
The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) recommended model for future education in nutrition and dietetics was released in the *Rationale Document* in February 2015. One of the recommendations in the document was **preparation of an associate's degree prepared practitioner** who was envisioned to provide support in the community setting. This position was originally termed a Community Nutrition and Health Assistant and was based on the growing use of community support workers and promotoras (lay Hispanic community member who is trained to provide basic health education) in many communities.

In Spring 2015, ACEND hired consultant, Leanne Worsfold, to conduct **focus groups and targeted interviews** to help ACEND better understand the possible role of this associate's degree prepared, community-based nutrition and dietetics practitioner. Two focus groups were held with 17 registered dietitian nutritionists (RDN) who worked in community and population health to explore the current roles and responsibilities of nutrition and dietetic practitioners working in community and population health positions. In addition, two structured interviews were conducted with individuals who have provided leadership to community health initiatives to explore the roles and responsibilities of the community support worker (CSW) and discuss possible future roles and responsibilities of a community support person who had some training in food and nutrition. The results of this work have been **added to the *Rationale Document*** found at www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards.

What was learned is that **community support worker type positions exists in the US** and in other countries including Canada and the United Kingdom. Terms such as dietetic support worker, community support worker, community health worker, and promotoras are most commonly used to describe these practitioners who interview, counsel, and assist clients with personal and social problems. **There is no set curriculum for this support worker** but various groups in the US such as the American Association of Diabetes Educators and US Cooperative Extension System have participated in projects to create curricula for these workers. The states of Massachusetts, New York, Illinois and Virginia are seeking state licensure and Maine is seeking title protection of Community Health Worker. Currently ongoing individual credentialing is not required as risk to public is perceived as being low. Many see the potential for large increases in demand from insurance companies for these support worker in community settings due to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

As a result of this data collection and recommendations from the Standards Committee and Expanded Standards Work Group, **the ACEND Board changed the title of this future practitioner to Nutrition Health Worker** to be more consistent with current practice. Because of information in the environmental scan and these supplementary data, the ACEND Board believes that in addition to the RDN and NDTR there will be a growing need in community settings for a support worker who focuses on nutrition and health promotion, assists in monitoring plans of care, works with RDNs and other health professionals, demonstrates food preparation skills, provides support for the elderly, older adult, child and maternal health groups, assists with diabetes education programs and school-based education, helps build relationships in the community, and collects basic assessment data (Hemoglobin, BP, blood glucose level, weight). **ACEND is continuing its work to develop competencies expected of an associate's degree prepared Nutrition Health Worker** in the future. **Please contact ACEND to answer any questions you might have about accreditation issues** (acend@eatright.org; 312-899-4872). Recent questions sent to ACEND with ACEND responses are included on the next pages.

Questions That Have Come to ACEND

Each month ACEND receives emails and phone calls with questions about its work on the future education model. In addition to answering these questions when they are asked, ACEND will share them each month with the ACEND response to provide additional information for stakeholders.

Question: How will ACEND be measuring outcomes of the graduates of the pilot programs for the master's degree?

ACEND Response: The strategies for gathering data from pilot programs and its graduates have not yet been finalized. ACEND values educator input on what types of information would be important to obtain from pilot programs and its graduates. Please consider attending the ACEND, CDR, NDEP roundtable discussions at FNCE on Monday, October 5 from 11:00 – 12:30 in the Omni Nashville Hotel Legends D Ballroom to participate in discussion on this and other education issues or send your ideas to acend@eatright.org.

Question: Will students be expected to do their internship before or after the master's degree program in the future education model?

ACEND Response: Completion of supervised practice either before or after completion of the master's degree is not part of the recommended future model of education in nutrition and dietetics. ACEND intends that the experience components will be integrated with the master's degree coursework to prepare students to demonstrate the competencies required of entry level dietitian nutritionists. ACEND will encourage innovation in how this experiential learning and its integration are done and will use pilot programs to help define options for how this integration might be accomplished. Although the coursework and experience will be integrated, there are likely to be many models of how such integration might occur. One such innovative model will be presented by Dr. Cathy English and Dr. Barbara Woodland at the ACEND Forum at FNCE on Tuesday October 6 at noon in the Convention Center room 103.

Question: Will ACEND be providing an update on the future education model and allowing time for educator questions on the model at FNCE?

