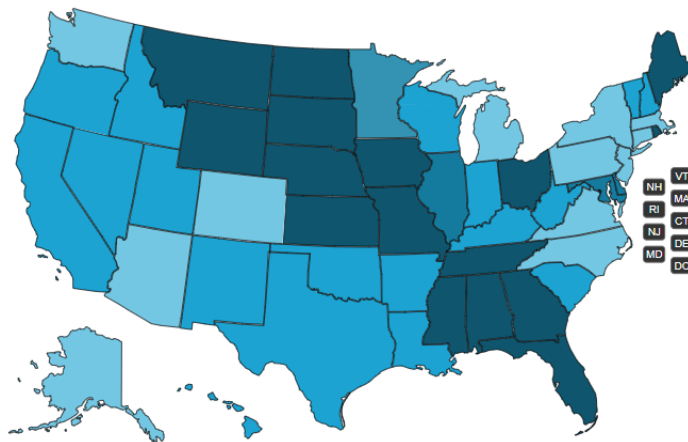






## Licensure for Registered Dietitians in California

**Statement of Issue:** Currently, the registration law in California only provides title protection for Registered Dietitians and Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. Title protection means that using the title “Registered Dietitian (RD)” or “Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN)” is restricted to only those who follow the accredited education path to achieve this title, a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree from an accredited dietetics program, completion of 1200 hours of supervised practice, and passing the CDR Exam. However, this law does not protect the scope of practice for the profession of nutrition and dietetics. This means that anyone is allowed to practice “nutrition” and give nutrition advice to clients. While they cannot call themselves an RD or and RDN, they can use titles such as “Nutritionist.” State licensure is needed to protect both title and scope of practice for the field of nutrition and dietetics. The map below illustrates this requirement varies by state. California is among the states with the least strict regulations for licensure.

Nutrition Career Requirement Laws By State



-  There is no legal opposition to individuals performing nutrition counseling on their own, although insurance limitations regarding reimbursement eligibility may apply.
-  Anyone can perform nutrition counseling on their own, however only an RD (Registered Dietitian) is accredited and authorized to be recognized by the US Government as performing services that are eligible for reimbursement under the current health care laws.
-  Unless an individual is licensed (or exempt in some cases), that individual cannot legally perform specific nutrition counseling. Additional licenses are available for nutritionists not interested in becoming an RD.
-  Unless an individual is licensed (or exempt in some cases), that individual cannot legally perform specific nutrition counseling. The fact remains that unless one becomes licensed as an RD, they would remain ineligible.

### **Policy Options:**

1. Licensure with practice inclusivity. Licensure would be granted to individuals who meet specific qualifications. Anyone un-licensed would not be able to use the title or provide services that fall under the specified scope of practice.
  - a. Advantages – Provides consumer protection. Consumers will be able to identify a qualified practitioner who can provide a specific service. This will also provide assurance to health insurance companies that the practitioner meets standards of professional competence in order for them to be reimbursed for providing nutrition care services.
  - b. Disadvantages – This law may eliminate the competition within the field of dietetics. Alliance for Natural Health states that there are some qualified titles, such as a Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS), who have advanced degrees, and did not take the specific steps to become a Registered Dietitian. Many of these professionals take a more integrative and preventative approach.
2. Keep the current law the same
  - a. Advantages – This law allows nutritionists to market themselves to the public and provide similar services as Registered Dietitians.
  - b. Disadvantages – The current law does not protect the scope of practice for Dietitians and therefore, there is a lot of misinformation spread and received by consumers. It is also difficult for consumers to tell the difference between a qualified professional and an unqualified professional.

**Policy Recommendations:** We recommend licensure with practice inclusivity. It is important to protect both the title and scope of practice. As future dietitians, we understand how much knowledge is needed to provide accurate and helpful nutrition information. A person without this level of training should not be allowed to provide services that fall under our scope of practice. It is dangerous for the public to receive information from a person without proper training.

### **Resources:**

Alliance for Natural Health - American Dietetic Association Speeds up its Race for Monopoly <http://www.anh-usa.org/american-dietetic-association-speeds-up-its-race-for-monopoly/>

Licensure and Professional Regulation of Dietitians.

<https://www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/licensure/professional-regulation-ofdietitians#resources>

State Requirements for Nutrition and Dietitian Fields <https://www.nutritioned.org/state-requirements.html>