



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**NATIONAL STANDARD OF PRACTICE:
Registered Dietitian Nutritionist**

July 2024

PURPOSE: This report provides a summary of internal and external feedback received for the draft Registered Dietitian Nutritionist VA national standard of practice during the comment period from March to May 2023.

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Executive Summary

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is establishing national standards of practice for health care professionals who have a license, certification, registration, or other state requirement. The VA national standards of practice are a standardized set of services that all health care professionals in a given occupation can perform while employed by VA if their VA medical facility performs such services and they have the proper education, training, and skill to perform the services. As part of a comprehensive development process to establish each occupation's national standard of practice, VA affords the public, Veterans, professional associations, VA employees, unions, and other interested parties the opportunity to provide feedback on the national standard of practice prior to finalization and publication in VA policy.

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are experts in the disciplines of nutrition and food; they are responsible for utilizing the nutrition care process framework to provide patient-centered care using evidence-based guidelines to make decisions.

On March 13, 2023, VA sent a letter to the Commission on Dietetic Registration to inform them of VA's intent to follow the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, and provided them with an opportunity to discuss the proposed national standard of practice with VA. The Commission on Dietetic Registration is the credentialing branch of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. VA also sent letters to the 46 state licensing boards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists to inform them of VA's intent to follow the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists.

In addition, from March 14 to May 15, 2023, VA posted the proposed national standard of practice for VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in the Federal Register ([88 FR 156860](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/14/2023-05143/notice-of-request-for-information-on-the-department-of-veterans-affairs-registered-dietitian)) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/14/2023-05143/notice-of-request-for-information-on-the-department-of-veterans-affairs-registered-dietitian>) for public comment and within VA's intranet for VA employee comment.

The proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists received 154 total comments across all platforms—15 responses from the state licensing boards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, 109 comments from VA employees, 29 comments from individuals from the public, including 1 comment from a professional association, and 1 comment from the national registration body for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. VA reviewed all comments received and made three changes in response to comments.

This report provides a summary of comments received on the proposed Registered Dietitian Nutritionist National Standard of Practice. It also provides VA's response to the comments and changes made to the national standard of practice in response to feedback received.

Authority

Chapters 73 and 74 of title 38 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) and 38 U.S.C. 303 permit the Secretary to further regulate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care professions to make certain that VA's health care system provides safe and effective health care by qualified health care professionals to ensure the well-being of those Veterans who have borne the battle.

On November 12, 2020, VA published an interim final rule confirming that VA health care professionals may practice their health care profession consistent with the scope and requirements of their VA employment, notwithstanding any state license, registration, certification, or other state requirements that unduly interfere with their practice. 38 CFR 17.419; 85 FR 71838. Specifically, this rulemaking confirmed VA's practice of allowing VA health care professionals to deliver health care services in a state other than the health care professional's state of licensure, registration, certification, or other state requirement, thereby enhancing Veterans' access to critical VA health care services. The rulemaking also confirmed VA's authority to establish national standards of practice for its health care professionals which would standardize a health care professional's practice in all VA medical facilities, regardless of conflicting state laws, rules, regulations, or other state requirements.

The rulemaking explained that a national standard of practice describes the tasks and duties that a VA health care professional practicing in the health care profession may perform and may be permitted to undertake. Having a national standard of practice means that individuals from the same VA health care profession may provide the same type of tasks and duties regardless of the state where they are located or the state license, registration, certification, or other state requirement they hold. VA emphasized in the rulemaking and reiterates here that VA will determine, on an individual basis, that a health care professional has the proper education, training, and skills to perform the tasks and duties detailed in the national standard of practice and that they will only be able to perform such tasks and duties after they have been incorporated into the individual's privileges, scope of practice, or functional statement. The rulemaking explicitly did not create any such national standards and directed that all national standards of practice would be subsequently created via policy.

As authorized by 38 CFR 17.419, VA is developing national standards of practice via policy. There is one overarching directive to describe Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy on national standards of practice. The directive is accessible on the VHA Publications website at <https://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/> (internal) and <https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/> (external). As each individual national standard of practice is finalized, it is published as an appendix to the directive and accessible at the same websites.

