# Center of Excellence

IN NUTRITION & DIETETICS

## DESIGNATION PROGRAM GUIDE

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## Introduction

The Center of Excellence Designation is a recognition program for organizations that demonstrate support and value for the nutrition and dietetics profession. This designation raises visibility for the work done by Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) and Nutrition and Dietetic Technicians, Registered (NDTRs), both inside and outside of their organizations. The Center of Excellence application is detail-oriented, allowing organizations and their leadership to determine opportunities for improvement and formulate action plans and long-term strategic plans to ensure excellence is at the forefront of all they do.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' Center of Excellence in Nutrition and Dietetics designation recognizes organizations that demonstrate exemplary leadership, quality management, outcomes, organizational structure and practice within the field of nutrition and dietetics.

This designation is not a healthcare referral service, clinical performance rating or guarantee, approval or endorsement of any organization's specific medical, nutrition or dietetics services. It is solely a recognition that an organization has met the Academy's established standards of excellence, designed to elevate and support the work of credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners.

Earning the designation does not indicate whether an organization is accepting patients, participating in insurance plans or providing services covered by any payer. The Academy makes no warranty or representation and disclaims all liability or responsibility in connection with the services or advice provided any Organization.

The Center of Excellence program is supported by the Academy's Quality Management Committee (QMC). Expert reviewers are comprised of members of the QMC's COE review group, supported by Academy Quality Management staff. All decisions of the Quality Management Committee and review group are final.

# CENTER OF EXCELLENCE QUALITY DOMAINS

The designation program is divided into four domains: Quality of Leadership, Quality of Organization, Quality of Practice, and Quality of Outcomes. Each domain contains a set of criteria that can be applied to the four main practice segments in nutrition and dietetics: health care, education and research, business and industry, and community nutrition and public health. This promotes broad eligibility for credentialed practitioners. The criteria have been developed to highlight the value of credentialed practitioners and ensure the demonstration of quality of service provided by the nutrition and dietetics professionals.

## Quality of Organization ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Recognizes organizations that empower credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners to make decisions at the organizational level. This work is essential to the success of credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners and is observed through their inclusion in its strategic plans, performance improvement plan, internal and external programs, organizational systems, and corporate culture.

## Quality of Outcomes ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Establishes the importance of nutrition-focused outcomes in demonstrating performance, value, and satisfaction by consistently measuring and reporting those outcomes. Organizations that value excellence continuously strive to improve the delivery of safe and timely nutrition and dietetics services that are effective in producing positive outcomes.

## Quality of Practice ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Recognizes organizations that provide quality nutrition and dietetics services utilizing credentialed practitioners' professional expertise. The culture of the organization identifies credentialed practitioners as leaders, while recognizing that quality practice is built on a solid foundation of education, credentialing, evidence-based practice, demonstrated competence, and adherence to established professional standards.

## Quality of Leadership ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Highlights an organization that values the education, skills, knowledge, applied judgment, and attitudes that credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners bring to the leadership of the organization. This domain is critical for excellence as it includes leadership within the organization and the profession, individual honors and awards, transformational leadership, and mentorship.

## Why Apply for the Center of Excellence Designation

The purpose of the designation is to promote the collaboration and competence of RDNs and NDTRs. Organizations that receive this award contribute to confidence in RDN and NDTR practice both by the practitioners themselves, along with internal and external clients, resulting in an overall improvement in the credibility of the organization, as well as employee satisfaction.

Some benefits that may be experienced when the organization obtains the Center of Excellence designation include:

- Attracting high-performing personnel
- Staff retention
- Administrative support for innovative ideas
- Increase in client/patient and employee satisfaction
- Increase in productivity and decreased burden
- Increase in preparation for accreditation surveys

## Obtaining the Center of Excellence Designation

The designation is valid for 5 years from the moment the application is submitted. Scoring for each of the domains is based on the total number of points achieved within each domain. For the Center of Excellence in Nutrition and Dietetics Designation, organizations will need to obtain the minimum score specified below in each of the domains.

