

Nutrition Professionals: The CNS and the RD

Certified Nutrition Specialists (CNS) and Registered Dietitians (RDs) are professionals in the field of nutrition, offering expertise in nutrition counseling, dietary planning, and medical nutrition therapy. Both the CNS and RD aim to improve health outcomes through nutrition. They assess and treat nutritional problems and provide nutrition counseling to help individuals achieve their health goals. They can provide medical nutrition therapy, develop and implement nutrition programs, and work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private practice, community health, and research.

CNS

- Master of Science or Doctoral degree in a field of nutrition or a related field; and

Thirty-six semester credit hours of relevant coursework to provide the foundational knowledge for the development of core competencies required for the practice of effective personalized nutrition
- The CNS Candidate must demonstrate evidence of experience in personalized nutrition and medical nutrition therapy by undergoing a 1,000 hour Supervised Practice Experience focused on nutrition assessment, intervention, education, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Tests at advanced level (master's, doctoral degrees); covering fundamental principles of nutrition, nutrients and human health, medical nutrition therapy, biochemistry, nutrition assessment, clinical intervention and monitoring, public health, professional issues/practice management.
- Scope of practice includes medical nutrition therapy and personalized nutrition. CNS nutritionists often work in private or group practices, public health, culinary nutrition, academia, and other healthcare settings.

RD

- Becoming an RD requires completing a bachelor's degree (and, as of 2024, a master's degree) in dietetics or a related field, a dietetic internship through an Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND)-accredited program
- 900 - 1,200 hours of experience required in dietetics, food service management, and nutrition care for groups and individuals.
- Tests at basic level (bachelor's degree); covering principles of dietetics, nutrition care for individuals and groups, management of food and nutrition programs and services, and foodservice systems.
- Scope of practice includes medical nutrition therapy. RDs often work in hospitals, schools, corporate cafeterias, or nursing homes. RDs may also work in private practice or other healthcare settings.