Purpose

It is critical that VA, the Nation's largest integrated health care system, develops national standards of practice to ensure first, that beneficiaries receive the same high-quality care regardless of where they enter the system and, second, that VA health care professionals can efficiently meet the needs of beneficiaries when practicing within the scope of their VA

employment. National standards are designed to increase beneficiaries' access to safe and effective health care, thereby improving health outcomes.

The importance of this initiative has been underscored by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The increased need for mobility in VA's workforce, including through VA's Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System, highlighted the importance of creating uniform national standards of practice to better support VA health care professionals who practice across state lines. As a national health care organization, VA often has health care professionals primarily based out of a VA medical center in one state travel to smaller community-based outpatient clinics in neighboring states to ensure access to care for Veterans.

Creating national standards of practice also promotes interoperability of medical data between VA and the Department of Defense (DoD), providing a complete picture of a Veteran's health information and improving VA's delivery of health care to the Nation's Veterans. DoD has historically standardized practice for certain health care professionals, and VA has closely partnered with DoD to learn from their experience.

It is also imperative that VA, as a national health care system, can recruit and retain health care professionals, to ensure there is access to health care regardless of where the Veteran resides. VA needs the flexibility to hire qualified health care professionals from any state to meet the staffing needs of a VA medical facility where recruitment or retention is difficult. This flexibility is especially beneficial in recruiting spouses of active service members who frequently move across the country and can be subject to delays in starting new employment due to needing to obtain an additional state requirement to practice in the new state.

Development Process

To develop VA's national standards of practice, VA is using a robust, interactive process that adheres to the guidelines outlined in Executive Order (EO) 13132 to preempt conflicting state laws, rules, regulations, or other requirements. All standards undergo a deliberate review process, both within VA and externally, to ensure that the draft national standard is consistent with VA's team-based approach to care, results in the highest quality of care for Veterans, is implementable on an enterprise level, and is legally supportable. The process includes consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including state licensing boards, VA employees, professional associations, Veterans Service Organizations, labor partners, and others.

For each VA occupation, a workgroup comprised of health care professionals in the identified occupation conducts research to identify internal best practices that may not be authorized under every state license, certification, or registration, but would enhance the practice and efficiency of the profession throughout VA. If a best practice is identified that is not currently authorized by every state, the workgroup determines what education, training, and skills are required to perform such task or duty. The workgroup then drafts a proposed VA national standard of practice using the data gathered during the research and incorporates internal stakeholder feedback into the standard. The workgroup may consult with internal or external stakeholders at any point throughout the process.

The proposed national standard of practice is internally reviewed, to include by an interdisciplinary workgroup consisting of representatives from Quality Management; VA medical facility Chief of Staff; Academic Affiliates; Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Chief Nursing Officer; Ethics; Workforce Management and Consulting; Surgery; Credentialing and Privileging; VISN Chief Medical Officer; and Electronic Health Record Modernization.

VA has developed a robust process to engage with partners, members of the public, states, and employees on the proposed national standard of practice. In addition, the proposed national standard of practice is provided to our partners in DoD as a notification and opportunity to flag inconsistencies with DoD standards. VA provides the proposed national standard of practice to our DoD partners as an opportunity to flag inconsistencies with DoD standards. VA also engages with labor partners informally as part of a pre-decisional collaboration. Consistent with EO 13132, VA sends a letter to each state board and certifying organization or registration organization, as appropriate, which includes the proposed national standard and offers the recipient an opportunity to discuss the national standard with VA. After the state boards, certifying organizations, or registration organizations have received notification, the proposed national standard of practice is posted in the Federal Register for 60 days to obtain feedback from the public, professional associations, and any other interested parties. At the same time, the proposed national standard is posted to an internal VA site to obtain feedback from VA employees. Responses received through all vehicles—from state boards, professional associations, unions, VA employees, and any other individual or organization who provides comments via the Federal Register—will be reviewed. VA will make appropriate revisions in light of the comments, including those that present evidence-based practice and alternatives that help VA meet our mission and goals. VA may also make additional changes outside the scope of the comments during its own internal review processes after the conclusion of the comment period. This document provides a summary of the comments received and VA's response to the comments.

VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists: Feedback on National Standard

VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are experts in the disciplines of nutrition and food. They translate the complex science of nutrition into healthy, real-world solutions. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in VA are fully integrated into a health care team and work within a variety of settings including inpatient, outpatient, long term care, food operations, and community clinics. VA employs approximately 2,500 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in the United States.

VA's proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists did not propose to preempt any current state requirements and instead proposed to confirm that all Registered Dietitian Nutritionists follow the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Per VA's qualification standards, Registered Dietitian Nutritionists at VA must have an active, current, full, and unrestricted registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration, the credentialing branch of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Currently, all VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists follow the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; therefore, there would be no change in practice for any Registered Dietitian Nutritionist in VA.

On March 14, 2023, VA posted the proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in the Federal Register ([88 FR 156860](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/14/2023-05143/notice-of-request-for-information-on-the-department-of-veterans-affairs-registered-dietitian)) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/14/2023-05143/notice-of-request-for-information-on-the-department-of-veterans-affairs-registered-dietitian>) and within VA's intranet for public and employee feedback, respectively. The proposed national standard of practice remained open for comment for 60 days, through May 15, 2023. A copy of the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists was posted for feedback and is located in [Appendix A](#).

The Under Secretary for Health also sent letters to the 46 state licensing boards and the Commission on Dietetic Registration to inform them of VA's intent to follow the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics registration standards and provide them with an opportunity to provide feedback directly to VA. Copies of those letters are located in [Appendix B](#).

VA specifically sought feedback through the following questions:

1. *Are there any required trainings for the aforementioned practices that we should consider?*
2. *Are there any factors that would inhibit or delay the implementation of the aforementioned practices for VA health care professionals in any state?*
3. *Is there any variance in practice that we have not listed?*
4. *What should we consider when preempting conflicting state laws, regulations, or requirements regarding supervision of individuals working toward obtaining their license or unlicensed personnel?*
5. *Is there anything else you would like to share with us about these national standards of practice?*

In addition to leaving specific comments and suggestions, commenters internal to VA could choose to provide agreement or disagreement on the proposed national standard. Agreement denotes overall acceptance of the standard while disagreement denotes that the national standard in its original form presents significant clinical, legal, or patient safety concerns. Employees could also select not applicable if the national standard did not pertain to their area of expertise.

In response to the proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, VA received 29 comments from the public through the Federal Register, including 1 comment from a professional association. VA received 15 comments from state licensing boards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and feedback from the registration body for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. Through an internal VA site, VA received 109 comments from VA employees. Out of the 109 employee comments, 93 employees *agreed*, 1 employee *disagreed*, and 15 employees selected *not applicable*.¹

Registration Body Feedback

On March 13, 2023, VA sent a letter to the Commission on Dietetic Registration to inform them of VA's intent to follow the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice

¹ At the time of feedback, employees were prompted to select "concur," "concur with comments," and "non-concur."

from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, and provided them with an opportunity to discuss the proposed national standard of practice with VA. Copies of the letters sent to the registration body from the Under Secretary for Health are located in [Appendix B](#).

Comment: The Commission on Dietetic Registration acknowledged and endorsed VA's proposed standard for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and is supportive of state licensure laws that provide Federal exemptions for VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. The Commission on Dietetic Registration is the credentialing branch of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The Commission also provided a link to their Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as a tool for VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists to use when assessing their individual performance and professional development to ensure safe, equitable, and quality care for patients. As the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is revised every seven years, the Commission on Dietetic Registration recommended that VA cite their website in the national standard of practice, at www.cdrnet.org/scope.

Response: VA thanks the Commission on Dietetic Registration for its support in enabling VA health care professionals to provide the best care to the Nation's Veterans. The national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists will continue to follow the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, available at www.cdrnet.org/scope. VA has revised the national standard of practice to use www.cdrnet.org as this is the most stable link.

