

# Kari Barden, RDN

## Corporate Dietitian/Wellness Program Manager

### **What is your job title?**

Corporate Dietitian/Wellness Program Manager

### **Where do you work?**

MGM Grand Casino and Resort - Detroit

### **How long have you been at this job?**

1 year.

### **Please describe your job (including typical role, population served and anything else you feel is important in understanding the job):**

I work with the 3,400+ employees at MGM Grand to improve their overall health and wellness. I provide individual counseling, large group presentations, and coordinate challenges and fun events to get the employees engaged. If the employees meet with me three times per year, they are qualified for a discount on their weekly health insurance premium.

### **What are possible places of employment for your position?**

Any company that is willing to prioritize the health and wellness of their employees. Corporate wellness is growing across the United States. There are many possibilities now and I expect even more opportunities in corporate wellness in the future.

### **What is your favorite thing about your job?**

Getting to help my employees make realistic, long lasting, lifestyle changes. We work together very closely so we form great relationships. My position is also very flexible, I make my own work schedule, I have my own office, and I am in charge of the program so I can do what I would like with it.

### **What is your educational background (where did you go to school)?**

I attended Madonna University for my Bachelor's degree in Nutrition/Dietetics. I did my dietetic internship at The Ohio State University.

### **What is your job/work background?**

I started working when I was 16 years old at Outback Steakhouse. I worked there for 6 years, moving up from hostess, to waitress, bartender, and eventually an assistant manager. I am extremely thankful for my time spent in food service. Many of the skills I use every day at my job, I learned from the restaurant industry. When I was a senior in my undergrad I got a position at Michigan Medicine as a diet tech. I was



able to improve my clinical skills and get comfortable working in a hospital before my internship which was very helpful. After my time at UofM, I went to OSU for my internship. I was offered the job with MGM shortly after completing my internship and passing my RD exam.

**Do you do any volunteer work?**

Yes, I have been an active volunteer with the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics since I was a sophomore in college. I currently sit on the board of directors as the newsletter director. I also spent five years coaching a competitive middle school pom team in my area, Livonia Pom.

**What do you like and what do you not like about the field in general?**

I truly love this field for so many reasons. It is the perfect mix of food, science, and helping others.

I don't like the stigma that RD's aren't ever meant to make good money. That is not true. Your earning potential is based on how hard you are willing to work and what skills you choose to develop. While clinical nutrition is an extremely important part of our field, we need to remember that dietitians have other skills to offer to the workplace as well.

**What do you think are the most important things for students and/or new RDs to know?**

Always know your worth and the skills you bring to the team. We need to value ourselves as professionals before anyone else can properly do it.

Don't be afraid to look for jobs that are outside of the "typical" dietitian positions. I found my current position on Indeed by looking up wellness/management positions. If you find a job that you are interested in or are passionate about, apply! You never know, you might find a job that you love. :)