**Domain 1: Quality of Organization** – 25/30 points
**Domain 2: Quality of Practice** – 18/21 points
**Domain 3: Quality of Outcomes** – 13/15 points
**Domain 4: Quality of Leadership** – 18/21 points

This scoring system applies to individual service entities (i.e., a university or college campus, one hospital and associated clinics in a system, individual outpatient clinics in an organization, etc.). If a larger/national organization or system is interested in applying for the designation, each individual entity must first receive the designation.

This program is open for applicants from international organizations. The criteria are built around credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners (RD/RDNs and DTR/NDTRs), as defined by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). International organizations interested in applying will be rated on the availability of the RD/RDN and DTR/NDTR credential, or an international equivalent. The Academy will consider an international equivalent a credential by the country's professional association or regulatory board for nutrition or dietetics, if such an association or board exists. This credential is expected to meet the same level of quality in accreditation as that provided by CDR, including an education program approved by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and a licensing or credentialing program in the applicant's country. Prior to applying, all international organizations will need to email quality@eatright.org for verification of candidacy.

## Obtaining the Center of Excellence Designation (continued)

Organizations that complete the submission process and do not meet the minimum required scores for each domain will have two additional opportunities to review the scores and submit additional documentation. Academy staff will also be available via quality@eatright.org for any needed support.

If an applicant organization is unable to meet the needed score to obtain the designation, they will have up to two years to meet the criteria and re-submit the application, at which time a new application fee must be paid. After two years or three attempts, whichever comes first, both the application fee and appraisal fee must be resubmitted if the organization desires to keep pursuing the COE designation.

## Resources to Obtain the Center of Excellence Designation

Organizations have an opportunity to review the scoring criteria prior to applying for the designation. Supporting evidence suggestions for each indicator are also available within each criterion to guide organizations in the process of self-scoring and submission.

For organizations that are working towards obtaining the designation, but do not meet the score needed, the Quality Management team is available for support via the email quality@eatright.org.

To support frequent questions and requests, the Academy will provide quarterly office hours that will provide guidance to organizations interested in applying. For more information on the office hour, please email quality@eatright.org. All organizations are encouraged to participate in this meeting prior to submitting the application.

## Fee Structure

The Center of Excellence in Nutrition and Dietetics Designation evaluates an organization's programs, services, and initiatives that identify and distinguish the credentialed practitioner as the expert in nutrition and dietetics.

To support the designation process, three fees are required:

- Application Fee: Covers the administrative review of submitted materials and confirms the organizations intent to submit an application and all supporting evidence within 2 weeks. This fee is standard and applies to all organizations no matter the size.
- Appraisal Fee: Initiates the formal evaluation process and supports the in depth assessment of documentation and verification of criteria by reviewers. This fee is applied in a scalable manner based on organization size.
- Annual Maintenance Fee: Supports ongoing program operations and sustains continued recognition by distributing the overall cost across the five year designation period.

All fees are shown in the table below.

| COE DESIGNATION FEE STRUCTURE | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Size of Organization** (# of Employees) | **1-1,500** | **1,501-5,000** | **5,001-10,000** | **10,001-15,000** | **>15,000** |
| **Application Fee** (Due with application) | $500 | $500 | $500 | $500 | $500 |
| **Appraisal Fee** (Due with submission) | $1,500 | $2,000 | $2,500 | $3,000 | $4,000 |
| **Year 1 Total** | **$2,000** | **$2,500** | **$3,000** | **$3,500** | **$4,500** |
| **Annual Maintenance Fee** (Due annually for years 2-5) | $500 | $500 | $750 | $750 | $750 |
| **Grand Total Cost of 5 Year COE Designation** | **$4,000** | **$4,500** | **$6,000** | **$6,500** | **$7,500** |

# APPLICATION AND STEPS

The Academy will only accept 10 applications each quarter. The official application process will be open during the designated times shown below.

**January 1 – January 31**
**April 1 – April 30**
**July 1 – July 31**
**October 1 – October 31**

1. Review the Center of Excellence scoring criteria and assign a self-score of 0-3 for each criterion.

2. If interested, request a meeting with Academy staff to clarify any application questions. This can be requested via email at quality@eatright.org.

