

PRACTICE TIPS:

Health Equity and Food Insecurity

RDN and NDTR Roles and Responsibilities

Background

“Ethics and human rights are guiding values for clinical nutrition practitioners. Together they ensure a patient-centered approach.”¹ The RDN’s and NDTR’s practice reflects the value the profession places on health equity in all forms of interaction when delivering care and/or services to colleagues, customers, students/interns, and when interacting with stakeholders.^{2,3}

Health equity is at the core of nutrition and dietetics practice where:

- all individuals have the same opportunity and access to healthy food and nutrition;
- the credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioner, the RDN and NDTR, advocate for a world where all people thrive through the transformative power of food and nutrition; and
- RDNs and NDTRs work to accelerate improvements in health and well-being through food and nutrition.^{2,3}

Food security status is a spectrum that describes the quality and quantity of individual/household food supply, which is subsequently categorized as high, marginal, low, and very-low food security. Food insecurity effects dietary quality and quantity and influences disease self-management capabilities of affected individuals.⁴

What is health equity and how is food insecurity identified?

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is dedicated to promoting health equity and eliminating systemic barriers while advancing the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity and access (IDEA) to improve health outcomes for individuals, communities, providers and organizations. As a result, the Academy has resources, some of which are available to the public, including the Definitions. Resources available to members or for purchase include IDEA Leadership Training, Member Interest Group (MIG) membership(s), and a Journal collection.

Become familiar with the health equity concepts by reading the Academy [Diversity and Inclusion Definitions](#) (not all inclusive).

To determine if patient/client is food insecure conduct a food insecurity screening using a validated food insecurity screening tool – the purpose of a food insecurity screen is to quickly identify individuals and/or households at risk for food insecurity, allowing providers to target services and interventions that address the health and developmental consequences of food insecurity. The two-item food insecurity screen in the box below is based on Questions 1 & 2 of the [U.S. Household Food Security Survey](#) and has been validated for use as a screening tool in the healthcare setting.

Now I’m going to read to you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months – that is, since last (name of current month).

1. (I/We worried whether (my/our) food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more.
2. The food that (I/we) bought just didn’t last, and (I/we) didn’t have money to get more.

Answers: Often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

Other Considerations

When screening for food insecurity, it is important to consider additional factors that may contribute to food insecurity when implementing a person/family-centered treatment plan such as:

- Access/food deserts
- Mobility/transportation
- Intellectual, developmental, or physical challenges
- Food storage/equipment
- Financial resources

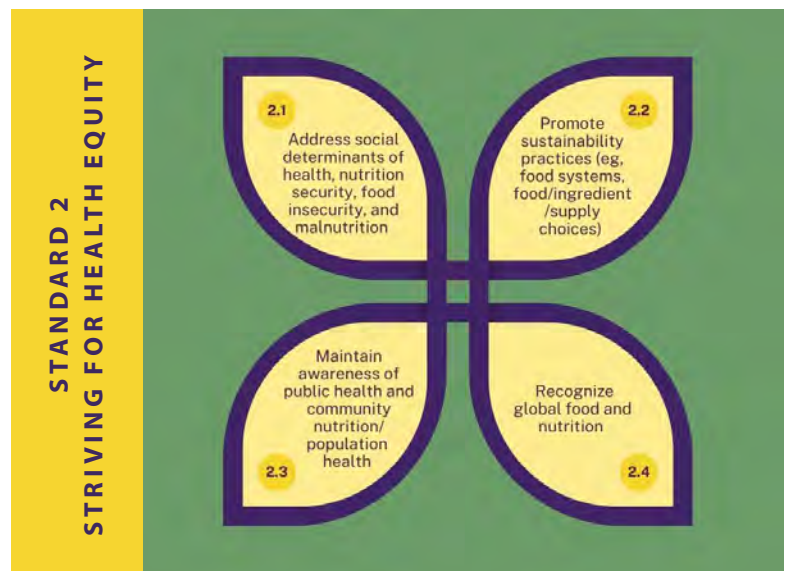
NEW 2024: Continuing Education Requirement

Starting in 2024, RDNs and NDTRs now have the option of completing at least 1 hour of continuing professional education (CPEU) in health equity OR ethics during each five-year recertification cycle. Specific activities have not been designated to satisfy this requirement. Practitioners can select, complete, and record an ethics or health equity activity of their choosing; the activity must meet CDR’s Content Criteria, adhere to an Activity Type definition, and deliver at least one hour of educational content devoted to ethics or health equity. Practitioners will be unable to submit the Activity Log without including at least 1 CPEU in ethics or health equity. For more information including a brief list of activities that received prior approval and may count toward ethics or health equity, please see <https://www.cdrnet.org/ethics>.

What are the RDN’s and NDTR’s roles and responsibilities?

