



DRAFT Guidelines for Self-Employed Registered Dietitians in Saskatchewan

Registered Dietitians collaborate with individuals, community groups, populations, inter-professional health care teams and others, to provide evidence informed food and nutrition services. As trusted professionals, Registered Dietitians fill many roles, depending on where they work. Dietitians provide services in a variety of practice settings including, but not limited to: community, public health, healthcare, industry, government, media, education, management, research and private practice.

The number of dietitians interested in working in a self-employed capacity is growing. Self-employed dietitians may work as consultants in health care, medical, industry or work in private practice.

The purpose of this document is to provide registrants of the Saskatchewan Dietitians Association working in a self-employed capacity with information and support to practice in a competent, safe and ethical manner. In some instances the information provided is general and you are referred to the source legislation or government agency so that you can ensure you have the most up to date information and that you are interpreting it correctly for your situation.

Legislation/Regulatory Requirements and Accountabilities

All SDA registrants are required to participate in the continuing competence program, uphold the SDA Code of Ethics and practice in accordance with the Professional Standards of Practice for Dietitians in Canada. Although these standards documents apply to all SDA registrants, if you are working in or wish to begin working in a self-employed capacity, it is crucial that you are familiar with section 7.0 of the Code of Ethics- "Dietitian as Business Person."

Health professionals in Saskatchewan are bound by the Health Information Protection Act (HIPA). HIPA provides direction regarding the confidentiality of and access to personal health information as well as sets out the rules for collection, use, and disclosure of personal health information. Dietitians in independent practice are required to understand their obligations under HIPA (see Appendix A) and are advised to refer directly to the Act and its regulations. Contact Saskatchewan Health and/or the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner directly for specific guidelines and further information.

Dietitians working in a self-employed capacity are also accountable to ensure their business practices are consistent with provincial, federal and local regulations and that they are working collaboratively.

Skills and Expertise

Do I need specific skills to work in a self-employed capacity?

Dietitians working in a self-employed capacity may be faced with a broad scope of issues requiring knowledge, skills and experience beyond entry to practice expectations. Solid nutrition experience, strong business aptitude, effective organizational and record keeping skills, and exceptional communication skills are required.

How much experience do I need to start my own private practice?

The knowledge and skills required to work in private practice are often beyond those that can be attained through completion of an undergraduate degree in nutrition and practicum. Although SDA does not have specific requirements at this time, it is advised that members have extensive experience before practicing independently. Other dietetic regulatory bodies throughout Canada recommend 3-5 years of experience.

Are there supports available to me?

Working in a self-employed capacity can be isolating. In the absence of direct supervision, it is important for you to establish a solid support network. Through Dietitians of Canada, there is a Consulting Dietitians Network. For an annual fee, the network members can have access to resources, mentorship and an online forum for asking questions to other consulting Dietitians. You may also be able to tap into local networks in your community for entrepreneurs or small business owners (i.e. Square One Saskatchewan, Futurpreneur, Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc.).

What do I do if I am contacted by a client whose needs are outside of my personal competence?

As a Dietitian, you assume responsibility and accountability for your personal competence in practice, and are required to practice within your personal level of competence. As you are starting your business, it may be tempting to accept every client that seeks your services. As outlined by the SDA Code of Ethics section 2.0 – The Dietitian as a Health Care Professional, “the dietitian assumes responsibility and accountability for personal competence in practice. She or he has an obligation to acquire new skills and knowledge in the areas of practice on a continuing basis to ensure safe, competent and ethical dietetic practice”.

If you do not have the personal competence in the practice area, you are obligated to be honest with the client and refer him or her to a Dietitian who is qualified in the practice area. Even after many years of working in a self-employed capacity, it is important that you recognize you may not have

established the personal competence to serve every potential client who seeks your services. The SDA Jurisprudence Workbook and Standards of Practice are resources to help you better determine your level of personal competence.

Business Practices

How do I start a business?

When starting a business, there are a number of considerations. It is your responsibility to be informed about acceptable business practices, including legal and financial requirements. Speak to other professionals and obtain legal/financial advice on how to start a business as well as how to incorporate legal, book keeping, and accounting best practices. Investigate local resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses. In addition, the Consulting Dietitians Network with Dietitians of Canada has a manual entitled "Dietitians in Private Practice: A Guide for the Consultant", which is available for purchase.

How do I register my private practice in Saskatchewan?