ACEND Response: Updates about the future education model and time for discussion of the model are planned for FNCE this year. At the ACEND Forum, which will be held on Tuesday, October 6 at noon, Dr. Sue Leson, the chair of the Standards Committee will be providing an update on the work that ACEND is doing on both the 2017 update of the 2012 Standards and the standards for the future education model. At that same session Dr. Cathy English and Dr. Barbara Woodland will share the work they have done in launching their integrated master's degree internship program. ACEND, CDR, and NDEP will host round table discussions in an open session on Monday, October 5 at 11 am to allow time for discussion with educators on any issues of concern, including the future education model. ACEND Staff will be available at the ACEND booth during FNCE to answer questions you might have.

Question: What did ACEND do with the stakeholder input gathered on the future education model?

ACEND Response: ACEND hired an external qualitative research consultant to review the comments and identify themes. A summary of this work is included in the *Rationale Document* found on the ACEND Standards Committee website: www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards. Also on the website is an updated FAQ and a webinar held with the Academy House of Delegates to share information and address HOD questions.

Question: Will ACEND be requiring prerequisites for education programs in the future education model?

ACEND Response: ACEND will identify competencies for each degree level program. ACEND currently does not specify what programs must have admission requirements, only that programs need to be able to demonstrate how their students are meeting the required competencies. ACEND anticipates that each program will set the prerequisite requirements for admission into the program and will be responsible for ensuring that its graduates achieve the competencies specified for that degree level program.

Question: I have a coordinated program and my university does not want to go to a graduate degree. Where will my program fit in the future model?

ACEND Response: Although ACEND is recommending that future dietitian nutritionist programs be master's degree programs with integrated experience, coordinated undergraduate (CU) programs are not being discontinued at this time. In 2017, ACEND will release revisions to the 2012 Standards for CU Programs, which will continue to be offered at the bachelor's degree level. ACEND also plans to release standards for the future model bachelor's degree level nutrition and dietetic technician programs in 2017 for programs to voluntarily adopt as pilot programs. Outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes decisions about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs. If a decision is made to discontinue accreditation of CU programs in the future, existing CU programs would need to determine at that time whether or not to convert to the new bachelor's or master's degree standards or to close.

Question: What is the difference between the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR)? Are they one organization or do they function separately?

ACEND Response: Although the Academy, ACEND, and CDR all are committed to the nutrition and dietetics profession, they have different roles. As regulatory agencies, ACEND and CDR are required to operate and make decisions administratively autonomously from each other and the Academy.

The Academy is a membership organization committed to advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. The Academy has a Board of Directors (BOD) and a House of Delegates (HOD) who focus on issues within the profession of nutrition and dietetics. The Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Practitioners is an organizational unit within the Academy whose leaders represent educator's views to various Academy units. The Council on Future Practice (CFP) is a committee of the HOD whose purpose is to project the future practice needs for the profession. For questions or concerns related to the Academy, please contact ceo@eatright.org. **The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics ACEND (ACEND)** is a regulatory agency recognized by the US Department of Education, who serves the public by establishing and enforcing standards for the educational preparation of nutrition and dietetics practitioners and by recognizing nutrition and dietetics education programs that meet its standards. ACEND is administratively autonomous from the Academy and CDR meaning that the ACEND Board acts independently in all matters pertaining to accreditation including accreditation decisions, standards setting, establishment of fees and approval of budgets to administer its program of work. For questions or concerns related to ACEND, please contact acend@eatright.org. **The Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR)** is a regulatory credentialing agency recognized by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, who serves the public by establishing and enforcing standards for certification, recertification and the Code of Ethics and by issuing credentials to individuals who meet these standards. CDR is administratively autonomous from the Academy and ACEND, meaning that the CDR Commission acts independently in all matters pertaining to certification, including certification eligibility requirements, standard setting, establishment of certification and recertification requirements, testing vendor selection, establishment of certification fees and administering credentialing programs. For questions or concerns related to CDR, please contact cdr@eatright.org. During the past five years, ACEND, CDR and CFP each have separately gathered and reviewed information about future practice in nutrition and dietetics and the governing boards of each have separately made recommendations about the educational preparation needed for future practice in nutrition and dietetics. Coincidentally, all have recommended that the educational preparation of the registered dietitian nutritionist be elevated to the master's degree level.

Question: Who writes and approves messages, handouts and presentations that ACEND distributes?

ACEND Response: The writing of messages, handouts and presentations typically begins in an ACEND committee. Communications, such as this one related to the future education model, for example, begin in the ACEND Standards Committee/Expanded Standards Workgroup and are submitted to the ACEND Board. The ACEND Board reviews, revises if needed, and approves information to be distributed to ensure that the ACEND Board's vision and decisions made are being clearly and consistently conveyed to stakeholders. No one from units within the Academy or CDR are involved in the writing, review, or approval of ACEND messages, handouts, or presentations.