



IDENTIFYING, PRIORITIZING AND ADDRESSING CLIENT NEEDS: STRATEGIES FOR HOME VISITORS



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Identifying, Prioritizing and Addressing Client Needs

Community Health Workers from the Maternal and Infant Community Health Collaborative (MICHC) programs and Home Visitors from the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Visiting (MIECHV) programs exclusively work in community settings among primarily disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. For simplicity in the rest of this report, the staff from these programs will be referred to as Home Visitors.

engaging the client in identifying strengths and needs can help build a two-way communication pattern that will help with future processes such as prioritizing and setting goals for addressing those needs.

A practical skill for Home Visitors, motivational interviewing can be helpful in the process of identifying, prioritizing and addressing client needs. The 5 principles of motivational interviewing are ^[5]:

1. **Unconditional positive regard** towards the client to show acceptance and build rapport.
2. **Empathy** to enable the client to recognize that her present situation does not necessarily fit into her values, and what she would like in the future, and what changes she can make to address the discrepancy between her reality and her hopes.
3. **Rolling with resistance** to prevent a breakdown in communication between Home Visitor and client; allow the client to explore her views.
4. **Supporting self-efficacy**, an important component of change: when clients believe they have the ability to change, it is more likely that they will make the changes.

The Self-Determination Theory is a theory of motivation and personality that addresses the universal psychological needs of ^[6]:

1. **Competence** to seek to control the outcome and become the expert;
2. **Autonomy** the universal urge to be in control of one's own life and act in harmony with one's self, while recognizing that this does not mean to be independent of others; and
3. **Relatedness** th

A problem, weakness, or difficulty should be identified honestly and genuinely (for example: don't pretend it's not a problem when it is; don't treat as if it's not a big deal if the problem is severe); however, the Home Visitor can highlight that the problem is an opportunity for learning and improving the mother's competence in caring for her infant's health and well-

places for health care) or socio-economic needs (enrolling in family assistance program, finding appropriate housing). Behavioral issues (smoking, physical activity) and the management of chronic illnesses (diabetes, hypertension) are important but can be addressed on a more long term basis.

To accomplish the task of prioritizing needs, Home Visitors should engage the client in the process. To prepare Home Visitors for these conversations, many programs utilize specific curricula. Since not all programs have specific steps for prioritizing needs, the following approaches may provide additional information to assist Home Visitors.

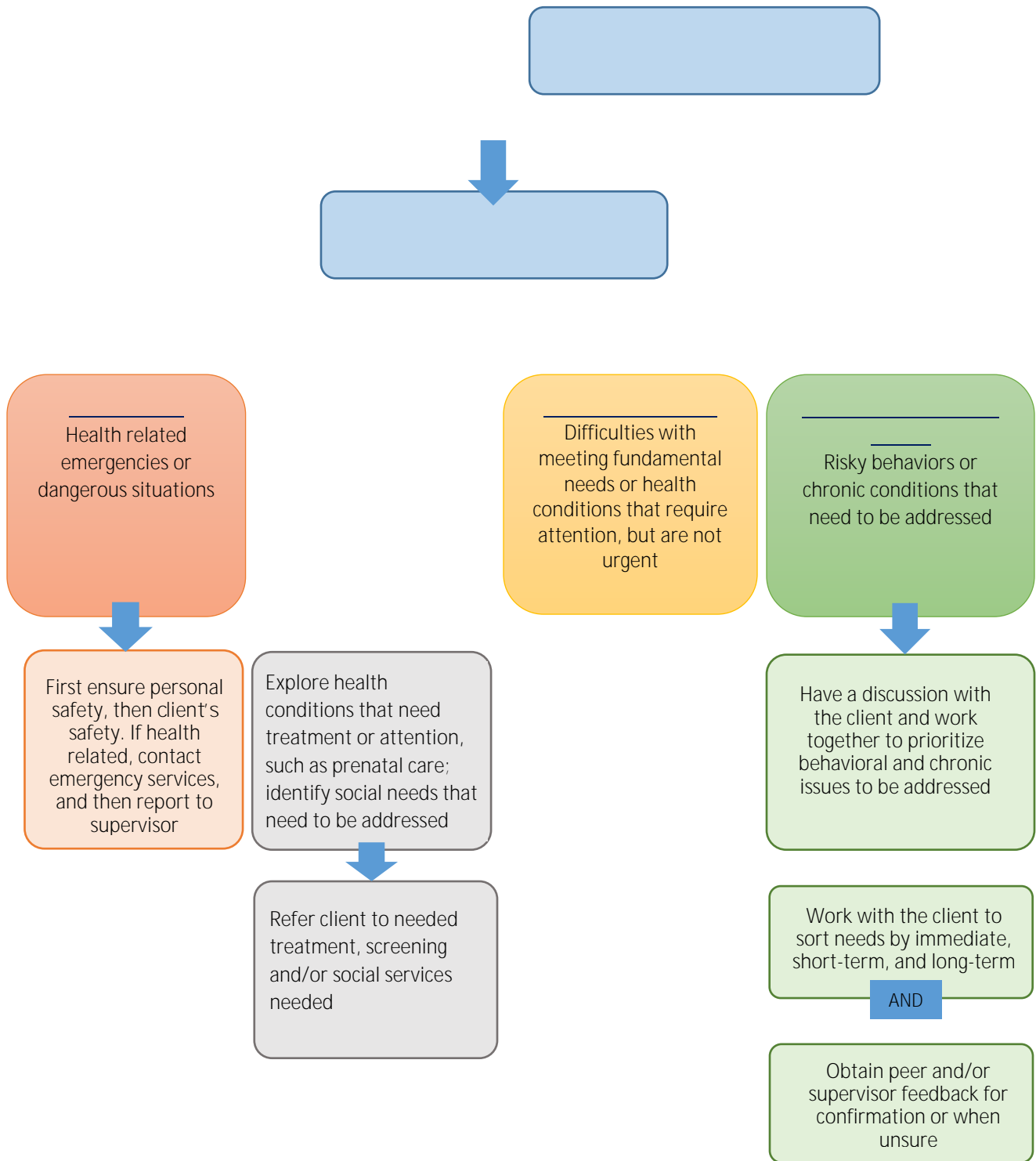
A well-known framework, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, ^[13,14] can be used as a general approach to guide the prioritization of client needs. Those needs often extend beyond healthcare. Maslow proposed that humans have common fundamental needs (Figure 1):

