The Registered Dietitian Nutritionist in Interprofessional Collaboration and Practice

The World Health Organization states that collaborative interprofessional practice strengthens health systems, patient satisfaction, acceptance of care, and improves patient outcomes. Registered Dietitians (RDs) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) are integral members of the health care team as the nutrition experts. Registered Dietitian Nutritionist need to complete multiple layers of education and training established by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics.

Using the framework of the Core Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice 2016 Update, as part of the interprofessional healthcare team, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist can:

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<th>COMPETENCIES</th>
<th>PRACTICE EXAMPLES</th>
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<td>(Values/Ethics for Interprofessional Practice)</td>
<td>Nutrition and dietetics practitioners have voluntarily adopted the Code of Ethics to reflect the values and ethical principles guiding the nutrition and dietetics profession and to set forth commitments and obligations of the practitioner to the public, clients, the profession, colleagues, and other professionals.</td>
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<td>(Roles/Responsibilities)</td>
<td>Dietitians, experts in food and nutrition, use the best evidence available along with clinical experience to help consumers and patients prevent and manage chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and gastrointestinal issues. Dietitians perform nutrition-focused physical exams to identify malnutrition and manage the Nutrition Care Process to improve the health of patients and populations.</td>
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<td>(Interprofessional Communication)</td>
<td>As active members in the health care team, dietitians use tools from the Team STEPPS to optimize patient outcomes and teamwork with other professionals. Dietitians are also trained in the skills of motivational interviewing to work with individuals in client-centered practice. Dietitians diagnose and treat malnutrition using standardized procedural terminology and team documentation in the health record.</td>
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<td>(Teams and Teamwork)</td>
<td>Committed to life-long learning and continuing competence, dietitians promote a broad skill set in many specialty areas and advance level of practice such as organ transplantation, eating disorders, oncology, and diabetes education. They often hold leadership positions within professional networks and organizational hierarchies to promote effective patient- and family-centered care in planning, delivery, and evaluation of health care that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships.</td>
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Educational and professional requirements:
Registered Dietitians (RDs) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs)\(^4\) are food and nutrition experts who have met the following criteria and earned the professional credential. All RDs or RDNs:

- Complete a minimum of a bachelor’s degree or master’s degree for entry level in 2024.
- Complete 1200 hours of supervised practice through an ACEND accredited Dietetic Internship or approved coordinated program.
- Pass a national examination by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR).
- Maintain continuing competence through commitment to lifelong learning.

College coursework for dietetics students includes a variety of subjects, including food and nutrition sciences, biochemistry, physiology, microbiology, anatomy, chemistry, foodservice systems, business, pharmacology, culinary arts, behavioral sciences and communication. In addition, many states have regulatory laws (professional licensure) for food and nutrition practitioners. All states accept the RD or RDN credential for licensure practice.

Specialty practice:
Some RDs or RDNs hold additional voluntary certifications in specialized areas of practice. These are awarded through the credentialing agency of the Academy and/or through other medical and nutritional organization.

- Certified Specialist in Gerontology Nutrition
- Certified Specialist in Oncology Nutrition
- Certified Specialist in Renal Nutrition
- Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics
- Certified Specialist in Obesity & Weight Management
- Certified Specialist in Pediatric Nutrition
- Certified Specialist in Pediatric Critical Care
- Certified Diabetes Educator
- Certified Nutrition Support Clinician
- Certified Lactation Consultant

Practice settings:
RDs or RDNs lead the nutrition care process in a wide variety of settings. Many work environments, particularly those in medical and health-care settings, require that an individual maintain the RD or RDN credential as well as professional licensing.

- Hospitals and ambulatory clinics
- Long-term care and rehabilitation
- Collegiate and professional sports
- Agriculture and sustainability programs
- Corporate wellness
- Consumer health promotion
- Retail and nutrition products
- Research
- Scientific communications
- Private practice
- Wellness and lifestyle coaching
- Consulting
- Community programs
- Public health programs and centers
- Governmental and regulatory agencies
- Universities and medical centers
- Training and organizational development
- Marketing and media

References:

Developed by the NDEP Interprofessional Education Committee 2/2021. Questions: ndep@eattright.org