

House of Delegates

Academy Actions on Critical Issues

Every year, the House of Delegates (HOD) surveys the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics membership to gather Critical Issues to potentially be addressed by the HOD with the goal of recommending the next best steps to address them.

What Is a Critical Issue?

Critical Issues arise from a variety of sources and have certain characteristics. Critical Issues may:

- Address key strategic questions the profession must answer to illuminate choices and challenges that will need to be overcome moving forward for the envisioned future that aligns with and supports the strategic mission, vision, and focus set forth by the Academy;
- Cut across multiple discipline areas;
- Impact the nutrition and dietetics profession in three or more years; or
- Have a short-term or immediate impact on the profession.

In the most recent survey, some popular Critical Issues submitted by members were not prioritized for dialogue by the HOD. It is not that these issues were not deemed important to the future of the profession. To the contrary, due to their importance there are other organizational units within the Academy already working hard on them. Below are key messages about each issue and some important Academy accomplishments or outcomes related to the specific issue. If the issue was dialogued during a HOD meeting within the last 10 years, it is indicated and outcomes (“meeting recaps”) can be found [here](#).

What Are These Issues and What Is Being Done to Address Them?

Critical Issue: Nationwide Licensure

HOD Meeting

2011

Key Messages for Members

- The health and safety of the public is the Academy’s top priority.
- The Academy is committed to advocating for strong consumer protection laws that protect the health and safety of patients by recognizing RDNs’ qualifications as the benchmark for licensure.
- Registered dietitian nutritionists’ unique education and training establishes them as the food and nutrition experts. The Academy is committed to making everyone aware of the safe and effective care assured by RDNs’ expertise, including the general public, other health care professionals and policy makers.
- Medical nutrition therapy and other complex nutrition and dietetics services should be provided by registered dietitian nutritionists who have specialized education and training to do so and licensure laws should reflect that.

- Unqualified individuals risk serious harm by providing nutrition counseling to treat chronic conditions and diseases; licensure recognizes registered dietitian nutritionists have the education and experience to provide nutrition care services safely and effectively.

As both qualifications for the RDN credential and RDNs' scope of practice grow and evolve, licensure laws should be able to grow and evolve with them.

Academy Accomplishments/Outcomes

- In the first three months of 2022 alone, in addition to the [great news](#) about the [favorable ruling](#) in the Florida licensure case, the West Virginia Academy successfully defended its licensure board from threatened termination, the Georgia Academy and Kansas Academy successfully prevented opponents from weakening their respective licensure laws into title protection acts, and a vigorous free speech challenge to Mississippi's practice act went away when the Department of Health clarified a license was needed in the state to provide MNT. Efforts to enact or strengthen licensure laws or obtain therapeutic diet ordering ability this year continue in Illinois, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.
- In 2021, affiliates passed stronger, updated licensure laws in Nevada and North Dakota, prevented opponents from weakening their respective licensure laws into title protection acts in Missouri and Ohio, worked to strengthen regulations in numerous states, avoided sunseting of their licensure law in New Mexico and Texas, and worked to strengthen and modernize licensure regulations in Indiana, North Carolina, and Washington.
- Ongoing licensure initiatives making it easier for RDNs and NDTRs to work across state lines and provide telehealth, including synthesizing states' qualifications for a license, enacting legislation facilitating licensure by reciprocity, upon agreements between states, and during emergency situations. See: [Licensure and Telehealth](#) page; [Licensure Guidance for RDNs During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) page.
- <https://www.eatrightpro.org/leadership/governance/committees/consumer-protection-and-licensure-subcommittee>
- <https://www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/licensure/professional-regulation-of-dietitians>

Critical Issue: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA)

HOD Meetings

2020, 2021

Key Messages for Members

- The Academy Board of Directors approved the IDEA Committee's four IDEA Action Plan goals and implemented them into the Academy's Strategic Plan. The IDEA Committee drafted strategies and measurable tactics to fill out the action plan and meet those goals.
- The IDEA Committee surveyed Academy units and groups to establish baseline data for the IDEA Action Plan's tactics. The data obtained from this survey provides a point from which to measure future growth in IDEA initiatives.
- An article entitled "[Advancing Equity: The Academy's Commitment to Supporting Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access](#)" was published in the January *Journal* and can be found on the

online IDEA Hub, which features Academy Group IDEA spotlights, videos/webinars, and up-to-date IDEA content.

