



## VENA Tips for Counselors and Trainers

### TIPS FOR COUNSELORS: Utilizing VENA tools and trainings

1. Review available **desk references** (VENA Counseling Framework Desk Reference Handout). Discuss these with your supervisor if you have questions. Keep these handy at your counseling station for a quick training refresher.
2. Review the **VENA Self Audit Counseling Checklist**. Using the checklist, identify counseling skills that you think you do very well and areas that you could improve.
3. With your supervisor and/or NE coordinator, identify **trainings** relating to VENA that you would like to see and prioritize them. **Trainings in bold are recommended for all counselors.:**
  - VENA 101: VENA Basics
  - VENA 102: VENA Counseling Skills
  - VENA 103: VENA Motivating for Behavior Change
  - VENA Monthly Sharing Session
4. Print a few copies of the VENA Self Audit Counseling Checklist. Use this checklist to periodically do **self evaluations** after your own counseling sessions. After a session, fill out the checklist as honestly as you can. Use this as a learning opportunity to identify at least one strength you have as a counselor and one area for improvement. Challenge yourself to improve, repeat this process periodically, and seek support from other counselors, supervisors, and your NE coordinator.
5. Periodically **reflect on your counseling sessions**. What barriers do you encounter that get in the way of having meaningful conversations with clients? What could you do to improve? Try to keep a positive attitude and focus on things that are within your control.



## VENA Tips for Trainers

### TIPS FOR TRAINERS: Meeting ideas, role-plays, peer-to-peer observations, etc...

1. Practice role-playing counseling sessions during staff meetings.
  - Review and discuss counseling skills such as: building rapport, asking open- ended questions, making reflective statements/active listening.
  - Divide up into groups of 3 and take turns role-playing a counselor, client, and observer.
  - The observer's job is to listen and record the following:
    - Did the counselor attempt to establish rapport?
    - Did the counselor attempt to identify and explore parent/client concerns using any of the following but not limited to:
      - following up on previous goal
      - open-ended questions
      - agenda setting tools
      - active listening
    - Did the counselor attempt to summarize the key points of the conversation?
    - Did the counselor attempt to assist the parent/client in setting a goal, if appropriate?
    - Did the counselor attempt to conclude the session on a positive note?
  - Other things to look for -
    - What approximate percentage of the time did the client talk? \_\_\_\_\_ (It is ideal for the client to talk at least 50% of the time)
    - Was the parent/client's concern addressed during the conversation?
    - Was the nutrition information accurate and tailored to the parent/client concerns?
  - After the role play, observers share their observations with their group. Reverse roles until everyone has role played a counselor and had the opportunity to receive peer feedback.
  - Repeat as time allows and share experiences/surprises/ideas for improvement with the large group.
2. During staff meetings consider asking each small group to tape record their mock counseling sessions so the counselor can listen to herself counsel, record the answers to the questions above, and identify an item to work on.
3. Take time at staff meetings for counselors to share success stories and struggles with counseling.
4. When feasible, allow counselors to shadow advanced counselors to learn skills and support each other to improve.