

ADA's Role in Safe Food for Seniors Legislation

Recently, representatives from the American Dietetic Association and the Dietary Managers Association met to identify opportunities for positive collaboration and to address questions members of Dietetics in Health Care Communities (DHCC, a practice group of the ADA) had regarding dietary manager certification and proposed legislation. The meeting brought together Brenda Richardson, MA, RD, LD, CD, Chair of the DHCC; Mary Pat Raimondi, MS, RD, Vice President of Strategic Policy and Partnerships for the ADA; William St. John, CAE, President and CEO of DMA; and Katherine Church, RD, Vice President of Professional Development for DMA.

Certification of dietary managers through DMA is a process where dietary managers meet established criteria that allow them to take a nationally-recognized credentialing exam. Once an individual passes the exam, they are required to have continuing education to maintain their credential. The CDM, CFPP (Certified Dietary Manager, Certified Food Protection Professional) credentials indicate these individuals have the training and experience to competently perform the responsibilities of a dietary manager. CDM, CFPPs work closely with RDs to provide quality nutritional care for their clients. DMA plans to have a bill introduced in the 112th Congress that will strengthen the qualifications of individuals serving as director of food services of a skilled Medicare or Medicaid nursing facility. ADA leaders have reviewed the language of the bill and are supportive. This bill will assure that quality care is being provided to residents and patients, a core value of ADA.

The bill's language assures that *"if the full-time director is not a qualified dietitian, then the dietary manager must be a Certified Dietary Manager meeting the requirements of the Certifying Board for Dietary Managers, or a dietetic technician meeting the requirements of the Commission on Dietetic Registration, or have equivalent military or academic qualifications (as specified by the Secretary)."*

Q & A

Representatives from ADA and its practice group -- Dietetics in Health Care Communities -- met with reps from DMA to learn more about the CDM, CFPP credentialing program. DMA drafted responses to ADA's specific questions below.

What is the dietary manager certification process?

Individuals interested in becoming CDMs must qualify for and pass a nationally-recognized credentialing exam. The exam is administered by ACT, Inc., an outside professional testing firm. There are several pathways of eligibility for this exam, each involving educational training. The most popular is by graduating from a DMA-approved dietary manager training program, which includes 120 hours of didactic education plus 150 hours of field experience. A second pathway is for candidates who hold a two or four year college degree in foodservice management or nutrition, or a related degree. A third pathway is for graduates of a state approved 90 hour foodservice course, who also have two years of institutional foodservice management experience. Lastly, current and former members of the US military who have graduated from an approved military dietary manager training program and have attained the grade of E-5, are eligible to take the exam. There is no pathway for candidates with experience only, to sit for this national exam.

Once an individual has passed the exam, they must pay an annual certification fee, plus earn 45 hours of continuing education every three years, five of which must be in the area of sanitation and food safety, in order to maintain their certified status.

What is the purpose of certification for a dietary manager?

Certification for dietary managers, similar to registration for dietitians and dietetic technicians, establishes a minimum level of competence that both employers and the public can expect in defined roles. Additionally, because certification requires continuing education, the credential assures that an individual is continually working to stay abreast of information and trends within the industry.

Are there specific states that mandate certification of dietary managers? If so, which states and how do we know the status of certification in the state(s) where we practice?

Currently, there are 17 states that recognize in some way, the CDM credential as one of the qualifications necessary to be a foodservice department supervisor. Recognition varies from state to state and specific regulatory information may be accessed at http://www.DMAonline.org/Advocacy/staffing_regs.shtml. An abbreviated snapshot may be found in Table 1.

How does the term “cost neutral” for the government apply to certification?

The Congressional Budget Office reviews legislative proposals to determine if there will be a cost to the federal government and if so, how much it will be and the Joint Committee on Taxation determines the revenue effects or ‘score’ of any proposed tax changes. Certification in ‘Safe Food for Seniors’ does not require additional funding from the federal government and is “cost neutral” to the U.S. Treasury. Also, certification does not involve a tax change and, therefore, is revenue neutral.

What are the costs to long-term care providers?

There are no costs to providers, unless they opt to cover the training and testing expenses for the individual. Those expenses, which are a one-time cost, average about \$1000.

Is there a plan to “grandfather” non-certified dietary managers if it becomes a requirement that managers must be certified?

While there is no plan to grandfather non-certified managers, we do want to ensure that qualified staff are in place and intend to allow ample time for individuals to become certified.

Would there be a ‘grace’ period for providers to have their dietary managers meet the certification process?

The Safe Food for Seniors bill will stipulate that individuals would have 18 months to become certified.

Is there evidence that certification of dietary managers improves the quality of care provided to residents?

