



Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

H.1073/S.618 – An Act relative to telehealth parity for nutrition counseling

Sponsored by Representative Meghan Kilcoyne and Senator Julian Cyr

⇒ *Ensure continued access to medical nutrition therapy provided via all modalities of telehealth.*

Why Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)?

- Cancer and heart disease are the leading causes of death in MA. The adult obesity rate in 2021 was 27.4%.^{1,2}
- 8.4% of MA adults have diabetes and have medical costs 2.3 times higher than those without diabetes.³
- 9% of MA residents will have an eating disorder in their lifetime. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rates of all mental health conditions and cost \$8.3 billion in direct health spending and loss of wellbeing.⁴
- Diabetes and eating disorders are just two of many nutrition-related conditions treated with medical nutrition therapy: “nutritional diagnostic, therapy, and counseling services for the purpose of disease management.”
- Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) is a cost-effective component of comprehensive, high-quality health care for the prevention and treatment of a variety of health conditions impacted by diet and nutrition.
- Evidence shows that the biggest public health impact will be made by reducing modifiable risk factors, such as diet and following a healthy eating pattern, via MNT.
- MNT addresses the precursors of chronic disease before they manifest, reducing the health care cost burden.
- MNT provided via all modalities of telehealth allows patients the option of choosing where and how best to receive treatment while removing barriers to care, improving health outcomes and increasing health equity.

Who provides Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)?

- Registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs), also called registered dietitians (RDs), are food and nutrition experts who have met academic and professional requirements to qualify for the ‘RDN’ credential.
- RDNs have completed at minimum a bachelor’s degree and an accredited supervised practice program, then have passed the national Registration Exam. To keep current on emerging science, they must complete continuing professional educational requirements on an annual basis.
- The work of many RDNs includes providing Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) to prevent and treat disease, including diabetes, eating disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, heart disease, hypertension and obesity.
- They work in acute care and rehab hospitals, long-term care facilities, community and public health settings, academia and research, sports nutrition, agriculture and food systems, schools, supermarkets and corporate wellness programs as well as private practice.

What is the Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND)?

- MAND is a state affiliate of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the nation’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, representing 112,000 registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs), nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered (NDTRs) and advanced-degree nutritionists across the country.
- MAND and its ~1,800 members are committed to helping Massachusetts residents thrive through the transformative power of food and nutrition and advancing the dietetics profession through research, education and advocacy.
- MAND asks legislators to ensure continued access to MNT provided via all modalities of telehealth by supporting “An Act relative to telehealth parity for nutrition counseling” (H.1073/S.618).

References

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2. America’s Health Rankings. United Health Foundation. <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Obesity/state/MA>. Accessed March 9, 2023.
3. American Diabetes Association. The Burden of Diabetes in Massachusetts. https://diabetes.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/ADV_2021_State_Fact_sheets_all_rev_1.27_MA.pdf. Accessed March 9, 2023.
4. STRIPED. Social & Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in Massachusetts. https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1267/2021/01/State-Report_Massachusetts.pdf. Accessed March 9, 2023.