



## NUTRITION CONNECTION

# SOURCING AND CREATING EFFECTIVE NUTRITION EDUCATION MATERIALS

BY KRISTIN KLINEFELTER, MS, RDN, LDN

**IT'S ANOTHER BUSY MONDAY MORNING** where you find yourself rushing from meeting to meeting between meals, and interviewing for an assistant cook. Visiting with Mr. J, the new client in the Lovely Lanes neighborhood, is next on your list. You quickly open his chart and see that he has requested to be educated on a meal plan that is appropriate for his newly-diagnosed prediabetes.

Your RDN consultant has already done the assessment and asked you to visit with him and bring MyPlate handouts and educational materials. Once again, you are scrambling to find handouts, as your printer is down. *Note to self: Organize the educational handout file cabinet!* You grab a piece of paper, some markers, and a few food models, and rush off to Mr. J's room.

If this situation sounds all too familiar, you need a plan (and time) to have easily accessible, simple, effective nutrition handouts at your fingertips at all times. The following information should bring you one step closer to this goal.

### PURPOSE OF NUTRITION EDUCATION

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (the Academy) defines *Nutrition Education* as “a process that assists the public in applying knowledge from nutrition science and the relationship between diet and health to their food practices.” Providing *nutrition education* is included in the Certifying Board for Dietary Managers CDM, CFPP Scope of Practice. According to the Scope of Practice for CDM, CFPPs, job duties may include:

- Utilize evidence-based educational materials to teach clients and staff about basic diet information.

In the past few decades, we have moved towards simplifying and customizing individualized meal plans (diets). This

means our approach to nutrition education should include practices such as Motivational Interviewing (MI) and identifying which stage of change the client might be in instead of launching into a generic approach to educating them on their diet order.

Along with culture change, menu program advances, a “real food first” approach and liberalizing diet orders, our approach to educating clients may need an update as well. Do you have educational materials for every meal plan (diet) that you offer? Are your handouts outdated? Perhaps you even have some old black-and-white typed handouts (in typewriter font) with a lot of words and no visual interest? If this is the case, your clients will benefit from a refresh!

### SELECTION CRITERIA FOR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Let's circle back to the role of the CDM, CFPP to “*Utilize evidence-based educational materials to teach clients and staff about basic diet information.*” A few key questions to ask to identify the validity of the information in your materials include:

- Is the author credible? On a printable educational handout, the author and their credentials may not be apparent. There are many free handouts that are colorful and helpful, but they are linked to a product or service that might not be evidence-based or credible. Authors or publishers that are giving away or selling nutrition education should have credentials of Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). If someone has “nutritionist” after their name, they may or may not be offering credible information, as they are not bound by a credentialing agency to only dispense evidence-based information.



If you have purchased access to approved nutrition care manuals (from the Academy, for example), their client handouts are evidence-based and peer reviewed.

- Does the information presented support healthful, practical tips to implement? Or is the handout promoting elimination of one or more food groups or macronutrients? Does it have a “good” and “bad” food list? Steer clear of this.
- Is the handout on a website linked to a national, credentialed agency? For example, the American Heart Association or the American Diabetes Association will only provide valid, evidence-based information for their consumers.
- Is the material written at a level that the client will understand? The goal is to offer educational materials that are at a sixth grade reading level, have plenty of white space,



### THE ROLE OF THE CDM, CFPP

is to “utilize evidence-based educational materials to teach clients and staff about basic diet information.”

and display appropriate graphics and charts. You may need to be the translator of technical information to the client. If the handout doesn’t make this easier for you, it is not the right choice.

### TIPS FOR PURCHASING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Budgets are tight and you may not have funds for purchasing educational materials. This is OK! Many excellent, free handouts are available. You may also have grants or funds within different departments in your facility. For example, the hospital where I work offers scholarships twice a year for departments to purchase educational materials. If you do purchase materials, make sure you have a system for inventory. These days, if you purchase a handout, most likely you will be given access to an electronic version to download. Make sure you save it on a drive versus

an individual computer. Have an organized electronic file system that everyone who may use them can access. If you were given access to a webpage with a password, keep the webpage on “favorites” or the home screen for easy retrieval. You should also have access to them from all computers in the facility to minimize trips to your office.

To prepare for those “*oh no! The printer is out of ink*” days, print 5-10 of the handouts and put one original in a sheet protector in the lateral file. Train your colleagues and staff to make more copies before they grab the last one, or at minimum, make a note that they took the last copy. If you purchase physical handouts or materials, have an organized storage or display system and remind employees that these are costly (sometimes up to \$10 per booklet!) and they only are to be used when a client is being educated on the topic. I make it a practice not to mail materials to people unless I am going to educate them, even if it is just on the phone.

#### TIPS FOR SEARCHING FOR FREE MATERIALS ONLINE

If you plan on downloading free materials online, approach this in a systematic manner. Work with your RDN to make a list of each topic you are going to search. A quick web browser search might look like: “*Mediterranean diet PDF.*” By including *PDF* in the search bar, your top hits/links should come up as printable handouts. Remember, they might not be evidence-based, but you can review the criteria above to make your selections. Do not type “*Mediterranean diet handout FREE,*” as many hits will take you down a rabbit hole of potential scams or viruses.