3. Submit the organizations intent to apply. Visit www.eatrightpro.org/COE, and click on the application link. Complete the application form, which includes organization information and submission of the non-refundable application fee of $500.

4. When ready to apply and submit supporting documentation, begin working on the application form. Ensure to upload all documents as required. Supporting evidence needs to be named with the criteria it aligns with (i.e., 3.2, 4.5, etc.). If multiple criteria are covered with one document file, then all criteria met will be included in the document name. Organizations can save the application and return to work on it at any time. Please save the application frequently as to not lose documentation / progress on the submission.

5. When all information has been uploaded and completed and the organization is ready to submit the full application, provide payment for the non-refundable appraisal fee based on organization size and select submit. You will receive a confirmation message that the application has been submitted.

6. Academy staff will prepare the application packet and submit to the review group for evaluation.

# EVALUATION STEPS

1. The review group will have two weeks to evaluate all the documents provided for each criterion. If additional time is needed, Academy staff will contact the applicant organization via email.

2. Once the first review process is completed, Academy staff will contact the applicant to communicate the results.

3. If the organization requires a second round of reviews, Academy staff will inform organization via email of additional documentation that is needed and the current score. An additional two weeks for submission of requested documents will be allowed to support the organization's needs. An opportunity to meet with the review group will be made available to promote understanding of the score and the requested information.

4. All additional documentation will be submitted via email to quality@eatright.org. All documents will be identified with the criteria they are supporting.

5. The review group will have two weeks to evaluate all the documents provided for each criterion. If additional time is needed, Academy staff will contact the applicant organization via email.

6. After completion of the second round of reviews, Academy staff will communicate results to the organization.

If the organization has not received the Center of Excellence designation at that time, the organization will have an additional 2 weeks to provide required documentation -OR- request a pause on the application of up to 2 years at which time a new application fee must be paid. After two years or three attempts, whichever comes first, both the application fee and appraisal fee must be resubmitted if the organization desires to keep pursuing the COE designation.

# APPLICATION AND REVIEW TIMELINE

### Organization Completes Self-Assessment to Evaluate Readiness to Apply

Reach out to quality@eatright.org with questions

### Organization Submits Intent to Apply

- Through the application portal
- Application fee due at this time

### Application Submission

- Includes evidence to support self-assessment score
- Appraisal fee due at this time

### Application Review Process

May take up to 2 weeks

### Second Round of Review, if Needed

May take up to 2 weeks

### Review Results Communicated to Organization

- Organization has up to 2 weeks to respond if needed
- Additional time available per request

### Organization Feedback

Organization has up to 2 weeks to provide the requested documentation **OR** request a pause on the application.

# ACHIEVING THE DESIGNATION

Once an organization accomplishes the Center of Excellence Designation, Academy staff will communicate the results via email. At this time, the organization will receive access to a Center of Excellence Celebration Toolkit, which includes:

- Center of Excellence logo for use in official documents, social media, and other marketing materials for the time the designation is valid
- Printable certificate to be proudly displayed by the organization
- Customizable press release template
- Sample email template communicating the receipt of the designation
- Downloadable web banners (in 3 standard sizes) and social media graphics (in two standard sizes)
- Permission and guidelines for logo usage
- Sample social media post
- Access to a Center of Excellence store where designees can purchase pens, lapel pins, and other promotional materials, as available

In addition, the organization will be honored with recognition of their accomplishment in Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics emails, social media posts, and promotional materials.

Academy staff will request several items including:

- Pictures from the organization showcasing staff and receipt of the designation
- A release form granting permission for the Academy to use the organization's photos and statements in promotional materials
- Organization agreement to an Academy legal disclaimer stating that the organization will not represent the designation as an endorsement, nor imply that the Academy has evaluated or approved any clinical or operational practices beyond the scope of the published Center of Excellence
- A program evaluation to assess the organizations overall experience and support improvement efforts of the COE program

Thank you for your interest in the Academy's Center of Excellence designation. We look forward to supporting your organization in achieving this prestigious award!

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