



Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Revised 2018 Standards of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (Competent, Proficient, and Expert) in Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Nutrition



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ABSTRACT

In a climate of change, the elevation of post-acute and long-term care (PALTC) services offered through community-based settings has optimized health care delivery. With the population age increasing, there is a growing need for community-based and residential care services, including for older inmates in the prison system. The Dietetics in Health Care Communities Dietetic Practice Group, with guidance from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Quality Management Committee, has updated the Standards of Practice (SOP) and Standards of Professional Performance (SOPP), which describe three levels of practice (competent, proficient, and expert) for registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) working in PALTC nutrition. The SOP uses the Nutrition Care Process and clinical workflow elements for care and management of clients/residents in PALTC settings (eg, long-term acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, home health agencies, hospice, assisted living facilities, and corrections facilities). The SOPP describes six domains of professional performance: Quality in Practice, Competence and Accountability, Provision of Services, Application of Research, Communication and Application of Knowledge, and Utilization and Management of Resources. Within the SOP and SOPP standards, specific indicators provide measurable action statements that illustrate how the standards apply to practice. The SOP and SOPP are complementary resources for RDNs providing nutrition care and services for individuals receiving PALTC services, or in other PALTC nutrition-related areas, including research. The SOP and SOPP provide RDNs with a self-evaluation guide for assuring competence, identifying knowledge and skills to enhance expertise and advance level of practice in PALTC nutrition.

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Editor's note: Figures 1 and 2 that accompany this article are available at www.jandonline.org.

THE DIETETICS IN HEALTH CARE Communities Dietetic Practice Group (DHCC DPG) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy), under the guidance of the Academy Quality Management Committee, has revised the Standards of Practice (SOP) and Standards of Professional Performance (SOPP) for Registered Dietitians in Extended Care Settings originally published in 2011.¹ The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Revised 2018 Standards of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance for

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) (Competent, Proficient, and Expert) in Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Nutrition reflect advances in post-acute and long-term care (PALTC) practice during the past 7 years and replace the 2011 Standards. These documents build on the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Revised 2017 SOP in Nutrition Care and SOPP for RDNs.² The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics/Commission on Dietetic Registration's (CDR) Code of Ethics (Revised in 2018),³ along with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Revised 2017 SOP in Nutrition Care and SOPP for RDNs² and Revised 2017 Scope of Practice for the RDN,⁴ guide the practice and performance of RDNs in all settings.

Scope of practice in nutrition and dietetics is composed of statutory and individual components, includes code(s) of ethics (eg, Academy, other national organizations, and/or employer

code of ethics), and encompasses the range of roles, activities, practice guidelines, and regulations within which RDNs perform. For credentialed practitioners, scope of practice is typically established within the practice act and interpreted and controlled by the

*Approved May 2018 by the Quality Management Committee of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy) and the Executive Committee of the Dietetics in Health Care Communities Dietetic Practice Group of the Academy. **Scheduled review date: November 2024.** Questions regarding the Standards of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Nutrition may be addressed to Academy quality management staff: Dana Buelsing, MS, manager, Quality Standards Operations; and Sharon McCauley, MS, MBA, RDN, LDN, FADA, FAND, senior director, Quality Management, at quality@eatright.org.*

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All registered dietitians are nutritionists—but not all nutritionists are registered dietitians. The Academy's Board of Directors and Commission on Dietetic Registration have determined that those who hold the credential Registered Dietitian (RD) may optionally use "Registered Dietitian Nutritionist" (RDN). The two credentials have identical meanings. In this document, the authors have chosen to use the term *RDN* to refer to both registered dietitians and registered dietitian nutritionists.

agency or board that regulates the practice of the profession in a given state.⁴ An RDN's statutory scope of practice can delineate the services an RDN is authorized to perform in a state where a practice act or certification exists. For more information see www.cdrnet.org/state-licensure-agency-list.

