



SUPPORT HB12-1060

LICENSURE FOR COLORADO DIETITIANS

Representative Tom Massey and Senator Betty Boyd

Co-sponsors: Rep. Liston, Rep. Ferrandino, Rep. D. Gardner, Rep. Kefalas, Rep. McCann, Rep. Swerdfeger, Sen. Steadman, Sen. Tochtrop.

BILL SUMMARY:

HB12-1060 creates state licensure for Colorado Dietitians. The bill will title protect the word dietitian and licensed dietitian. To receive licensure an applicant must provide proof of education and field experience of not less than 1200 hours. It defines dietetics, medical nutrition therapy, and the nutrition care process. The bill also defines the scope of practice as the practice of dietetics including medical nutrition therapy and the nutrition care process. The bill provides exemptions for individuals and retailers and others who provide non-medical nutrition information or services. Dietitians from another state with similar requirements may be licensed by endorsement.

WHAT IS A REGISTERED DIETITIAN?

Registered Dietitians are highly educated food and nutrition experts who have a minimum of a 4 year degree, a 6-12 month internship and have passed a National exam. They work in Health Care facilities, hospitals, long-term care settings and the community. Dietitians provide care by applying the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics evidence based nutrition practice guidelines which illustrates best practices for medical nutrition therapy to address chronic health problems such as diabetes in concert with licensed health care professionals. Medical nutrition therapy is linked to reduced costs related to physician time, medication use and hospital admissions for people with obesity, and diabetes, as well as other chronic diseases.

WHY COLORADO NEEDS LICENSURE FOR REGISTERED DIETITIANS

47 states currently regulate dietitians. The Colorado Dietetic Association (CDA) submitted a sunrise application to DORA and DORA, citing the large number of states who currently regulate dietitians, concluded CDA did not need to undergo a sunrise review and could therefore move forward with pursuing licensure.

CDA's licensure will ensure that dietitian jobs go to Colorado dietitians. The Dietitian licensure bill has been drafted using The American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics model legislation. The legislation will define the requirements to be a "licensed" dietitian as one who provides medical nutrition therapy. Currently dietitians enjoy title protection but do not enjoy the regulation of their practice on a state level. Several states surrounding Colorado are moving towards requiring licensure to provide Dietetic services in hospitals such as the Veteran's Affairs Hospital in Utah.

Dietitian Licensure FAQs

Why should Colorado License Dietitians?

Licensure will strengthen the dietetic profession and protect Colorado jobs for Colorado dietitians. Licensure will also ensure that Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) is provided by trained dietitians. Medical Nutrition Therapy is a specific nutrition service used by dietitians for the purpose of disease management, to treat or rehabilitate an illness or injury or condition. Licensing dietitians will make it easier for dietitians to receive insurance reimbursement increasing the likelihood patients can access important nutrition services. Currently 47 other states license or certify dietitians it is the right time for Colorado to move forward with licensure.

Will Licensure help save the state health care dollars?

Licensure will help dietitians get insurance reimbursement which will increase access to dietitians and MNT, potentially saving health care dollars. MNT and evidence-based nutrition counseling can prevent complications of many diseases. For example, a person with diabetes who receives MNT from a licensed dietitian may be able to reduce medications they are taking and prevent complications such as nerve damage. MNT can also reduce hospitalizations and shorten length of hospital stays.

Will Licensure cost the state?

Licensure will not create any additional cost to the public and may save future health care costs by providing people with preventative nutrition education and support from dietitians. Licensure registration and renewal fees will cover the cost for licensure and enforcement.

Will Licensure restrict other nutrition professions?

Licensure for dietitians will not prohibit other professionals from providing basic nutrition counseling, however MNT must be provided by a licensed registered dietitians who has extensive education and training. Other nutrition counselors will still be able to provide nutrition counseling and advice, but not call themselves a licensed dietitian or provide MNT. Licensure for dietitians will not prevent the public from choosing to get nutrition information from a health food store employee, nutritionist, or exercise physiologists.

Is the public harmed when dietitians are not licensed?

CDA has collected documented cases of individuals giving improper nutrition advice which has harmed patients. Licensure would help designate dietitians as the experts in MNT. Additionally a licensure board will have the authority to hold licensed dietitians accountable.

Evidence Based Practice

Dietitians, who are registered through the Commission on Dietetic Registration and regulated in 47 states practice according to specific guidelines outlined in Medical Nutrition Therapy* and the Nutrition Care Process*. These are based on evidence-based practice.

Evidence-Based Dietetics Practice is the use of systematically reviewed scientific evidence in making food and nutrition practice decisions by integrating best available evidence with professional expertise and client values to improve outcomes.

Key Considerations:

- Evidence-based dietetics practice is consistent with the general definition and key considerations of “Evidence-Based Practice” in healthcare outlined in the Academy's Scope of Practice Dietetic Framework Definition of Terms.
- Evidence-based dietetics practice is based on the best available evidence including research, national guidelines, policies, consensus statements, expert opinion and quality improvement data.
- The determination of “best available evidence” is based on the hierarchy of evidence.
- The systematic review of scientific evidence is an ongoing process.
- Evidence-based dietetics practice involves continuing evaluation of outcomes which becomes part of the evidence base.
- Evidence-based dietetics practice applies to individual clients, customers and communities.

Definitions:

**Medical Nutrition Therapy* means the use of specific nutrition services for disease management and to treat or rehabilitate and illness, injury or condition. It includes a) Interpreting dietary data and recommending nutrient needs relative to medically prescribed diets, including tube feedings, specialized intravenous solutions and specialized oral feedings, b) analysis of food and prescription drug interactions, and c) Developing and managing food service operations, the chief function of which is nutrition care and the provision of medically prescribed diets

**Nutrition care process* means the systematic problem-solving method that dietitians use to critically think and make decisions when providing medical nutrition therapy or to address nutrition-related problems and provide safe, effective, high-quality care. The nutrition care process consists of four distinct, but interrelated steps: 1) Nutrition assessment, 2) Nutrition diagnosis, 3) Nutrition intervention and 4) Nutrition monitoring and evaluation.