

# Eating disorders role statement

This role statement was developed by members of the Eating Disorders Interest Group.

It lists the knowledge and skills of an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) working in the area of eating disorders.

## **Knowledge**

- Knowledge of the functional nature of eating disorders and its relationship with nutrition and eating behaviour.
- Thorough knowledge of body weight and health, child and adolescent physical, social and psychological development, human eating behaviour and body image.
- Thorough understanding of the health and nutrition consequences of eating disorders and their management, including the physiological and psychological effects of eating disorder behaviours (for example, starvation, bingeing, purging, laxative abuse, excessive exercise) and management of refeeding syndrome.
- Understanding of psychological engagement and the client-centred/family-centred models used in the management of Eating Disorders and the role of the Dietitian in each of these treatment models. These may include (but not exclusively), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Family Based Treatment (commonly known as Maudsley), Adolescent Focused Therapy, Motivational Enhancement Therapy and Mindfulness.
- Understanding of psychotropic medication; use, side effects and nutritional interactions.
- A good understanding of team care processes and practices in mental health care.

## **Skills**

- Facilitation of the nutrition counselling process (engagement and education) involved in achieving physical re-nourishment and restoration of normalised eating behaviours.
- Counselling skills including (but not limited to) motivational interviewing skills.

- Skills in maintaining therapeutic/treatment boundaries given the long-term nature of therapeutic relationships.
- An ability to self-reflect on one's practice and your relationship with your client and to seek clinical supervision on a regular basis.

### **Activities entry level APDs would conduct**

- Identify potential eating disorder and eating disordered behaviours, address this with the client and act to refer to a medical practitioner for formal diagnosis, medical risk management and referral for mental health intervention.
- Assessing appropriateness of a referral considering level of risk of client's nutrition status, the individual's motivation to change and the suitability of inpatient or outpatient care.
- Promote a therapeutic engagement by expressing empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence and actively listening to the client.
- Provide structure, education and therapeutic support to encourage a return to normal/healthy nutritional intake and eating behaviours.
- Regular clinical supervision with an appropriate clinician (either intra or inter-disciplinary).

### **Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct**

- Overseeing nutritional care of inpatients and outpatients with more severe eating disorders and being aware of specialist/support services available for people with eating disorders.
- Act as nutrition resource person for the support, education, training and development of others involved in the care of eating disorder patients.
- Support a multidisciplinary team for best practice management of the client, and be actively involved in treatment planning, team meetings and correspondence with other health professionals within the team.

### **Activities dietitians working in this area of practice do not usually undertake**

- Sole management and treatment of clients, without the involvement of a GP and (where possible) a mental health clinician.
- Practising in the eating disorders field without engaging in ongoing professional development to build on knowledge and skills and without clinical supervision.
- Providing psychological counselling outside their skill-base.

**For more, download the full [role statement](#). The full statement includes a list of document references**

## Get in touch

If you have questions about this role statement, contact us at [policy@dietitiansaustralia.org.au](mailto:policy@dietitiansaustralia.org.au)

### [The role of an Accredited Practising Dietitian](#)

Our role statements describe the skills and knowledge of an APD working in a particular area of practice.

### [Seeing a dietitian in Australia](#)

Dietitians treat a range of health conditions. They understand how nutrition affects the body and will give you expert nutrition and dietary advice.