



Licensure Myths Debunked

By
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Now, let's debunk some myths about licensure.

Myth #1 The purpose of licensure is to ensure that only dietitians provide nutrition services and to protect the dietetics profession against professional encroachment.

Fact: No, sorry. The purpose of any licensure bill is simply to protect the public against unsafe practice by practitioners. The focus is on the safety of the public. Licensing of healthcare professionals protects the public health against unsafe practice by establishing minimum educational, experience, and examination criteria for those individuals who provide services.

With that said, the purpose of licensure bills is not to restrict practice or to protect practitioners against professional encroachment. The state has an obligation to protect the health and safety of the public; it is not the state's responsibility to prevent professional encroachment unless there is proven harm associated with the encroachment.

Myth #2 Only LDNs can provide nutrition information.

Fact: Another myth. As we earlier noted, under our licensure law persons working in weight loss or fitness programs, health food stores or businesses that sell health products, or who are conducting classes are allowed to give out nutrition information in some cases. However, they can only provide **non-medical nutrition**.

The rules and regulations define "non-medical" (T.C.A. §63-25-104) as *the dissemination of non-therapeutic information relating only to normal nutrition for healthy people*. Therefore, non-LDNs who work in weight loss or fitness programs or health food stores or who teach classes can only provide general information on normal nutrition for healthy people.

Myth #3 The job of licensure board members is to investigate complaints about persons who are providing nutrition services without a license.

Fact: This is a common misconception. Licensure board members do not investigate complaints. That job is the responsibility of staff members of the Health Related Board (a board attorney) assisted by an LDN who serves as a consultant to the staff. If the

investigation finds there was a violation of the practice act, the case is presented to the licensure board members who decide the disciplinary action to be taken. For that reason, details of open cases should not be discussed with board members.

The duties of the licensure board members are to 1) promulgate (make known) the rules that are necessary to carry out the licensure statute; 2) set licensure fees; 3) review and approve licensure applications and issue licenses; 4) collect fees and fines; and 5) discipline LDNs who violate the licensure regulations.