- refer to the very basic elements humans need to survive, such as food and shelter;
- include physical safety as well as the security of having an income, resources and health;

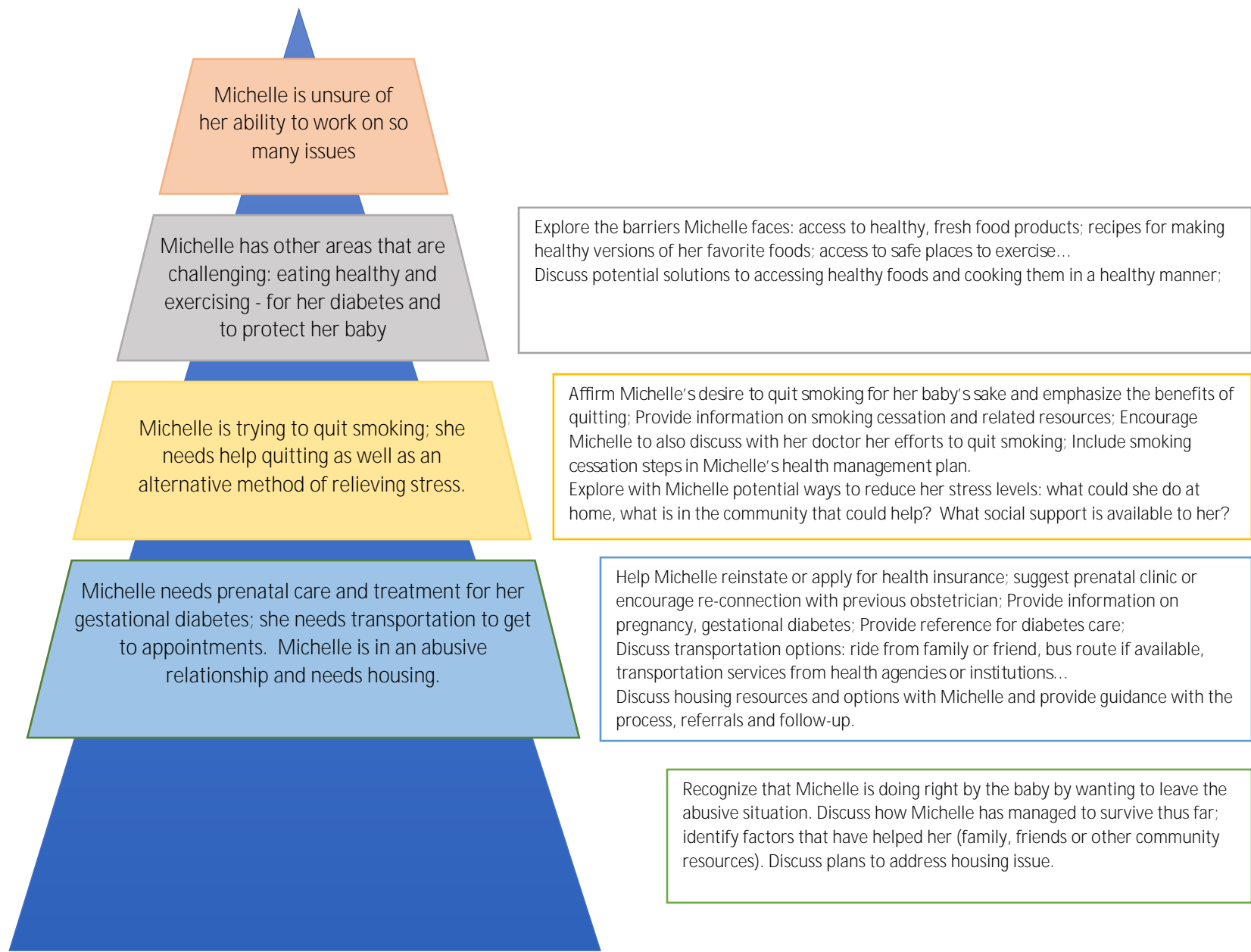
banks or shelter). Information on housing assistance or public assistance can be provided for more long term solutions. Health-related urgent needs may include health insurance, prenatal care for

The order and degree that Home Visitors assume these functions will vary based on the need being addressed and their client's current situation.

As the representatives of their program in the community, Home Visitors have the important task of working directly with clients, many of whom face multiple physical, social, economic and healthcare challenges. Home Visitors are in a key position to engage clients and empower them to be part of the process of identifying both their strengths and needs, prioritizing those needs, and developing plans to address them for the benefit of their children and families.



Note: Procedures and protocols vary by agency. Home Visitors must be aware of and follow program curriculum, processes, and protocols for addressing client needs.



1. Rosenthal EL, Rush CH, Allen CG. Understanding Scope and Competencies: A Contemporary Look at the United States Community Health Worker Field –