Comment: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics also separately acknowledged and endorsed VA's proposed standard for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. Additionally, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics received inquiries from various states regarding VA's request that states offer a licensure exemption for VA employees if they do not already have these Federal exemptions in place. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics created the Model Practice Act that encourages all states to provide exemptions for Federal employees. Although the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages Federal exemptions for clarity, it recognizes exemptions are not necessary as Registered Dietitian Nutritionists working within their scope of practice for VA only need to meet VA's requirements. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics asked VA to share guidance it can provide to states regarding VA's request to amend state law to provide Federal exemptions.

Response: VA supports the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in its effort to encourage states to establish exemptions for VA employees. VA published an [Interim Final Rule](#) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/11/12/2020-24817/authority-of-va-professionals-to-practice-health-care-print>), which confirms VA health care professionals can practice their health care occupation in any state regardless of conflicting state laws, and confirms VA's authority to develop national standards of practice for each health care occupation via policy. Therefore, VA's authority preempts any state requirement that conflicts with a VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionist's Federal duties. However, VA continues to encourage states to establish exemptions for VA employees in their laws or rules in order to

provide clarity that VA employees do not need to adhere to any state requirement that conflicts with their ability to carry out their Federal duties.

State Licensing Board Feedback

On March 13, 2023, VA sent letters to the 46 state licensing boards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists with the proposed VA national standard of practice and provided them with an opportunity to discuss the proposed national standard of practice with VA. Of the 46 states with licensing boards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, 33 states offer an exemption for employees working at Federal facilities. VA received comments from 15 of the total 46 state licensing boards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. Copies of the letters sent to the state licensing boards from the Under Secretary for Health are located in [Appendix B](#).

Of the 15 states that provided comments, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, Puerto Rico, and South Dakota confirmed the proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists as is and Maryland, North Dakota, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia provided feedback.

Comment: While Maryland has an exemption for Federal employees, Maryland's Board of Dietetic Practice requested that VA also recognize the Certified Nutrition Specialist credential in hiring qualified candidates at VA.

Response: VA qualification standards will not change as a result of the national standard of practice. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for employment. VA qualification standards require that VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists maintain an active, current, full, and unrestricted registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration. VA appreciates the comment raised regarding changing the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist qualification standards, and it has been referred for consideration to the appropriate offices as it is not within the scope of the national standard of practice. VA acknowledges that changes to 38 U.S.C. § 7402 would require congressional action.

Comment: North Dakota's Board of Dietetic Practice indicated that North Dakota's exemption from its licensing requirements for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists is only applicable to educators who are also Federal employees. Thus, the state requested that VA remove it from the list of states that exempt Federal employees from its licensing requirements. North Dakota also suggested that the national standard of practice include Medical Nutrition Therapy as a responsibility of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. North Dakota's Board of Dietetic Practice had additional questions concerning VA's qualification standards for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, which were not related to the proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, and thus are not addressed further here.

Response: VA met with North Dakota's Board of Dietetic Practice on June 8, 2023, to discuss the state's feedback and the request to remove North Dakota from the list of states that exempt Federal employees from state licensing requirements. VA agreed with the request and has revised the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists to remove North Dakota from the list of states that exempt Federal employees from their state licensing

requirements. Additionally, VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists can perform Medical Nutrition Therapy as it is a part of their scope of practice. The national standard of practice does not provide an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist may perform.

Comment: Texas's state licensing board clarified that the Texas Occupations Code is a title protection act, not a practice act. Thus, its state law protects the title "Licensed Dietitian." Unless an individual is a Licensed Dietitian by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, they may not use this title. Texas indicated that an individual is allowed to practice dietetics without holding a state license.

Response: VA appreciates the clarification from Texas on its state licensing laws. VA has revised the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to clarify the type of state credential offered by Texas. VA qualification standards govern VA employment. To ensure consistent nomenclature, VA refers to this occupation as "Registered Dietitian Nutritionist" instead of "Licensed Dietitian," which is consistent with VA qualification standards. Please see VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. VA ensures that all Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have the appropriate education, training, and skills before they are credentialed to perform any tasks.

Comment: Washington's Dietitian and Nutritionist licensing board denied VA's request to create an exemption for Federal employees in Washington's state licensure requirements, as it would require amending a state law. However, the state recognizes that health care professionals working at a VA facility are not obligated to be licensed by Washington. Washington added that Federal health care professionals seeking employment in Washington will be able to as long as they meet specific eligibility requirements outlined in Federal legislation.