In an analysis of publicly available CMS data, facilities with CDMs had a lower citation rate for dietary/nutrition deficiencies than facilities with non-certified managers. Across the board, facilities with CDMs fared better than those without a CDM in almost every type of dietary/nutrition deficiency.

Who are preceptors and how does one become a preceptor?

Preceptors are registered dietitians or licensed dietitians, with no less than one year full-time equivalent employment, post-registration, in a practitioner role, with at least six months of this experience related to the subject matter of the program. CDM or DTR preceptors, with no less than one year full-time equivalent employment, post-certification/registration, in a practitioner role may also precept. This individual may precept non-nutritional aspects of the field experience and 25 of the 50 nutritional related hours as designated in the DMA Requirements.

Are preceptors paid for their time and oversight?

Preceptors may be volunteers or may be paid by the school or facility to precept students. The majority of preceptors work in the same healthcare facility as the student.

What if a dietary manager does not have access to a preceptor?

If a student does not have a preceptor, they are not allowed to apply to the school for entry into the program. Some schools provide a qualified preceptor, and the student must have access to a healthcare facility to complete the 150 hours of field experience.

Why was the number of RD preceptor hours reduced from 50 to 25 hours?

In surveying our Dietary Manager Training Programs, we found it was increasingly difficult for students to obtain enough RD preceptor hours to meet the required 50 RD hours. The Program Advisory Committee (including RDs from various schools) met to discuss the survey outcome and recommended the CDM or DTR precept 25 of the required hours and the RD precept the other 25 hours. This committee determined which field experiences were critical for the RD to directly precept. The program continues to ensure onsite field experience RD oversight. For those dietary manager training students enrolled in an online/distance education program, students must verify that they have secured an RD preceptor for field experience prior to admission into the program. University online RD preceptors provide the following:

- 50 hours of direct online mentoring supervision, divided between review of course assignments, additional assignments, e-mail contact and occasional phone contact.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the student learning experiences for the total required 150 field experience hours required for the student to complete the program.
- The online RD preceptor also assists the student in planning the field experience projects and provides suggestions for additional resources and information as needed by the student.

Why does DMA use the credential Certified Food Protection Professional (CFPP), which is similar to CFP that is included in the Model Food Code?

The CFP is an organization - the Conference for Food Protection, which sets standards for sanitation and food safety. The CFPP is a credential. In 1996, the Certifying Board for Dietary Managers decided to enhance the CDM credential by adding the requirement that all CDMs take and pass a stand-alone certification exam in sanitation and safety – and this was the CFPP certification program. In 2003, the two exams were merged into one larger exam, and anyone that passes holds the CDM, CFPP credential. Table 2.0 provides additional information on various certification programs.

State Regulations

Below are the states that recognize the Dietary Managers Association in their regulations.

The Certified Dietary Manager (CDM) credential or the successful completion of DMA approved coursework may be one of the qualifications necessary to be a dietary department supervisor.

These states recognize the following:

Alabama:	Long Term Care: DMA coursework
Alaska:	Hospitals: CDM credential or the DMA course Long Term Care: CDM credential
Arkansas:	Hospitals: CDM credential Long Term Care: CDM credential
California:	Long Term Care: CDM credential
Florida:	Long Term Care: CDM credential
Hawaii:	Hospitals: CDM credential
Illinois:	Long Term Care: CDM credential or DMA course
Iowa:	Long Term Care: CDM credential or DMA course
Kansas:	Hospitals: CDM credential Long Term Care: CDM credential
Louisiana:	Hospitals: DMA course Long Term Care: DMA course
Maine:	Long Term Care: CDM credential
Maryland:	Long Term Care: CDM credential
Michigan:	Long Term Care: DMA course
Minnesota:	Long Term Care: DMA course

Mississippi:	Long Term Care: CDM credential or DMA course
Missouri:	Hospitals: DMA course
Nebraska:	Long Term Care: DMA course
North Carolina:	Hospitals: CDM credential Long Term Care: DMA course
North Dakota:	Long Term Care: CDM credential
Oklahoma:	Hospitals: CDM credential
Oregon:	Long Term Care: DMA course
Pennsylvania:	Long Term Care: DMA Membership
South Carolina:	Hospitals: CDM credential or the DMA course Long Term Care: CDM credential or the DMA course
South Dakota:	Hospitals: CDM credential or the DMA course Long Term Care: CDM credential or the DMA course
Texas:	Long Term Care: DMA course
Washington:	Long Term Care: DMA course
West Virginia:	Long Term Care: CDM credential
Wisconsin:	Long Term Care: DMA course
Wyoming:	Hospitals: DMA course Long Term Care: DMA course