To conduct business in Saskatchewan, the Dietitian must decide which business structure is the most appropriate for their situation: sole proprietorship, partnership or corporation. More information on each type of business structure and its reporting requirements can be found at the provincial corporate registry for the province of Saskatchewan- Information Services Corporation (www.isc.ca). Businesses registered with Information Services Corporation can search and register names, file incorporation documents and obtain business numbers for use with the Canada Revenue Agency for purposes of GST, payroll, etc. As appropriate, you must then also obtain a Business License with your town or city, if required. Consult with an accountant to determine the most appropriate structure for your business. This may change as your business becomes more established.

Are there best practices for self-employed Dietitians?

Yes, although not developed or endorsed by SDA, the Consulting Dietitians Network with Dietitians of Canada has created a document called, "Best Business Practice Characteristics for Dietitians Working in Private Practice". It includes information on national legislation such as Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents (PIPEDA) and Canada Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) as well as guidelines around confidential voicemail, email, record keeping, backing up electronic records, private meeting space, client consent, satisfaction surveys, and so forth.

Outside of best practice, am I required to have specific policies and procedures in place?

Yes. Policies are important in any business as they help you to standardize routine practices and provide consistent written guidelines specific to your business and practice. Policies can protect you and the clients you serve. When developing policies and procedures, they should be compliant with both provincial and federal legislation, as applicable.

As a self-employed Dietitian, you will be responsible for confidentiality, privacy and access to the health records of your clients. As a trustee of personal health information, you need to be aware of your obligations under the provincial privacy legislation known as Health Information Protection Act (HIPA) and have the appropriate policies in place. Resources and information on privacy best practices are located in Appendix 1 and through Saskatchewan Health and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Saskatchewan.

Consent and Record Keeping

Consent

Prior to providing any service, you must obtain documented informed consent. Informed consent means providing the client with information regarding the nature of the treatment or service to be provided along with its expected benefits, possible risks and side effects, alternate courses of action and the likely consequence of no action (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario). Consent must be related directly to the treatment/service (which includes fee, services and/or billing practices), be based on full disclosure of the likely risks and benefits and be given voluntarily.

In addition to consent for services, Dietitians in independent practice must also obtain consent for the collection of personal health information. This can be done in conjunction with consent for services, but should specifically address your obligations under HIPA to have expressed written consent that identify the following in relation to the collection of personal health information:

- The type of information you will be collecting.
- The intended use for the personal and health information being collected.
- Who you may be corresponding with regarding the information collected (e.g. physician, or other pertinent health care providers).
- How files will be stored and protected.
- The option to revoke consent and opt out at any time.
- How long the client file will be stored and how file records will be eliminated after that point.

Record Keeping

Good record keeping allows you to meet professional, legal and ethical obligations. Accurate and complete health records must be created as part of the services you provide. Dietitians are expected to document relevant information accurately and completely in a timely manner. You are expected to document care according to generally accepted professional practice and business standards in compliance with any local, provincial and/or federal legislation. Your professional obligations are the same for services delivered in person or via technology, in the province or by electronic practice outside of Saskatchewan.

For example, The Nutrition Care Process and International Dietetics and Nutrition Terminology (IDNT) are recommended by the International Confederation of Dietetic Associations and supported by Dietitians of Canada as a framework for dietetic practice. This includes thorough nutrition assessment, nutrition diagnosis if applicable, nutrition care planning, and follow up or monitoring.

Record Retention/Destruction

A dietitian working in private practice is considered the trustee under HIPA and is responsible for record storage. The retention and destruction section of HIPA has not yet been proclaimed. Presently, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Saskatchewan suggests that records are retained for a minimum period of ten years from the date of the last entry. For pediatric clients, records should be retained for a period of fifteen years or until two years past the date that the client becomes 18 years old.

Fees and Financial Management

How do I establish fees?

Establishing fees can be tricky. Your fees must be fair, reasonable and appropriate for the services provided. Before establishing fees, you should be aware of standard rates for dietetic services. Fee guidelines are available free of charge from the Consulting Dietitians Network with Dietitians of Canada. Unreasonable, inappropriate, or mismanagement of fees may be considered professional misconduct.

In addition to establishing fair and reasonable fees, your fees should be pre-established and communicated (including accepted methods of payment) prior to provision of any service.

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If I'm not making a lot of money in my business, do I still need to claim it?

Absolutely. No matter how much or how little income you make in a self-employed capacity, you are required to claim it. In some instances you may also claim a loss if your income is low and you have expenses. It is important to talk to an accountant as they will help you choose the business structure that makes sense for your situation.

