

LICENSURE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Q: *Why licensure when we have certification?*

A: Certification defines and protects the title of “dietitian” in Wisconsin statutes, but does not prevent unqualified persons from practicing dietetics. Licensing of dietitians protects the public’s health by establishing minimum educational and experience criteria for those individuals who hold themselves out to be experts in food and nutrition *and* by giving the state authority to discipline unqualified persons practicing dietetics without a license.

Q: *How much will it cost a dietitian to become licensed?*

A: This will remain unchanged from \$75 every two years which is the current certification fees for Wisconsin dietitians.

Q: *What will happen to the CD credential once we get licensure?*

A: Certified Dietitian, or CD, will no longer be used in Wisconsin once the licensure bill becomes statute. The new credential will be “Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist”, or LDN, and fees for the license will replace fees previously paid for the certificate.

Q: *Will only registered dietitians qualify for licensure?*

A: During an initial grandfathering period (within one year from the date the licensure bill goes into effect), all certified dietitians submitting an application and demonstrating current certification as a dietitian in the state of Wisconsin or registration by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), credentialing agency of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, will be granted a license. Following the grandfather period, only dietitians meeting current CDR requirements as a registered dietitian will be licensed.

Q: *Will licensure impact public access to medical nutrition therapy?*

A: Licensure will improve accessibility of MNT. Many insurance companies require licensure to reimburse healthcare professionals to assure that only qualified healthcare professionals are dispensing advice. If a state doesn’t license dietitians, services may not be covered regardless of whether a physician orders them.

Q: *What are the proposed examination requirements for licensure?*

A: In order to ensure that Wisconsin’s licensed dietitians have achieved proficiency commensurate with our RD colleagues nationally, the applicant for licensure must pass the registration exam established by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ Commission on Dietetic Registration.

Q: *Will licensure provide clinical privileging for RD’s?*

A: Licensure will not assure RD’s clinical privileging but is necessary for this as it defines the scope of practice for a health care provider. Clinical privileging would still require hospitals to develop policies regarding dietitian privileges and document provider competencies to perform special tasks.

Q: Will currently practicing dietitians need to take a new exam in order to remain in practice?

A: No. Currently practicing dietitians *will* need to obtain a license in order to continue practicing; however, registered dietitians and certified dietitians who apply for licensure within the first twelve months after licensure is established and submit evidence of current registration with the Academy's Commission on Dietetic Registration or current certification as a Wisconsin dietitian will become licensed with no additional examination requirements.

Q: How many states have enacted legislation regulating dietitians?

A: Forty-six states currently have statutory provisions regarding professional regulation of dietitians and/or nutritionists. The rationale for legislatures acting to protect these titles is simple: the public deserves to know which individuals are qualified by education, experience, and examination to provide nutrition care services including medical nutrition therapy. Thirty-five of these states license dietitians, allowing the state to take action on behalf of the public against unqualified individuals.

Q: Will licensure of dietitians increase costs for Wisconsin taxpayers or healthcare institutions?

A: No. Licensure fees are structured to provide sufficient revenues to operate the already-existing Dietitians Affiliated Credentialing Board and related activities. State regulations for hospitals and nursing homes already require these institutions to utilize registered dietitians or certified dietitians, who would qualify immediately for licensure.

Q: How has the public been harmed by states not licensing dietitians?

A: Several states have documented cases of unqualified individuals giving improper nutritional advice, which has harmed patients. Individuals with medical conditions are particularly at risk especially if they are promised a cure for their condition. Unfortunately, many cases of healthcare fraud are never reported.

Q: Would licensure prohibit anyone except dietitians from giving nutrition advice?

A: No. Licensure would not affect anyone that provides "nonmedical nutrition information" meaning principles of good nutrition and food preparation, foods to be included in a normal daily diet, essential nutrients, sources of essential nutrients, recommended amounts of essential nutrients, the action of nutrients in the body and the effects of an excess or deficiency of a nutrient; nor would it affect other licensed healthcare professionals practicing within their scope. It would, however, provide recourse for victims of unqualified, unscrupulous individuals dispensing improper advice.

Q: Does the legislation recognize the role of dietetic technicians?

A: Yes. Under the proposed legislation, dietetic technicians may practice dietetics without violating the licensure requirement if they are working under the supervision of a licensed dietitian nutritionist. According to the Academy, "Given the RD's defined supervisory role in patient treatment, licensure of the RD automatically incorporates care provided by the DTR, eliminating the need for separate licensure of DTRs."

Do you have other questions?

Please contact Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at 920-560-5619, or email eatrightwisc@gmail.com