Academy Accomplishments/Outcomes

- [IDEA Hub](#)

Critical Issue: Reimbursement

HOD Meeting
2013

Key Messages for Members

- Academy representatives serve on American Medical Association committees that create new [CPT codes](#) and associated reimbursement values. They work to expand CPT codes available for use by RDNs, including online digital evaluation and management services and health and wellness coaching.
- The Academy works to expand access to RDNs and coverage of medical nutrition therapy and other nutrition services through both the legislative and regulatory arenas via the [Medical Nutrition Therapy Act](#), the [Treat and Reduce Obesity Act](#), the [Expanding Access to Diabetes Self-Management Training Act](#), the [Nutrition CARE Act](#), the [Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act](#) and [comments](#) to CMS on proposed rules.
- The Academy continuously advocates on members' behalf with federal and state policy makers and commercial payers for access to RDNs and nutrition services via [telehealth](#).
- The Nutrition Services Payment Committee produces resources to support members' ability to increase RDN recognition and coverage for RDN services and maximize payment streams in various practice settings via fee-for-service and [value-based payment models](#). Efforts include collaborations with key external stakeholders, including [primary care providers](#).
- In collaboration with the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN), the Academy educates public and private payers on the use of appropriate criteria for identifying malnutrition and advocates for appropriate payment for inpatient claims for malnutrition diagnostic codes.

Academy Accomplishments/Outcomes

- [MNT References in the Eatright STORE](#)
- [Toolkits in the Eatright STORE](#)
- <https://www.eatrightpro.org/payment>
- [Telehealth Payment](#)
- [Promoting Nutrition Services](#)
- [Payment and Reimbursement Discussion Board](#)
- [Malnutrition Coding and Payment](#)

Critical Issue: Food Access

HOD Meetings
2013, 2015, 2019

Key Messages for Members

- The Academy and its members work to improve health and reduce food insecurity for pregnant women, new mothers and their children, school children and older Americans aging at home and in long term care facilities.

- The Academy is a proud champion of the Medical Nutrition Therapy Act. If passed, Academy members would receive more opportunities for reimbursement, while addressing the gap in care for seniors in the U.S. who only have access to MNT for diabetes and renal disease—a crucial step needed to achieve health equity for older adults from racial and ethnic minority populations.
- Strong nutrition standards work. Since the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kid Act provisions were implemented, the school meal nutrition standards significantly increased the dietary quality of both the lunch and breakfast program offerings, while Healthy Eating Index scores for lunch and breakfast increased by 41% and 44% respectively.
- Schools are the healthiest place in the U.S. to eat, according to a recent Tufts study. After analyzing 16 years of American diets, researchers found that meals eaten at schools had higher dietary value than meals eaten anywhere else.
- WIC works! A study from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation examined the impact the change in the WIC food package had on a child’s diet and found that not only was there a significant decrease in overall obesity rates for children age zero to four, but there also was an increase in breastfeeding rates, which lead to healthier mothers and babies. WIC establishes life-long health benefits.
- Millions of community-residing seniors get healthy meals delivered to their door or in a congregate setting from the Senior Nutrition Program. These programs also employ RDNs to screen and counsel participants. The Academy supports strong funding and nutrition standards for these meals programs through reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and in the annual government funding process.
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation has a great relationship with Feeding America and have worked with them on the following:
 - “[Healthy Cities](#)” project: This multi-phase project is an integrated nutrition and health program that has been piloted with Feeding America food banks in several major US cities, including Cleveland, Houston, Oakland, Chicago, Newark, and New Orleans. The program, in its final phase now, includes four components: food distribution, nutrition education, health screenings, and safe places to play (opportunities for physical activity).
 - We also collaborated with them on the [Healthy Food Bank Hub](#).
 - We also worked with them to create the [Food Insecurity/Food Banking](#) dietetic internship curriculum.
- In collaboration with the Nutrition Research Network, the Foundation led our Food Security Solutions [project](#). This project pilot tested and launched the “Food Security Solutions” guide and tools (five pilot sites – three in the US and two international). This guide supports community leaders in their efforts to end hunger and promote food and nutrition security and wellness in their communities by helping community partners identify the interventions that will make the biggest impact in addressing food security and access for their most vulnerable populations.
 - Through funding from the General Mills Foundation, the Foundation funded an initial research fellow in 2016 to draft the guide, a second fellow to help build out ANDHII surveys for community settings, including food banks, and a third fellow to create and package all of the resources and promote to our membership. This work was completed in spring 2020.
- In 2012, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation (Foundation), Feeding America (FA), and National Dairy Council (NDC) came together to address a public health challenge – raising awareness of food insecurity as a public health issue and increasing access to adequate amounts of nutrient dense food for all Americans – and launched the [Future of Food initiative](#) (FOF).

