



What to Consider When Registered Dietitians Start a Private Practice

The College of Dietitians of Ontario regulates dietitians for public protection.

1. Scope of Practice

RDs have a legal duty to provide safe, ethical and competent dietetic services to clients. An important aspect of professionalism is for RDs to practice within the dietetic scope of practice and know the limits of what is within your personal competence and scope of practice. If you feel a client needs other health care services that are beyond your ability or dietetic scope, you must refer your client to another RD or health professional/service, accordingly. Please refer to the [Scope of Practice and Controlled Acts](#) section on the College's website.

If you are considering taking on a particular task in your dietetic practice, you can use the [RD Role & Task Decision Framework](#) for guidance. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the task within the dietetic scope of practice or reasonably related to it?
2. Are there any legal barriers?
3. Do RDs have the appropriate skills and competence to perform the task? If not, how can they become competent?
4. Who is the most appropriate person to perform the task?

2. Conflict of Interest

a) Review the [Conflict of Interest](#) section on the College website to make sure you or your practice will not be in any conflict or will not be perceived to be in conflict in any way.

b) Will you be selling products or promoting services that you may benefit from? Promoting a product or service for personal financial benefit could be a conflict of interest. Refer to the following newsletter articles:

[Standards and Guidelines for Professional Practice: Conflict of Interest](#) (2017)

[Conflict of Interest and Dietetic Practice e-learning module](#) (2016)

[Conflict of Interest in Dietetic Practice - How to Handle Competing Interests](#) (Winter 2015, p. 5)

[Conflict of Interest & RD Practice](#) (Winter 2009, p. 4)



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3. Boundary Crossings

The RD-client therapeutic relationship depends on clearly defined professional boundaries to maintain the mutual trust, integrity and respect essential for quality nutrition care. To ensure you set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with your clients, refer to the College's [Boundary Guidelines for Professional Therapeutic RD-Client Relationships](#) (2017) and the [Boundary](#) section on the College website for further information.

4. Advertising

Will you be advertising your services? The College encourages RDs to advertise their services in an honest and client-centred manner. Refer to the [Private Practice](#) resources on the College website, and the following newsletter articles for guidance:

- [Advertising & Solicitation](#), Winter 2010 (p. 4)
- [Testimonials and Direct Solicitation of Clients](#), Spring 2010 (p. 5)
- [Solicitation of a Client for Business When Your Client is a Group](#), Summer 2010 (p. 7):

5. Fees

Consider the fees you will be charging for your services. The College does not set fee schedules. However, we suggest you contact [Dietitians of Canada](#) for suggestions on appropriate fees. Their telephone number is: 416-596-0857. Alternatively, you can contact some of the other private practice RDs in your area to find out the going rate.

6. Charging Tax

According to the [Excise Tax Act](#), most dietetic services are exempt from HST and you do not need to charge PST for dietetic counselling services. Because the tax laws change from time to time, it is best to contact your accountant for the most current information about taxes.

7. Consent



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In a hospital setting, getting informed consent for a series of treatments that includes nutrition intervention may not necessarily be the responsibility of the RD. It may be the responsibility of the person explaining the services offered and taking an initial overall history. However, in your private practice, it will be your responsibility to obtain informed consent for your nutrition intervention. Consent needs special attention in private practice. Refer to the College's [Standards of Consent to Treatment and for the Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Health Information](#) and the [Consent](#) page on the College website.

8. Record Keeping

Record keeping and documentation is as important in private practice as it is in any practice area. Please refer to the College's [Professional Practice Standards for Record Keeping](#) (2017), [Record Keeping Guidelines for Registered Dietitians](#) (2014) and [Record Keeping](#) resources on the College website.

9. Confidentiality & Privacy

As a private practice RD, you are the Health Information Custodian (HIC) and you are the Privacy Officer of your independent practice. You must understand obligations as required in the [Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004](#). Consult the [Confidentiality and Privacy](#) page on the College website. As a HIC, you are responsible for ensuring privacy, confidentiality, storage, retention, destruction and access of client health information are secure.

10. Liability Insurance

Effective April 1, 2011, it is now mandatory for RDs to carry professional liability. Refer to the College's website for important information about your [liability insurance obligations](#).

11. Personal Injury/Disability Insurance

There are some employers that require contracted RDs to have some form of independent personal injury/disability coverage. This is because the contracted employees are not covered under the facility's Workplace Safety & Insurance Board of Ontario (WSIB) insurance plan. In addition, the Professional Liability Insurance that many private practice or consulting RDs have through Dietitians of Canada, doesn't



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cover RDs who encounter a personal injury in the workplace that wasn't caused by a third party (i.e., an RD slips and falls and breaks their leg at work).

There are two options for RDs:

- I. Obtain individual WSIB insurance. RDs can investigate this option through the [WSIB](#) website or contact WSIB by phone at: 1-800-569-7919 or 416-344-4526.
- II. Obtain personal injury/disability insurance through an independent insurance company. RDs can explore rates from many insurance companies to determine the most economical option. The insurance company that offers the professional liability insurance through Dietitians of Canada (the professional association) offers such insurance. When the College contacted them, they indicated they may be able to provide discounted rates for personal disability insurance for RDs who currently have the [Professional Liability Insurance through Dietitians of Canada](#).

12. Contact an Accountant and/or Lawyer

As with any business you may want to consult an accountant and/or a lawyer for advice. Some RDs register their business for tax purposes, but others file their taxes as being self-employed. RDs in private practice will need to discuss their options with their accountant and/or lawyer. Refer to the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) website for more information about registering businesses.

Incorporation may also be a route you may wish to take. Please refer to the information on the College's web page for information about [Professional Corporations](#).

13. Use of Social Media and Tele-practice

Similar to in-person services, if using social media and/or tele-practice within dietetic practice, dietitians would have a professional responsibility to follow the [Code of Ethics](#) as well as following all relevant professional obligations. See [Virtual Care, Social Media and Technology](#) on the College website.

Technology has provided opportunities for Ontario dietitians to provide virtual counselling to clients in other provinces or even outside of Canada. Dietitians who work in more than one province, or even with clients who reside in another country, should contact the regulatory bodies where the client is located to determine what the requirements are for tele-practice in that jurisdiction. Please see the College's [Registration Requirement for Interjurisdictional Practice](#).



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14. Additional Resource

You may find the *Dietitians in Private Practice: A Guide for the Consultant*, developed by the Consulting Dietitians Network of Dietitians of Canada a useful resource. Contact [Dietitians of Canada](#) for further information about this resource. If you are a DC member, you may also want to consider becoming a member of the Consulting Dietitians Network which can provide you with a great deal of resources.

The College understands that this document contains a great deal of information to consider when starting a private practice. We have heard RDs say “I am only going to see a couple of clients, why do I have to bother with all of this?” It does not matter if you see one client; your professional obligations remain the same.

If you have any other questions or require clarification on any issues, please contact the College’s [Practice Advisory Service](#)
416-598-1725/1-800-668-4990, ext. 397
practiceadvisor@collegeofdietitians.org