

Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Advocacy Priorities for the 2018 Legislative Session

The Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, an affiliate of The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, is a not-for-profit professional organization of over 800 members including registered dietitians, dietetic technicians, and dietetic students. We promote and enhance our profession through various activities and help to improve the lives of Iowa citizens through evidence-based practices.

Our members work in a variety of settings such as:

- Healthcare – Hospitals, HMOs, Clinics
- Food Management/Food Safety
- Business and Industry
- Private Practice
- Fitness Centers/Sports
- Educational Institutions
- Government Agencies
- Public Health Clinics
- Long Term Care Centers

The Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics aims to optimize the health of Iowans through food and nutrition. We believe, people all over the state of Iowa deserve high quality health care provided by health care professionals. Registered Dietitians are highly trained nutrition professionals and can help to ensure the health quality of all Iowans.

As an organization, we strive to advocate for legislation that will affect the health and nutritional status of all Iowans. To that end, this year the Iowa AND plans to address the following legislation:

1. Licensure status of professionals in Iowa, specifically Licensed Dietitians
2. Telehealth legislation, as it relates to the care and services a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist/Licensed Dietitian can provide to our patients
3. The health of all Iowans, ensure adequate food access to nutritious food and encourage physical activity

As a group, we recognize that our priorities may shift or change depending on what bills are introduced during this legislative session. We ask that you keep our organization and professionals in mind as you create, modify, or introduce new legislation that may related to wellness and nutrition care.



Advocacy Priority #1: Licensure for Licensed Dietitians

Identified issue: In the 2017 Iowa Legislative session, a bill was introduced that included provisions that would end licensing requirements for several professions, including registered dietitian nutritionists and replace that licensing with registration. The bill did not move forward in the 2017 legislative session but is likely to reappear in the 2018 legislative session. The Academy believes licensing is essential to assuring the public that trained nutrition professionals are providing the appropriate nutrition education and advice.

Individuals seeking nutrition advice who are medically compromised deserve the assurance that the individual treating them has the requisite education and experience. Licensure laws protect the public from unscrupulous and unqualified individuals who would portray themselves as nutrition experts. As educated and qualified health care practitioners, dietitians and nutritionists have the primary obligation to promote public health. The rationale behind licensure is consistent with this obligation. Licensure laws are not intended to restrict freedom of speech or to monopolize any business. The same arguments opposing licensure laws could be used against licensure of physicians, nurses and other health care professionals, but legislatures in every state have recognized that the protection of the public health justifies regulation. The same argument should prevail when discussing the licensure of dietitians and nutritionists.

Proposed solution: State governments play a vital role in creating and implementing policies that serve and protect the public. **Licensure provides the public, health insurance companies, and state and federal governments with the assurance that practitioners meet standards of professional competence in order to be reimbursed for providing nutrition care services. We ask that you continue to support licensure laws in Iowa and strongly oppose any legislation that would no longer require licensing for dietitians in the state of Iowa.**

Advocacy Priority #2: Telehealth

Identified issue: In the 86th General Assembly, HF 600 was introduced which is an act relating to telehealth and professional licensure, insurance coverage and reimbursement under medical assistance program. Health care delivery in the form of telecommunications technology, also known as telehealth, is becoming more evident throughout Iowa. Telehealth allows healthcare professionals, including Registered Dietitian Nutritionists to provide medical nutrition therapy to individuals in their own community. This allows patients to overcome obstacles such as geography, weather, transportation and other barriers to have access to necessary healthcare providers. This in turn can aid in improved health outcomes, lower health care costs, improved public health, strengthened health infrastructure and preserved health care related jobs.

Proposed solution: State and commercial insurance providers play a vital role in reimbursement for medical nutrition therapy provided by Registered Dietitian Nutritionists. We ask you to consider supporting telehealth coverage for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists when provided in the form of telehealth for Iowans.

Advocacy Priority #3: The Health of all Iowans

Identified issue: The health of every Iowan should be a top priority to our state and nation. Keeping Iowans healthy is important to ensure well-being in the community, home, and workplace. According to the American's Health Rankings, an annual report from the United Health Foundation, obesity is the second highest health issue in our state as of 2017. In Iowa, our obesity rates are higher than the national average- 69% adult Iowan over 31% of Iowa high school students are overweight or obese (data from CDC's Behavioral Risk and Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey). Two large contributing factors to obesity include physical inactivity and poor nutrition, both modifiable behaviors.

In Iowa and across the United States, evidence-based and innovative approaches can and have been used to improve nutrition and physical activity. We know that RDNs play a crucial role in providing evidence-based strategies to improve individual's dietary habits and implement clinical and community nutrition interventions.

Proposed solution: We believe that through appropriate legislation we can take steps to increase the affordability and accessibility of healthy food and beverages by requiring government food procurement to conform to the USDA Dietary Guidelines. We believe that we can create policies that guarantee that school districts are actively creating, implementing, and updating local school wellness policies. We ask that we receive support for the reimbursement of primary care treatment for overweight/obesity from a registered dietitian nutritionist. To promote physical activity in our communities we request that our state requires shared-use agreements, safe walking and biking routes, and safe routes to school for city plans and zoning and subdivision regulations, and incentivize businesses and organizations to offer wellness programs with tax credits.