

Nature of Nutrition and Dietetics Regulation

Regulation of the nutrition and dietetics profession increases public safety by reducing the prevalence of unethical and unsafe practices. At present, 48 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have statutory provisions regulating the practice of nutrition and dietetics and/or associated titles used by practitioners, such as “dietitian” and “nutritionist.”

Michigan has no provision. The Academy’s dedication to protecting consumers is reflected in our advocacy to enact, maintain or strengthen states’ dietetics licensure laws that hold these health care practitioners to high standards. This commitment is a central part of the Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession for the Academy.

Licensure Protects the Public

- Licensure is common and virtually mandatory for health care professions and other occupations in which potential harm may result from incompetent or unqualified to practice.
- Licensure helps consumers identify dietitians and nutritionists who meet minimum qualifications.
- Regulation increases safety by mitigating unethical and unsafe practices.
- Standardized criteria facilitate services across states via telehealth.
- In many states, registered dietitian nutritionists, like nurses, physicians, pharmacists, psychologists, paramedics, lawyers, teachers and certified public accountants, must maintain a license to practice.

The most effective nutrition and dietetics regulations include two parts:

- Establishment of a scope of practice for nutrition professionals who meet the specified minimum credentials to perform certain tasks, such as medical nutrition therapy or other complex nutrition care services.
- A legislatively protected scope of practice, meaning only those individuals with sufficient qualifications to become properly licensed may legally provide services within the regulated scope of practice.

High Standards for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)

The Academy believes that licensure is especially important when it comes to the standards set for MNT and other complex dietetics and nutrition services. Such services should only be provided by individuals who have specialized training and competencies. Therefore, the Academy collaborates with other professions in the nutrition space - physicians, chiropractors, pharmacists, certified nutrition specialists, and health coaches - on various legislative and licensure initiatives. Licensure qualifications in all states with licensure regulations are increasingly based on extensive education and experience standards essential to providing MNT. All Michigan citizens should be assured of the highest quality, science-based and safest nutrition services available.

The Environment in Michigan

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Michigan (MI Department of Health and Human Services).
- 12% of Michigan residents are living with diabetes, while another 37% have prediabetes and may be unaware (American Diabetes Association). Diagnosed diabetes costs an estimated \$9.7 billion in Michigan each year (American Diabetes Association).
- Michigan’s adult obesity rate is 32%, up from 22% in 2000 (Center for Disease Control; State of Obesity). The cost of obesity to Michigan is over \$58 billion annually (Obesity Care Advocacy Network).

Evidence-based, MNT provided by qualified nutrition professionals will help improve quality of life as well as lower health care costs, avoid expensive medications and increase productivity of Michigan’s workforce. Ensuring that Michigan residents have access to competent, qualified nutrition advice to address chronic conditions would be best achieved by passing professional regulation for dietitian nutritionists.

For more information, visit www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/licensure/professional-regulation-of-dietitians