- When COVID first started the article we created an article that featured how our resources can help support members, students and educators during the pandemic [here](#).
 - Scholarships, Awards and Grants
 - The Foundation Board allowed no-cost extensions to all research grant recipients whose research activities were impacted by COVID-19.
 - As a direct response to the impact of the pandemic on students, CDR made an additional \$100,000 donation in 2020 to support Foundation scholarships for dietetic interns of underrepresented backgrounds and significant financial need.
 - Fellowships
 - The work of our Accelerating Food Security Fellow. [This page](#) on our website provides an overview of the program.

Academy Accomplishments/Outcomes

- Policy Initiatives and Advocacy staff worked closely with the SNS DPG to create the Healthy School Meals for All [video](#) and [one-pager](#) to shine a spotlight on the impact school meals have in communities across the country.
- Academy members are encouraged to join the [ACT now for MNT campaign](#) to garner support and raise awareness of the Medical Nutrition Therapy Act.
- The Academy coordinated with other organizations to secure a strong reauthorization of senior nutrition programs in 2020 and has successfully advocated for funding increases for these programs. See also: [Academy Celebrates 50 Years of Senior Nutrition Program](#).
- [Future of Food, Accelerating Food Security](#)

Critical Issue: Marketing the RDN as THE Expert

HOD Meeting 2017

Key Messages for Members

- The Academy continued its successful program of promoting registered dietitian nutritionists and dietetics technicians, registered.
- Media coverage plays a significant role in building awareness and recognition for the Academy and its members. The Academy's Strategic Communications team worked with the news media to raise public awareness of the Academy, the significant contributions of members, scientific research published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* and the importance of healthful nutrition for everyone.
- The Academy and its network of volunteer media Spokespeople remained a trusted source for media across the country and the globe. From June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021, interviews with Academy Spokespeople reached an audience of approximately 7.1 billion and generated 1,800 media placements. During the same time, the Academy's name reached an audience of approximately 31.6 billion and appeared 16,500 times in media stories.
- In March 2021, the hashtag #NationalNutritionMonth and ancillary hashtags such as #NNMchat, #RDNday and variations were used in more than 50,000 social media posts for a total of 340.8 million impressions.

[2022 National Nutrition Month® Press Releases](#)

Academy Accomplishments/Outcomes

- [Audience-Specific Marketing Flyers](#)
- [Redesigned Find a Nutrition Expert Website](#)
- [Marketing Career Toolbox](#)
- [Expanded Consumer Web Content on the RDN](#)

Career Development and Advancement Webinars

- [Blaze Your Own Trail: How to Find Your Unique Career Path](#)
- [Climbing the Clinical Ladder: A Conversation with an Influential Leader](#)
- [Dietetic Career Hack: The Complete Networking and Resume Guide](#)
- [Dietetic Career Hack Part II: Interviewing Tips and Tricks](#)

Media and Communications webinars

- [Alexa, Play My Favorite Podcast: Why Podcasts are the New Blogs](#)
- [Designing and Delivering High Impact Presentations: Envision, Enlighten, and Engage](#)
- [Mastering the Media: An #RDChat](#)

In the News

<https://www.eatrightpro.org/news-center/member-updates/events-and-deadlines/academy-celebrates-president-linda-farr-in-times-square>