

# Consumer Protection Through Professional Regulation

## Leave Behind for Michigan Policymakers

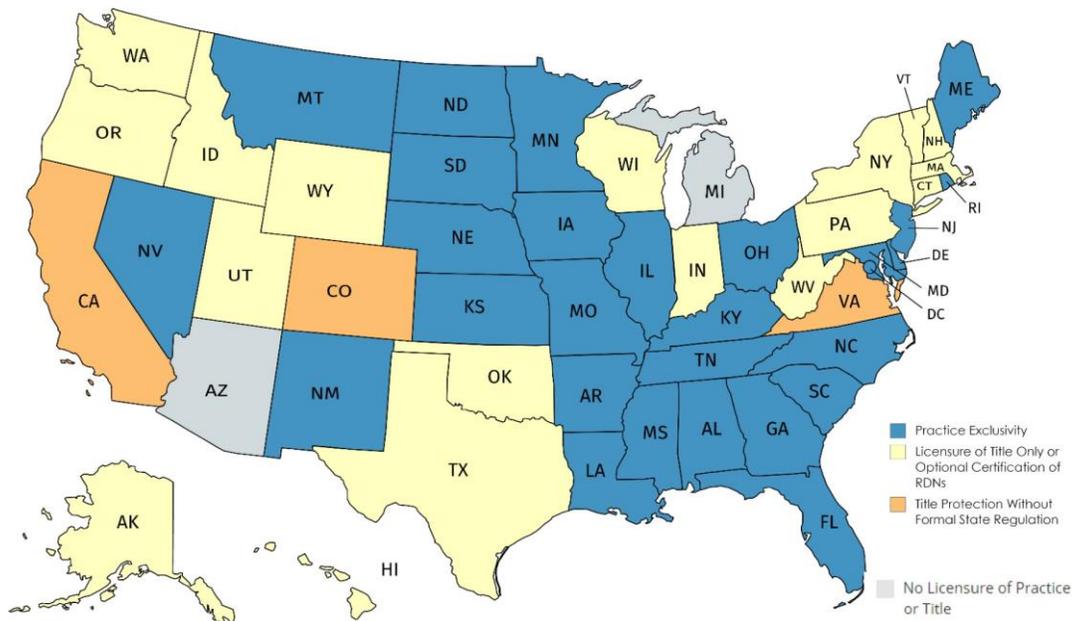
### About Us

The Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is an affiliate of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. There are over 5,000 registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and dietetics technicians, registered (DTRs) in Michigan. Michigan is also a center of dietetics education, with 22 accredited programs providing education and training for dietetic students and interns. Visit the Michigan Academy website at: [www.eatrightmich.org](http://www.eatrightmich.org).

### Commitment to Licensure

As a nonpartisan organization, the Academy supports the regulation of the practice of nutrition and dietetics, which helps minimize the dangers of unscientific, inappropriate treatments, thereby improving the public health.

With the availability of so many sources and opinions about nutrition — not all of which are reliable — consumers are understandably uncertain as to which providers can best meet their needs for competent guidance about food and nutrition. Additionally, quality health care requires access to qualified advice about the most effective therapies for particular diseases and health conditions, especially given complex or unique dietary requirements. Unfortunately, patients and communities receiving conflicting, confusing and often inaccurate nutrition advice bear the physical and financial costs, often resulting in significant harm and even death.



## 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

- According to the MDHHS, heart disease is the leading cause of death in Michigan
  - By 2030, heart disease cases in Michigan are projected to rise from 600,000 to 2.9 million.
  - In 2010, \$10.2 billion was spent on heart disease related medical costs in Michigan.
  - In the past five years in Michigan 58,298 women have died of heart disease. This number of women could easily fill Comerica Park for a Detroit Tigers baseball game
- 12% of Michigan residents are living with diabetes, while another 37% have prediabetes and may be un- aware (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 AdvocacyNetwork).

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.