

Protecting and Promoting the Health of Iowans Through Dietetic Licensure



Dietetic Licensure is essential to the practice of medical nutrition therapy and the provision of specialized nutrition care to patients and clients in hospitals, clinics, long-term care, and private practice.

Licensure is beneficial to Iowans, health care systems, health care teams, the Iowa workforce, and Iowa's economy.

Similar to other healthcare professions, dietetics licensure **protects** Iowa citizens from incompetent or unqualified nutrition care.

At present, **47 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia** have statutory provisions regulating the practice of nutrition and dietetics and/or associated titles used by such practitioners, such as “dietitian” and “nutritionist.”

While Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) practice in a variety of settings, licensure is particularly important in the context of the practice of **medical nutrition therapy (MNT)**, which is nutrition care aimed at treating a disease state or medical condition. MNT differs from general nutrition or health education.

MNT provides RDNs with the ability to **manage complex medical conditions** such as: diabetes, heart disease, cancer, kidney disease, malnutrition, gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, and nutrition support through feeding tubes or IV; as well as providing individualized nutritional guidance within the setting of specific surgeries, drugs, or treatments.

Without licensure, anyone, qualified or not, may provide dietetic services. Licensure ensures **only qualified nutrition practitioners** are authorized to treat individuals with medical conditions, creating accountability and safeguarding the public by regulating all providers of medical nutrition therapy services, not just RDNs.

Iowa law provides that treating conditions is the practice of medicine, with the caveat that such regulation does not apply to “*licensed health professionals who are exclusively engaged in the practice of their respective professions.*”¹ Without licensure, Registered Dietitian Nutritionists practicing medical nutrition therapy would be unlawfully practicing medicine.



Dietetic licensure supports employment opportunities and nutrition care access in Iowa:

- Many Iowa RDNs depend on their services being **reimbursed by insurance payors** who often look to licensure to identify who is a qualified provider of MNT. Requiring licensure of qualified dietetics practitioners expands nutrition care access.
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in collaboration with the Council of State Governments is working to streamline licensure of dietitians by introducing an **interstate compact**. This effort would significantly broaden nutrition care access, the income opportunities of dietitians, and support active duty military and their spouses. States are able to participate in the Dietitian Licensure Compact only if they license dietitians. Maintaining licensure would increase opportunities for RDNs to participate in the compact, enticing **more RDNs to live in Iowa** and contribute to the Iowa economy. This could be especially helpful to dietitians who live on/near the borders of our state. States without licensure, such as Michigan, are increasingly seeing patients/clients receive MNT outside of their state.

Dietetic Registration and Dietetic Licensure Serve Different Functions

Dietetic Registration	Dietetic Licensure
Credentialing through the Commission on Dietetic Registration sets and evaluates minimum professional standards (rigorous, evidence-based education and training) for RDNs and dietetic technicians, registered.	Licensure provides protection for the public to prevent harm and when there may have been harm caused as a result of negligence, dereliction of care, impairment by addictions, incompetence, or criminal violations.
Relying on CDR eliminates any state oversight/authority in regulating the profession. Registration does not offer as robust of protection to the public.	Licensure offers a more robust course of action in response to harm done by an RDN.

¹ 653—1.1(17A,147) Definitions