Response: VA thanks Washington for its support in enabling VA health care professionals to provide the best care to the Nation's Veterans. Although Washington does not provide a Federal exemption for VA employees, VA agrees that Registered Dietitian Nutritionists working within their scope of practice for VA only need to meet VA's requirements. VA also followed up with Washington to clarify which Federal legislation it was referring to in its comments.

Comment: West Virginia's Board of Licensed Dietitians requested that VA send the names of VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists practicing in West Virginia for verification of their licensure status. West Virginia also sought out clarification on whether Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are privileged to write diet orders.

Response: VA met with West Virginia's Board of Licensed Dietitians on April 25, 2023, to address the board's feedback. The state clarified that its concern was regarding cases of misconduct and negligence by individuals practicing in West Virginia. Consistent with [VHA Directive 1100.18, Reporting and Responding to State Licensing Boards](#) (<https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>), dated January 28, 2021, VA reports certain information to state licensing boards as necessary and appropriate. VA also confirmed that Registered Dietitian Nutritionists within VA can order diets.

Professional Association Feedback

On March 14, 2023, VA posted the proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in the Federal Register ([88 FR 156860](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/14/2023-05143/notice-of-request-for-information-on-the-department-of-veterans-affairs-registered-dietitian)) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/14/2023-05143/notice-of-request-for-information-on-the-department-of-veterans-affairs-registered-dietitian>) and within VA's intranet for public and employee feedback. VA received comments from the American Nutrition Association through the Federal Register.

Comment: The American Nutrition Association requested that VA accept its Certified Nutrition Specialist credential as a requirement for employment. Furthermore, the American Nutrition Association requested that VA 1) modify the national standard of practice to include the standards for education, examination, and supervised practice experience of the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists, 2) change the existing occupation title in VA ("Dietitian") to "Dietitian and Nutritionist", 3) modify 38 U.S.C. § 7402 by changing "Dietitian" to "Dietitian and Nutritionist", and 4) permit temporary appointments of individuals working towards obtaining the Certified Nutrition Specialist certification.

Response: VA qualification standards will not change as a result of the national standard of practice. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for employment. VA qualification standards require that VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists maintain an active, current, full, and unrestricted registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration. VA appreciates the comments raised regarding changing the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist qualification standards and occupation title, and they have been referred for consideration to the appropriate offices as they are not within the scope of the national standard of practice. VA acknowledges that changes to 38 U.S.C. § 7402 would require congressional action.

Feedback Across Five Areas

All commenters had the opportunity to provide responses to the five areas on which VA solicited feedback, and VA responds to any questions or concerns raised by the commenters in response to those areas below.

VA received comments from employees and individuals from the public that were supportive of the draft national standard of practice, as well as comments that were not responsive to the specific national standard of practice.

"[The national standard of practice] allows for consistency in care throughout the VA system, as well as throughout the field of nutrition and dietetics." – Comment from VA employee

1. Are there any required trainings for the aforementioned practices that we should consider?

Comment: All but 1 of the 28 public comments that VA received via the Federal Register requested that VA accept the Certified Nutrition Specialist certification for employment at VA, stating that the certification requires a more advanced academic degree than Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. These individuals commented that the Certified Nutrition Specialist certification will minimize VA's restriction of only allowing practitioners that hold a Registered

Dietitian Nutritionist credential to practice dietetic and nutritional care at VA. The sole remaining public commenter agrees with VA's current qualification standards to only employ Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, as they believe Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are the most qualified candidates to provide nutritional care.

Response: VA qualification standards will not change as a result of the national standard of practice. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for employment. VA qualification standards require that VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists maintain an active, current, full, and unrestricted registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration. VA appreciates the comments raised regarding changing the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist qualification standards, and they have been referred for consideration to the appropriate offices as they are not within the scope of the national standard of practice. VA acknowledges that changes to 38 U.S.C. § 7402 would require congressional action.

Comment: One VA employee asked if a Certified Nutrition Support Clinician with the required specialized trainings would be able to perform total parenteral nutrition and partial parenteral nutrition if permitted by the medical facility.