After you have done the initial searches for your topics, present the options to your education committee and make final selections. It is not a good practice to “search and print” as you go, because most likely you will be rushed and might not find one appropriate for the situation.

Finally, it is critical that we honor copyright laws and give credit to those who write the materials. Often, an author will add a line that it is *permissible to reprint for educational purposes* on their copyright. This means that even if a handout is free and printable, we should always keep the author name and logo on the materials when we reproduce them.

#### CREATING YOUR OWN EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

If you are creative, computer savvy, and have a lot of time (sarcasm), it is possible to develop educational materials for use within your facility. All materials should still be reviewed with your RDN, DON, or Medical Director. You will also want to partner with your marketing department to make sure you use the logos and color palette according to their printed material policy and company marketing plan.

Now that you have your educational materials, how can you use them effectively to create an educational, motivating experience for your clients?

- Go through each piece of info on the handout. Circle or highlight pertinent info as you review it.
- If you are sitting opposite of the person or standing up, make sure the material is facing the correct way so the client can see it properly and write on it.
- Avoid giving the handout to the client if you do not have time to review it with them. If you do leave it with them, make sure you follow-up to ask what questions they have.
- There can be too much of a good thing. Limit overwhelming them with a lot of paper.
- If budgets allow, purchase folders with a space for business cards. It is always nice for people to have a folder for their materials.

#### IT IS CRITICAL WE HONOR COPYRIGHT LAWS

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#### WHAT IS THE “IDEAL” HANDOUT?


Think of materials that you have learned from, as well as implemented behavior change or been motivated by. Our ultimate goal is for the client to learn (the “KNOW”) and to implement behavior and lifestyle change for improved quality of life, disease prevention, reduction of symptoms or complications from a disease (the “GO”). The material should allow individualization and customization as appropriate and be attractive and not overwhelm the person. In the QR code for this article we have included a link to a Know and Go worksheet that will go along nicely with your handouts during an education session. We hope you find it useful!

## STEPS TO CREATE YOUR EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL LIBRARY

1. Decide which topics require materials. Make a list with your RDN.
2. Search your Nutrition Care Manual or related sources for materials that work for your topics first.
3. Next, do Internet searches for materials that fit your needs (for both free and purchased items).
4. Form an education committee with your RDN, DON, or Medical Director to approve all selected materials.
5. Create folders (electronic and/or paper) with the materials for each topic.

6. Write a Policy & Procedure to annually review the educational materials for relevance and effectiveness.

## SUMMING IT UP

Providing quality, evidence-based nutrition materials and handouts for staff and clients can go a long way towards educating your stakeholder groups, and augmenting your training goals. 



## REFERENCES

Scan QR code to view the list of sources to purchase or download handouts.



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Kristin Klinefelter has worked as a consultant dietitian and nutrition educator for the past 25 years. When educating clients, she ends her session by asking them to write down “two SMART goals that you will begin work on as soon as you walk out the door.” She believes that using effective, evidence-based handouts is the key to guiding the client to set and achieve those goals.



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## CE QUESTIONS | NUTRITION CONNECTION



This **Level I** article assumes that the reader has introductory knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to ensure a basic understanding and explanation of the concepts of the subject matter and recalling of related facts.



Reading *Sourcing and Creating Effective Nutrition Education Materials* and successfully completing these questions online in the ANFP Marketplace has been approved for 1 hour of continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. To earn 1 CE hour, visit [www.ANFPonline.org/market](http://www.ANFPonline.org/market) and select **Edge CE Articles** within the Publications section. Purchase the article and complete the quiz.

1. Utilize evidence-based educational materials to teach clients and staff about basic diet information is a job duty of the CDM, CFPP according to what document?
  - A. The CDM, CFPP state licenses
  - B. The Nutrition Education Policy & Procedure of the department
  - C. The CDM, CFPP Scope of Practice
2. What questions should you ask yourself when reviewing nutrition education materials on the Internet?
  - A. Is the author credible?
  - B. Is the research evidence-based?
  - C. Both A and B
3. If you subscribe to an online program that has nutrition education materials, what is a good policy to follow?
  - A. Put a link to the site on the desktops of the people who have authority to view and access the materials
  - B. Give access to your clients so they can print their own materials
  - C. Download the materials and then cancel the subscription
4. How often should you review your nutrition education materials with your committee?
  - A. Monthly
  - B. Quarterly
  - C. Yearly
5. Which is a good guideline to follow if you create your own nutrition education materials?
  - A. Leave white space on each page
  - B. Write the information at a sixth grade reading level
  - C. Both A and B
6. If you do not have time to educate the client on the nutrition education materials, it is beneficial to mail it or leave it in their room to go through it on their own.
  - A. True
  - B. False
7. Nutrition education materials should:
  - A. Give the client practical, realistic tips to implement in their life
  - B. Be complicated to challenge the client
  - C. List technical terms and information to ensure they ask questions



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