rushed or disorganized, the women will not feel valued. Facilitating prenatal education is not just another task. This is a sacred time.
- **Your attire could be a barrier to trust if it is too formal or too casual.** If you are not sure what to wear, it may be a good idea to ask someone who already has an established relationship with the women.
- **You can show the women respect by introducing yourself to each woman individually.** Shake her hand and ask how she is doing. Show genuine joy for her pregnancy and appreciation for her desire to do her best for her baby.
- **It might be a good idea to ask the group if they would like to begin and/or end each session with a prayer.** If they do, it would be appropriate to ask one of the women to provide the prayer each time.
- **It may help to occasionally share your personal experiences.** This allows the women get to know you as an individual.
- **It is best to focus on the positive.** Celebrate successes in each session, even if they are small. For example, if a woman is able to reduce smoking since the last session, this should be celebrated. Perhaps at the beginning or end of each session, participants could be asked if they have a success to celebrate. Another option could be to ask for the women to voluntarily share joys & concerns.
- **If possible, have small gifts to share during each session.** These gifts can be used to celebrate success, comfort someone with a concern, show support/encouragement, etc.

Until trust is established, some of the activities in the curriculum that require sharing in front of the group may not be embraced by the women. Here are some alternatives to consider:

- You might limit talking in front of the group in the early sessions and gradually increase these activities as they seem more comfortable.
- Have the participants write down their thoughts instead of saying them aloud. As facilitator, you can summarize or highlight some of their anonymous contributions for the group.
- Several activities in the curriculum include pairing participants for discussion then having them report out to the group. Pairing the women for discussion may work well. However, you might want to consider asking for volunteers to share with the group. If no one volunteers, it will help if you are prepared with some general statements about what they may have learned through their conversations.
- As an alternative to role playing, you can consider asking questions of the group and making a list of their responses on a flip chart. Instead of the role playing activity in Session 2, you could invite a trusted and culturally sensitive health care provider to participate in a discussion about how to ask questions during prenatal visits.
- At the end of each session, participants are asked to identify one thing they plan to change as a result of what they have learned. The women may want to keep this private. As an alternative, the women could write what they want to change on a piece of paper and burn them as a symbolic gesture.

Thank you!