The Academy/CDR Code of Ethics calls upon practitioners to adhere to core values of customer focus, integrity, innovation, social responsibility, and diversity: *Principle 1, Standard g: Act in a caring and respectful manner, mindful of individual differences, cultural, and ethnic diversity.*

The Scope and Standards of Practice for the RDN and the Scope and Standards of Practice for the NDTR serve as foundational documents for credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners (RDN and NDTR) to understand the practice environment and standards that guide practice. They were revised in 2024 and now include a standard dedicated to Striving for Health Equity (Standard 2). Practitioners use the Standards of Practice to identify opportunities to improve and enhance practice and professional performance. The standards and indicators reflect the minimum competent level of nutrition and dietetics practice and professional performance.^{2,3}



Where can RDNs and NDTRs find Health Equity and Food Insecurity resources?

Below is a list (not all inclusive) of resources RDNs and NDTRs can use to gain knowledge to assist with the application of health equity in their practice.

Practice Applications	
Definition of Terms List	https://www.cdrnet.org/definitions
Code of Ethics	https://www.cdrnet.org/code-of-ethics
Focus Area Scope and Standards for RDNs	https://www.cdrnet.org/focus
Food Insecurity/Food Banking Supervised Practice Concentration	https://www.eatrightfoundation.org/resources/future-of-food/food-insecurity-food-banking-concentration
Food Security for Everyone: An Academy Priority	https://www.jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(18)32303-7/fulltext
Nutrition Security is More than Food Security	https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-019-0002-4
Revised 2024 Scope and Standards of Practice for the NDTR	https://www.cdrnet.org/scope
Revised 2024 Scope and Standards of Practice for the RDN	https://www.cdrnet.org/scope
Toolkit: Food Bank - Health Care Partnerships	https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/FA_HCP_Toolkit_2022_FINAL.pdf
Food Insecurity Screening	
Development and Validity of a 2-Item Screen to Identify Families at Risk for Food Insecurity: Pediatrics	https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/EH_Pediatrics_2010.pdf
Hunger Vital Sign	https://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Hunger-Vital-Sign-2-pager1.pdf
U.S. Household Food Security Survey Tools	https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools.aspx#household
Community and Policy	
Food Assistance Programs	https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/food-security-and-access/food-assistance-programs
Food Security and Nutrition Building A Global Narrative Towards 2030	https://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf
Prioritizing Food Security Solutions	https://www.eatrightfoundation.org/why-it-matters/public-education/food-security-solutions/

Health Equity	
Barriers to Accessing Healthy Food and Food Assistance During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Racial Justice Uprisings: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Emerging Adults' Experiences	https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(21)00343-9/fulltext
Cultural Competence Resources Practice Tips	https://www.cdrnet.org/tips
Academy Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Webpage	https://www.eatrightpro.org/about-us/our-work/inclusion-diversity-equity-and-access
Ethics in Practice: Social Determinants of Health: Enhancing Health Equity	https://www.jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(21)00152-0/abstract
Food Insecurity, Dietary Quality, and Health Care Utilization in Lower-Income Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study	https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(21)00380-4/fulltext
Health Equity in Nutrition and Dietetics Practice	https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/quality-care/quality-management
Sustainability Solutions	
Climate Change and Global Food Systems: Potential Impacts on Food Security and Under nutrition	https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031816-044356
Cultivating Sustainable, Resilient, and Healthy Food and Water Systems: A Nutrition-Focused Framework for Action	https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(20)30202-1/fulltext
Food Security and Sustainability (membership required)	https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/dietetics-resources/food-security-and-sustainability
Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group	https://www.hendpg.org/home
Sustainable Food Systems Certificate of Training Module 4 - Community Food Security and Hunger	https://www.eatrightfoundation.org/videos/sustainable-food-systems-primer-module-4
Prioritizing Food Security Solutions: A Toolkit to Facilitate the Process	https://www.eatrightfoundation.org/why-it-matters/public-education/future-of-food/sfs/?1, 2018 EZine

References:

1. Cardenas D, Davisson Correia M, Hardy G, Ochoa J, Barrocas A, Hankard R, Barazzoni R. Nutritional Care is a human right: translating principles to clinical practice. *Nutr Clin Pract*(37), 743-751. doi:10.1002/ncp.10864
2. Revised 2024 Scope and Standards of Practice for the Nutrition and Dietetic Technician, Registered. Commission on Dietetic Registration Scope and Standards of Practice Task Force. April 21, 2026. www.cdrnet.org/scope.
3. Revised 2024 Scope and Standards of Practice for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Commission on Dietetic Registration Scope and Standards of Practice Task Force. Accessed April 21, 2026. www.cdrnet.org/scope.
4. Wetherill MS, White KC, Rivera C. Food Insecurity and the Nutrition Care Process: Practical Applications for Dietetics Practitioners. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2018;118(12):2223-2234. doi:10.1016/j.jand.2017.08.114

In this Practice Tips, the Academy has chosen to use the term RDN to refer to both registered dietitians (RD) and registered dietitian nutritionists (RDN) and to use the term NDTR to refer to both dietetic technician, registered (DTR) and nutrition and dietetics technician, registered (NDTR).