The RDN's individual scope of practice is determined by education, training, credentialing, experience, and demonstrating and documenting competence to practice. Individual scope of practice in nutrition and dietetics has flexible boundaries to capture the breadth of the individual's professional practice. Professional advancement beyond the core education and supervised practice to qualify for the CDR RDN credential provides RDNs practice opportunities, such as expanded roles within an organization based on training and certifications, if required; or additional credentials (eg, CDR Board-Certified Specialist in Gerontological Nutrition [CSG], Certified Case Manager [CCM], or Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality [CPHQ]). The Scope of Practice Decision Tool (www.eatrightpro.org/scope), an online interactive tool, guides an RDN through a series of questions to determine whether a particular activity is within his or her scope of practice. The tool is designed to assist an RDN to critically evaluate his or her personal knowledge, skill, experience, judgment, and demonstrated competence using criteria resources.⁵

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Department of Health and Human Services, Hospital⁶ and Critical Access Hospital⁷ Conditions of Participation now allow a hospital and its medical staff the option of including RDNs or other clinically qualified nutrition professionals within the category of "non-physician practitioners" eligible for ordering privileges for therapeutic diets and nutrition-related services if

consistent with state law and health care regulations. RDNs in hospital settings interested in obtaining ordering privileges must review state laws (eg, licensure, certification, and title protection), if applicable, and health care regulations to determine whether there are any barriers or state-specific processes that must be addressed. For more information, review the Academy's practice tips that outline the regulations and implementation steps for obtaining ordering privileges (www.eatrightpro.org/dietorders), and the Revised 2017 Scope of Practice for the RDN⁴ that addresses medical staff rules, regulations, bylaws, or other facility specific process.⁸ For assistance, refer questions to the Academy's State Affiliate organization.

The Long-Term Care Final Rule published October 4, 2016 in the *Federal Register*, "allows the attending physician to delegate to a qualified dietitian or other clinically qualified nutrition professional the task of prescribing a resident's diet, including a therapeutic diet, to the extent allowed by State law" and permitted by the facility's policies.⁹ The qualified professional must be acting within the scope of practice as defined by state law; and is under the supervision of the physician that may include, for example, countersigning the orders written by the qualified dietitian or clinically qualified nutrition professional. RDNs who work in long-term care facilities should review the Academy's updates on CMS that outline the regulatory changes to §483.60 Food and Nutrition Services (<https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/quality-management/national-quality-accreditation-and-regulations/centers-for-medicare-and-medicaid-services>.) Review the state's long-term care regulations to identify potential barriers to implementation; and identify considerations for developing the facility's processes with the medical director and for orientation of attending physicians. The CMS State Operations Manual, Appendix PP-Guidance for Surveyors for Long-Term Care Facilities contains the revised regulatory language (revisions are italicized and in red color).¹⁰ CMS periodically revises the State Operations Manual Conditions of Participation; obtain the current information at www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/Downloads/som107Appendicestoc.pdf.

ACADEMY QUALITY AND PRACTICE RESOURCES

The Academy's Revised 2017 SOP in Nutrition Care and SOPP for RDNs² reflect the minimum competent level of nutrition and dietetics practice and professional performance. The core standards serve as blueprints for the development of focus area SOP and SOPP for RDNs in competent, proficient, and expert levels of practice. The SOP in Nutrition Care is composed of four standards consistent with the Nutrition Care Process (NCP) and clinical workflow elements as applied to the care of patients/clients/populations in all settings.¹¹ The SOPP consist of standards representing six domains of professional performance: Quality in Practice, Competence and Accountability, Provision of Services, Application of Research, Communication and Application of Knowledge, and Utilization and Management of Resources. The SOP and SOPP for RDNs are designed to promote the provision of safe, effective, efficient, and quality food and nutrition care and services; facilitate evidence-based practice; and serve as a professional evaluation resource.

These focus area standards for RDNs in PALTC nutrition provide a guide for self-evaluation and expanding practice, a means of identifying areas for professional development, and a tool for demonstrating competence in delivering PALTC nutrition and dietetics services. They are used by RDNs to assess their current level of practice and to determine the education and training required to maintain currency in their focus area and advancement to a higher level of practice. In addition, the standards can be used to assist RDNs in general clinical practice with maintaining minimum competence in the focus area and by RDNs transitioning their knowledge and skills to a new focus area of practice. Like the Academy's core SOP in Nutrition Care and SOPP for RDNs,² the indicators (ie, measurable action statements that illustrate how each standard can be applied in practice) (see [Figures 1 and 2](#), available at www.jandonline.org) for the SOP and SOPP for RDNs in PALTC Nutrition were revised with input and consensus of content experts representing diverse practice and geographic perspectives. The SOP and

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