Response: VA has implemented Parenteral Nutrition Therapy as a part of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist's scope of practice. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are responsible for practicing to their full scope of practice in accordance with the national standard of practice and [VHA Directive 1438\(1\), Clinical Nutrition Management and Therapy](https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1) (https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1), dated September 19, 2019. Specialized training and certifications, such as Certified Nutrition Support Clinician, are supplementary and optional for VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists who are interested in advancing their skills. The national standard of practice does not provide an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist may perform.

Comment: Two VA employees commented that VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists must complete 75 hours of continuing education every five years to maintain their registration with the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

Response: VA qualification standards require that VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists maintain an active, current, full, and unrestricted registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration, which includes completing the necessary trainings and 75 hours of continuing education every five years to maintain the Commission's registration. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022.

Comment: One VA employee commented that training should include vitals, bedside swallowing, and nasogastric tube placements to comply with the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics standards.

Response: VA qualification standards require that VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists maintain an active, current, full, and unrestricted registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration, which includes completing the necessary trainings such as vitals, bedside

swallowing, and nasogastric tube placements to maintain the Commission's registration. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022.

Comment: One VA employee suggested that VA implement Nutrition Focused Physical Exams for the diagnosis of malnutrition in both hospitalized and outpatients.

Response: VA has implemented Nutrition Focused Physical Exams as a part of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist's scope of practice. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are responsible for practicing to their full scope of practice in accordance with this VA national standard of practice and VHA Directive 1438(1). However, the national standard of practice does not provide an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist may perform.

2. Are there any factors that would inhibit or delay the implementation of the aforementioned practices for VA health care professionals in any state?

Comment: One VA employee asked if the national standard of practice will replace local scopes of practice, as local scopes are aligned to VA's required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Response: The national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists will be incorporated into an individual health care professional's scope of practice as needed.

3. Is there any variance in practice that we have not listed?

Comment: One VA employee suggested that all states have a Federal exemption from states' license requirements, as they have never seen a VA job posting that requires a state license, while another VA employee suggested the national standard of practice list the states that exempt Federal employees from their license requirements versus the states that do not exempt Federal employees from their state license requirements. A third employee inquired whether VA would meet with individual states to explain that a state license is not required for VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists.

Response: Although not all states have a Federal exemption from their license requirements for VA employees, Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are not required to be licensed to be employed by VA. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. The proposed national standard of practice included which 46 states require a license to practice as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and which states exempt Federal employees. VA contacted all 46 states and shared the proposed VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionist National Standard of Practice. In these letters, VA offered to individually meet with each state licensing board. Copies of those letters are located in [Appendix B](#). State licensing boards may continue to email comments and feedback to va.nsp@va.gov for consideration.

Comment: One VA employee asked if a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist licensed in Rhode Island but practicing in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts requires a license from Massachusetts. This employee noted that Rhode Island exempts VA employees from state license requirements, but Massachusetts does not.

Response: Regardless of the state in which they are practicing, Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are not required to be licensed by any state to work at VA, per VA's qualification standards. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for employment.

Comment: Several VA employees commented that the credential required by New York and Washington is a certification, rather than a license. One VA employee in New York commented that certification does not grant the same rights as licensure in other states, including practice exclusivity, which limits the ability of unlicensed individuals to provide services within the defined scope of practice. Another employee also commented that Wisconsin does not require certification or licensure to practice, although a certification is offered.

Response: VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists must follow VA qualification standards, which do not include a state license. However, VA has revised the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to clarify the type of state credential either required or offered by Washington, New York, and Wisconsin.

Comment: One VA employee commented Texas does not require state licensure to practice dietetics unless the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist uses the Licensed Dietitian credential. Another VA employee commented Idaho also does not require state licensure for VA employees, thus should be listed as an exempt state in the national standard of practice.

