

Primary Care Role Statement

Developed by members of the Dietitians in the Private Sector Interest Group

Introduction

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) are recognised professionals with the qualifications and skills to provide expert nutrition and dietary advice. APDs are qualified to advise individuals and groups on nutrition related matters.

APDs have university training accredited by Dietitians Australia, undertake ongoing professional development and commit to evidence-based practice. They comply with the [Dietitians Australia Code of Conduct for Dietitians & Nutritionists](#) and commit to providing quality service.

APD is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. It is a recognised trademark protected by law.

Purpose of this role statement

- To define the role an APD may fulfil when providing individualised Medical Nutrition Therapy and group based interventions in a primary care (private practice) setting
- To promote the knowledge and expertise of an APD, broadly and in the area of primary care (private practice) and beyond [National Competency Standards](#)
- To advocate for dietetic services

**Dietitians working in Primary Care may also include Public Health and Community Nutrition settings.*

Knowledge and skills in this area of practice

Entry level dietetic competencies ensure all APDs can conduct comprehensive assessments (assessment, diagnosis, intervention, monitoring and evaluation). Within a particular practice area, APD skills and knowledge will range from entry level to highly skilled. Within this continuum APDs can either fully manage the patient, seek support (clinical supervision, secondary consultation, mentor) to continue seeing the patient or choose to refer the patient on.

Many APDs working in the area of primary care (private practice) may have higher level clinical skills and knowledge in particular practice areas that align with, and are further outlined in, relevant [APD role statements](#). The following is a list of skills and knowledge required to work broadly in the primary care (private practice) area:

Knowledge

- Small business management, including business planning, marketing and review.
- Accounting and taxation requirements.
- Legal obligations – including understanding of contract law, intellectual property law, Privacy Act requirements, professional indemnity insurance and document retention.

- Strong network of other specialist dietitians to enable appropriate referring on.
- Knowledge of relevant government programs such as the DVA system, Medicare Chronic Disease Management Plan items and NDIS, as well as knowledge of Private Health Funds.
- Generalist expertise in the dietary management of a broad range of health issues with the ability to identify significant nutritional issues and know when to refer on to a dietitian from their extensive network with greater expertise in a particular practice area.

Skills

- Small business management skills – including understanding basic accounting, business and financial planning, business development, project management and planning, time management and interpersonal skills, legal responsibilities and workplace health and safety.
- Marketing skills – including developing marketing plans targeting referral sources, social and print media e.g. direct marketing to GPs/practice managers (letters, sponsored lunch presentations) and working with media.
- High level communication and negotiation skills with clients and their families, medical and allied health professionals, practice managers and other relevant groups including aged care facility staff, and health and fitness trainers.
- Evaluation skills – business evaluation including financial and marketing analysis.
- Ability to work autonomously while being able to undertake professional development and remain linked in with the wider dietetics and health community.
- Health coaching skills/motivational interviewing – such as dietetic health coaching or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, to enable long term behavioural change in clients. Further training may be required for successful implementation.

Activities entry level APDs would conduct

- Small business planning.
- General business management and administrative tasks that will enable a dietitian to set up their private practice e.g. business planning and management including accounting, taxation, compliance with relevant Medicare, DVA and NDIS requirements as well as Work Cover, and private health fund requirements.
- Marketing including implementing social media strategies and networking with referral sources.
- Preparation and review of client resources.
- Entry level nutritional assessment and management of clients across a broad range of nutritional issues, including skills to evaluate drug side effects and interactions, clinical signs and symptoms and recommendation of appropriate supplements where appropriate.

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct

- Running their own independent clinic/business i.e. larger scale business planning and management.
- Clinical consultations with higher level practice skills in other areas which may require extra training including but not limited to the non-diet approach, health coaching, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, sports nutrition, paediatrics, specific disease areas (bariatrics, renal,

gastroenterology, food allergies/intolerances and others), therapeutic use and evaluation of nutraceuticals, and nutrigenetics.

Any individual practitioner should refer to the [Scope of Practice Decision Tool](#) to determine if a task is within their scope of practice.

Activities Dietitians working in this area of practice do not usually undertake

- Exercise prescription (outside of general physical activity guidelines) unless having appropriate training, qualifications and/or certification.
- Diabetes Educator role unless having dual qualification and certification as a Credentialed Diabetes Educator.