CURRENT LEGISLATION:
REGISTERED DIETITIANS & DIETETIC TECHNICIANS
SB 993 (MITCHELL)

THIS LANGUAGE:

- Updates the provisions of law regarding the role of dietitians in licensed institutional settings such as hospitals and addresses specific issues regarding scope of practice of dietitians in the modification of medically prescribed diets. Specifically, it:
  - Allows registered dietitians (RDs), upon health care provider referral or per nutritional screening policy approved by the institution, to recommend nutritional and dietary treatments for patients in licensed institutions or in private office settings.
  - Defines the following services provided by RDs as “medical nutrition therapy”: nutritional and dietary counseling, nutritional and dietary assessments, development of nutritional and dietary treatments, and recommendations including therapeutic diets.
  - Clarifies the RD’s role in individualizing the nutritional and dietary treatment when necessary, as that of modifying the distribution, type, and quantity of food and nutrients within the parameters of the medically prescribed diet order.
  - Requires that a medical nutrition therapy referral be accompanied by a signed prescription from the health care provider and include either a statement of the dietary treatment objective or a diet order.
  - Specifies that RDs may accept or transmit verbal or electronic orders for medical nutrition therapy from a patient’s health care provider.
- Expands the pathways by which an individual can become a dietetic technician, registered (DTR) by requiring a candidate to have either:
  - (1) An associate’s degree meeting the appropriate academic requirements for dietetic technicians from a U.S. regionally accredited school and at least 450 hours of supervised practice experience or
  - (2) A bachelor’s degree in dietetics from an U.S. regionally accredited school.
- Corrects the statutes to reflect oversight by the Department of Public Health (DPH). The Department of Health Services (DHS) was abolished and RDs and DTRs functions were transferred to DPH.
- Makes a number of conforming changes throughout the statutes.
- Does not expand the scope of practice of dietitians, nor will it adversely affect those holding themselves out as nutritionists in non-institutional settings.
- Will not affect the roles and responsibilities of nurses, nurse practitioners, or physician assistants.
- Will not affect health care professionals who have nutrition in their scope of practice.
- Will not affect those providing basic nutrition information.

REGULATION OF DIETITIANS IN CALIFORNIA

California Business and Professions Codes 2585-2586.8 provide title protection for RDs, DTRs and describe their respective scopes of practice. However, neither profession is licensed in CA; therefore, there is no state agency providing regulation and oversight of practice.

Business and Professions Code § 2068 provides that any person may provide nutritional advice or give advice concerning proper nutrition and requires a notice posted in commercial settings that clearly states
individuals providing nutritional advice may not diagnosis or treat any diseases, injuries or conditions. This legislative proposal does not change this section of law.

**Practice Areas and Settings**
Registered Dietitians (RDs) are highly trained health professionals who provide dietetic and nutrition services. The majority of RDs work in the treatment and prevention of disease through the practice of evidence-based medical nutrition therapy, often in hospitals, HMOs, private practice and other health care facilities. In addition, a large number of dietitians work in community and public health settings, academia and research. Medicare regulations recognize RDs and nutrition professionals who meet certain requirements as the only health professionals qualified to provide and be reimbursed for medical nutrition therapy for diabetes and renal disease.

Dietetic technicians, Registered (DTRs) work under the direct supervision of RDs and assist RDs in the implementation or monitoring of patients’ dietary treatments, performance of dietary and nutritional assessments and the provision of nutritional counseling.

**Educational Requirements**
To be an RD, an individual must meet the following criteria:

- Possess a baccalaureate degree from a U.S. regionally accredited college or university. Graduates of foreign universities must have their degree validated as equivalent to a U.S. baccalaureate degree.
- Complete dietetics coursework according to the Didactic Program in Dietetics requirements specified by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND – formerly the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education of the American Dietetic Association).
- Complete a supervised practice program (internship) accredited by ACEND.
- Pass a national registration examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR).
- Complete continuing professional education requirements to maintain registration status with CDR.

Some RDs hold additional certifications in specialty areas (e.g. pediatrics, renal, oncology, and diabetes) awarded by CDR or other medical or health care organizations or certifying boards. These are recognized but not required for RDs.

To be a DTR, an individual must meet the following criteria:

- Be 18 or older.
- Possess either:
  - an associate’s degree from a DTR program at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university and complete 450 hours of supervised practice OR
  - a baccalaureate degree in dietetics from a U.S. regionally accredited college or university.
- Pass a national registration examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration.
- Complete the necessary continuing education requirements to maintain registration status with CDR.

**Dietitians in California**
There are 9120 RDs in California. There are 532 DTRs in California.