Response: The national standard of practice includes which states have a license to practice as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, including Idaho and Texas. VA has revised the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to clarify the type of state credential offered by Texas. To ensure consistent nomenclature, VA refers to this occupation as "Registered Dietitian Nutritionist" instead of "Licensed Dietitian," which is consistent with VA qualification standards. Per Idaho's Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses, Idaho requires all Registered Dietitian Nutritionists to be licensed in its state, and there is no Federal exemption in place for Federal employees. However, Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are not required to be licensed to work at VA per VA qualification standards, which govern VA employment. Please see VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022, which sets the minimum training and registration requirements for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. VA ensures that all Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have the appropriate education, training, and skills before they are credentialed to perform any tasks.

Comment: One VA employee suggested Registered Dietitian Nutritionists should provide Nutrition Care Process and Medical Nutrition Therapy.

Response: VA lists Nutrition Care Process and Medical Nutrition Therapy in the qualification standards as required knowledge, skills, and abilities of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. See VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20, dated October 14, 2022. The national standard of practice does not provide an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist may perform.

Comment: One VA employee commented that VA needs to continue following the standards promulgated by the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

Response: The national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists follows the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, available at www.cdrnet.org. The Commission on Dietetic Registration is the credentialing branch of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. VA ensures that all Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have the appropriate education and training before they are credentialed to perform any tasks.

Comment: One VA employee mentioned that diet ordering is another task that Registered Dietitian Nutritionists can perform.

Response: VA confirms that Registered Dietitian Nutritionists within VA can order diets. The national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist follows the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, available at www.cdrnet.org. The national standard of practice does not provide an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist may perform.

Comment: One VA employee recommended the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist National Standard of Practice include Research Dietitians and Information Dietitians as additional titles listed within the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist credential.

Response: VA confirms that Registered Dietitian Nutritionists within VA can practice as Research Dietitians or Information Dietitians. The proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist follows the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, available at www.cdrnet.org. The national standard of practice does not provide an exhaustive list of all tasks and duties a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist may perform.

4. What should we consider when preempting conflicting state laws, regulations, or requirements regarding supervision of individuals working toward obtaining their license or unlicensed personnel?

Comment: VA's Office of Academic Affiliates commented that health professions trainees who complete their clinical training at a VA Medical Center must come from an accredited program and practice under the supervision of an individual with the appropriate registration.

Response: The national standard of practice does not apply to students, residents, health professions trainees, or otherwise non-credentialed staff.

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about these national standards of practice?

Comment: One VA employee suggested that VA incorporates webinar or Microsoft Teams training sessions that break down the scope of practice for both Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and management.

Response: VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists practice according to the Registered Dietitian Nutrition Scope and Standards of Practice from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, available at www.cdrnet.org. More information about VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists can be found in VHA Directive 1438(1), which outlines responsibilities for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and management teams.

Comment: One VA employee suggested that all Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have National Provider Identifier numbers as providers if they are entering orders, since this will be vital in VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization initiative.

Response: VA Registered Dietitian Nutritionists must have a National Provider Identifier number. Per [VHA Directive 1066, Requirement for National Provider Identifier and Taxonomy Codes](https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1) (https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1), dated February 10, 2021, all individual VA health care providers providing billable VA health care services must obtain a National Provider Identifier.

Conclusion

VA considered all comments that it received. VA is making the following three changes to the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist National Standard of Practice based on the reasons described above. VA has revised the national standard of practice to use www.cdrnet.org as this is the most stable link. VA has also revised the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist National Standard of Practice to remove North Dakota as a state that exempts Federal employees from their state licensing requirements. Lastly, per New York, Washington, Wisconsin, and Texas's requests, VA has revised the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist National Standard of Practice to clarify the type of state credential that these states either require or offer. The final VA national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists will be an appendix to VHA Directive 1900, VA National Standards of Practice, and accessible on VHA Publications website at <https://vawww.va.gov/vhapublications/> (internal) and <https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/> (external) once published. In accordance with VHA's national policy process, the national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists will be reviewed and recertified at minimum on a five-year cycle.

Appendix A: Draft National Standard of Practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Appendix A includes the proposed national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists posted in the Federal Register and within VA on March 14, 2023, for individuals to provide feedback on. The final national standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists is written into VHA Directive 1900, VA National Standards of Practice, posted at <https://vaww.va.gov/vhapublications/> (internal) and <https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/> (external).