For more information on claiming self-employed income including information regarding GST, refer to the Canadian Revenue Agency's Checklist for Small Businesses.

What are the requirements for maintaining financial records?

It is recommended you consult a small business accountant for advice. Financial records should be kept in accordance with the requirements outlined by the Canada Revenue Agency. No matter how big or small your business, you are required to maintain comprehensive financial records including, but not limited to, accurate invoicing (client name, date/type/duration of service), income collected (fees charged, payment method, third party payers), expenses accrued, and expense receipts.

There are many online book keeping programs available such as Sage, QuickBooks or Freshbooks, to help you with financial record-keeping.

Do I have to charge my clients GST or PST?

The information provided in these guidelines is general. As you know best what types of services you are providing, it is your responsibility to search out the relevant information to determine if you need to be collecting GST and/or PST.

For GST, it will depend on what type of services you are providing. According to the federal *Excise Tax Act*, one-on-one dietetic counselling would be GST exempt, regardless of who pays for the service (i.e. the client, employee assistance program, or insurance company). Group sessions are also GST exempt if dietitians are providing services to a public sector body (e.g. a non-profit organization, a municipality, a school authority, or a public college or university) or health care facility (e.g. hospitals or rehabilitative care facilities). GST is not charged to First Nations organizations operating on a reserve.

There are exceptions. Dietetic services are GST taxable when provided to a group who is neither a public sector body nor health care facility. For example, providing a lunch and learn to a private corporation would be GST taxable.

Health care services in Saskatchewan are deemed to be non-taxable according to the Information Bulletin for Service Enterprises and *Provincial Sales Tax Act*. If the service you provide is considered to be within the definition of one of the exemptible services, you are not required to charge PST. However, you are still required to pay tax on purchases of equipment, supplies and taxable services used in their business and in providing their services. If you have questions regarding PST, contact the Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance at 1-800-667-6102.

Liability and Conflict of Interest

Liability Insurance

Although the Saskatchewan Dietitians Association currently does not have a requirement for private practice Dietitians to have professional liability insurance, it is highly recommended. You can purchase professional liability insurance through a variety of companies listed in Appendix B. In choosing which insurance to purchase, you will want to consider the amount of coverage provided (ie. \$3, 4 or 5 million) and what is included/excluded in coverage (ie. negligence, criminal proceedings, disciplinary proceedings. You may also consider other types of insurance (personal injury/disability insurance, building insurance) as appropriate for your situation.

Conflict of Interest

As a healthcare professional, you are in a position of trust and must not use your position for personal or financial gain. A conflict of interest occurs when, in the mind of a reasonable person, a dietitian has a personal interest that could improperly influence their professional judgment (Steinecke and CDO, 2015). This may undermine the integrity of the dietitian and of the profession resulting in loss of public trust. A conflict of interest may arise in a transaction that involves you, a member of your family, or a corporation owned or controlled by you or a member of your family.

Examples of potential conflicts of interest include:

- accepting gifts, rebates, credits or other benefits for referring a client to any other service or program
- offering, making or conferring a rebate, gift, credit or other benefit for receiving a client referral from another professional
- pressuring clients to participate in research that directly benefits you (including monetary benefit or status)
- if employed elsewhere, referring clients to your private practice from your place of employment

As outlined by the SDA Code of Ethics 7.0 – The Dietitian as a Business Person, “The dietitian should avoid real or perceived conflict of interest in which her or his professional judgment could be compromised. When circumstances make it impossible to avoid a conflict of interest it shall be

disclosed to the client.” It is your responsibility to disclose to relevant others (i.e. your clients) any perceived or actual conflicts of interest at the first opportunity. Failure to do so may be seen as professional misconduct. Where discussions about conflict of interest have occurred, it is essential that you document them.

Managing Conflict of Interest

Conflicts may arise in any work setting. Some of these conflicts can be avoided, others can be managed. Using a systematic approach to work through conflict of interest situations is helpful. Certain situations can be managed using the safeguards outlined in the DORM Principle:

- **Disclosure:** at the earliest opportunity, RDs should disclose the nature of the conflict to the client;
- **Options:** inform the client of his/her alternatives and assist in arranging for alternatives where requested;
- **Reassurance:** reassure clients that choosing another product or service will not affect the quality of the professional services to them;
- **Modification:** making small modifications can remove or greatly reduce the potential for conflict of interest

SDA does not currently prohibit RDs from selling products, because they feel this conflict can be managed. In some other provinces, there is an outright prohibition of dietitians selling products to clients because it is viewed that no matter how well intentioned, the client may feel the pressure to purchase products from the Dietitian.