1. RDNs are experts in the disciplines of nutrition and food. They translate the complex science of nutrition into healthy, real-world solutions. RDNs within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are fully integrated into a health care team and work within a variety of settings including inpatient, outpatient, long term care, food operations, and community clinics. Clinical RDNs are responsible for utilizing the nutrition care process framework to provide patient-centered care using evidence-based guidelines to make decisions. RDNs in the food service setting are responsible for scientific preparation and service of high-quality food by selection, requisition, receipt, storage, issuance, and transportation of food and supplies. They assure sanitation, safety, competency, and training programs are robust and effective.
2. RDNs employed by VA possess the education and registration from the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) required by VA qualification standards, as more specifically described in VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G20.
3. This national standard of practice confirms RDNs practice in accordance with the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist standards from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, available at www.eatright.org. As of March 2022, RDNs in VA follow the standards associated with this national registration.
4. Although VA only requires a registration, 46 states require a state license in order to practice as RDNs in that state: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Of those, the following states exempt Federal employees from its state license requirements: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina,

North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

As of May 2022, there is no variance in how VA RDNs practice in any state.

Appendix B: VA Under Secretary for Health Letters

Letter	Organization	Responded to VA as of July 2, 2024
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	Commission on Dietetics Registration, the credentialing agency for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to A	Alabama Board of Examiners for Dietetics and Nutritionists	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to A	Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to A	Arkansas Dietetics Licensing Board	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to V	D.C. Board of Dietetics and Nutrition	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	Delaware Board of Dietetics/Nutrition	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to F	Florida Dietetic & Nutrition Practice Council	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	Georgia Board of Dietitians	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	Guam Board of Allied Health Examiners	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to h	Hawaii Department of Health	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to I	Directing Physician Registration, Athletic Trainers, and Dietitians, Idaho Board of Medicine	No

 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to I	Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to I	Indiana Professional Licensing Agency	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to I	Iowa Bureau of Professional Licensure	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to k	Kansas Health Occupations Credentialing	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to k	Kentucky Board of Licensure and Certification for Dietitians and Nutritionists	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to L	Louisiana Board of Examiners in Dietetics and Nutrition	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Maine Board of Licensing of Dietetic Practice	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Maryland Board of Dietetic Practice	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Massachusetts Board of Registration of Dietitians and Nutritionists	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Minnesota Board of Dietetics and Nutrition Practice	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Mississippi Council of Advisors in Dietetics	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Missouri Committee of Dietitians	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Montana Board of Medical Examiners	No

 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	Nevada Dietitian Licensing Unit	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	New Hampshire Board of Licensed Dietitians	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	New Mexico Regulations & Licensing Department	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	New York State Board for Dietetics & Nutrition	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	North Carolina Board of Dietetics	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to M	North Dakota Board of Dietetic Practice	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	State Medical Board of Ohio	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	Oklahoma State Board of Medical Licensure and Supervision	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to C	Oregon Board of Licensed Dietitians	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to F	Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing	No
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to F	Examining Board of Nutritionists and Dietitians of Puerto Rico	Yes
 Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to F	Board of Dietetics Practice for Rhode Island Department of Health	No

	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to S	South Carolina Panel for Dietetics	No
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to S	South Dakota Board of Medical and Osteopathic Examiners	Yes
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to T	Tennessee Board of Dietitians/Nutritionist Examiners	No
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to T	Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation Dietitians	Yes
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to L	Utah Dietitian Licensing Board	No
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to V	Vermont Office of Professional Regulation: Dietitians	No
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to v	Washington State Department of Health Dietitian and Nutritionist	Yes
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to v	West Virginia Board of Licensed Dietitians	Yes
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to v	Wisconsin Dietitians Affiliated Credentialing Board DSPPS	No
	Letter from Dept of Veterans Affairs to v	Wyoming Dietetics Licensing Board	No

*VA reviewed all comments received and made appropriate revisions to the VA standard of practice for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in light of the comments, to include those that help VA meet its mission and goals through evidence-based practice and alternatives. This final report is a collective response to all comments; however, VA will continue to actively engage with states.