In accordance with the SDA Code of Ethics section 7.0 – The Dietitian as Business Person, SDA permits the sale of products by Dietitians if the product is recommended as part of the nutrition care plan and where its use is supported by best practice guidelines and scientific evidence. The DORM systematic approach, as outlined above, can be used as a guide to help manage potential conflicts of interest.

Advertising and Marketing

The purpose of advertising is to provide information so that potential clients can make informed decisions. A dietitian must ensure the information in an advertisement is:

- Truthful, accurate and verifiable
- Includes a proper professional title
- Includes detailed fees to enable the client to understand the nature and extent of services and their cost.
- Is clear and comprehensible, not misleading by either omitting relevant information or including irrelevant information.

The SDA Regulatory Bylaws state that it is professional misconduct to:

- Guarantee a cure, either verbally or in writing.
- Advertise, promote or market with inaccurate or misleading information intended to:
 - Misrepresent facts
 - Compare either directly or indirectly the member's services with that of any other practitioner or clinic or promises more effective or better results than that available elsewhere.
 - Deprecate another member or clinic with respect to service, ability or fees.
 - Create an unjustified expectation about the results that the member can achieve
 - Be incompatible with the best interests of the public or tends to harm the standing of the dietetic profession generally
 - Contains any testimonial or discloses the names of clients
 - Contain any reference to a specific brand of drug, device or equipment.

The SDAs fundamental principles of safe, competent and ethical dietetic practice applies to all forms of marketing and communications including blogs and social media.

Professional Misconduct Regulation

The Saskatchewan Dietitians Association has a defined process in place to react to or deal with concerns that are raised in regards to the practice of its registrants. In order for a complaint to be investigated, SDA must receive a completed complaint form that provides sufficient information for the Professional Conduct Committee to undertake its investigation. It would be considered professional misconduct to breach the SDA Code of Ethics in regards to any of the dietitian's roles, including those provided under section 7.0 – The Dietitian as Business Person.

Cessation of Practice

Self-employed Dietitians must have a plan in place for the transfer of health records in the event of cessation of practice (retirement, incapacity, death). The cessation plan should include the name, address and telephone number of a designated trustee who can take over the custody of the client care records. The designated trustee does not need to be an RD. They can be a spouse, family member, a friend or colleague who is willing to assume the legal responsibility for maintaining records according to Saskatchewan law.

The contact information for the designated trustee must be kept up to date by the self-employed Dietitians and known to his/her next of kin and/or executor as appropriate. The cessation plan should include a notification plan that informs ongoing clients of any transfer of their records and also notification to SDA.

Acknowledgements *The Saskatchewan Dietitians Association would like to acknowledge The Nova Scotia Dietetic Association, the College of Dietitians of Ontario, the College of Dietitians of British Columbia and the College of Dietitians of Alberta in support with the preparation of this document.*

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Government of SK – PST <http://finance.gov.sk.ca/taxes/pst/>

Government of SK- PST Information Bulletin on Service Enterprises:
<http://finance.gov.sk.ca/revenue/pst/bulletins/PST-46ServiceEnterprises.pdf>

Government of Canada- Excise Tax GST exemption on health services- <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-15/page-172.html#h-160>

Appendix 1- Best Practice Principles of Privacy

	Fair Information Principle	Recommended Compliance Actions
1	<p>Be accountable- ensure compliance with the legislation.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: "trustee" as defined in Part 1- Interpretation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure someone in the office/clinic assumes the role of "privacy officer"- the person who is responsible for understanding the legislation and ensuring policies and processes are in place to protect the collection, use and disclosure of clients' and employees' personal information.
2	<p>Identify purpose- before or at the time of collection, identify the purpose for collecting personal information.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: Section 9 (Right to be informed)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State purposes in writing whenever personal information or personal health information is requested. • Do not collect personal information or personal health information if the purpose for collection can not be stated.
3	<p>Obtain consent- provide information and obtain consent for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information, including the consequences of consent not being provided.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: Section 6 (Consent)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to obtaining consent, ensure clients and employees understand who will have access to the information, how it will be used and when and how it will be disclosed. • Obtain written or verbal consent; implied consent is given when clients and employees provide answers to posed questions. • Consent may be withdrawn subject to legal reason and reasonable notice. • Be sure to check the legislation if you are unsure whether information should be disclosed (with or without consent – HIPA outlines this)
4	<p>Limit collection- collect only information that is required to fulfill the stated purpose.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: Section 24 (Restrictions on Collection)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review questions on forms for relevance and delete any not relevant to stated purpose • Identify optional questions

<p>5</p>	<p>Limit collection, use, disclosure and retention - use personal information and disclose it to another person only for the purpose it was collected; keep personal information or personal health information only as long as required.</p> <p><i>HIPAA references: Section 23 (Collection, use and disclosure on a need-to-know basis), Section 27 (Disclosure)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit use of personal information to the purposes stated; contact information must be used for business purposes only, not personal • Do not disclose an individual's information to anyone unless written or verbal permission is obtained and recorded. • Keep information only as long as required for the stated purpose or as required by law • Shred paper records once usefulness is over; destroy discarded computer hard drives and ensure the destruction is done in a confidential manner. You are still responsible for records under HIPAA if they are destroyed improperly. • In consultation with a lawyer and/or the Ministry of Health, determine a retention period for client's records.
<p>6</p>	<p>Ensure accuracy- ensure personal information collected is complete, current and accurate as needed to fulfill stated purpose.</p> <p><i>HIPAA reference: Section 19 (Accuracy)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update personal information on a regular basis. • HIPAA outlines the trustees responsibility to ensure records are complete and accurate
<p>7</p>	<p>Use safeguards- protect against unauthorized access, disclosure, use copying or modification of all personal information, regardless of the format.</p> <p><i>HIPAA reference: Section 16 (Duty to Protect), Section 17 (Retention and destruction policy)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep all records (computer and paper) containing personal information or personal health information safe from public view and from access by unauthorized individuals. • Do not discuss client and employee information in a public area • Allow employee access to client records on a "need to know" basis • Store records in a lockable cabinet/drawer when not in use and at night; lock nightly • Back up computer records regularly and store in a safe, un-obtrusive place • Ensure computers have technological safeguards to protect against unauthorized access

8	<p>Be open- communicate policies and practices.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: Section 9 (Right to be Informed)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a privacy policy for clients which includes information about accessing their personal records • Include a privacy statement on emails, computer and fax forms • Ask staff members to sign confidentiality agreements
9	<p>Provide individuals access- provide clients and employees access to their personal records on request to ensure accuracy and completeness.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: Section 12 (Right to access by individuals) and Part V- Access of Individuals to Personal Health Information</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write all health records in an objective and professional manner, following standards accepted by the profession • Develop a policy that enables employees and clients to obtain access to their personal file on request and to assist the patient should they require interpretation of their file.
10	<p>Provide a challenge process- provide a process for clients and employees to challenge compliance.</p> <p><i>HIPA reference: Section 13 (Right to request amendment) and Part V- Access of Individuals to Personal Health Information</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a process for monitoring the office's compliance with privacy legislation. • Develop a clear and simple process to manage complaints about the office's privacy policy or access to information process

For more information, see the following references:

Health Information Protection Act- <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/english/Statutes/Statutes/H0-021.pdf>

OIPC guide to HIPA: <http://www.oipc.sk.ca/Resources/2016-2017/IPC%20Guide%20to%20HIPA.pdf>

HIPA webinars: http://www.oipc.sk.ca/Resources_PublicBodies_Presentations.htm

Best Practices for Obtaining Informed Consent: <http://www.oipc.sk.ca/Resources/2015-2016/Best%20Practices%20for%20Gathering%20Informed%20Consent.pdf>

Best Practices for Responding to Access Requests: <http://www.oipc.sk.ca/Resources/2016-2017/Best%20Practices%20for%20Responding%20to%20Access%20Requests.pdf>

Appendix B- Professional Liability Insurance Providers

The cost of professional liability insurance will vary with the activities you are undertaking and the amount of coverage you think you need. As such, we are not able to give you the cost of professional liability insurance. You will need to contact each provider and they will give you a quote.

Dietitians of Canada- If you are a member of Dietitians of Canada, you can purchase professional liability insurance through them: www.dietitians.ca

Sheppard Insurance: www.sheppardinsurance.com

HUB Sinclair Cockburn: www.scfg.ca

Holman Insurance Brokers Ltd: www.holmanins.com

Michael Palermo & Assoc: www.palermoinsurance.com

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