Have you considered taking a new job, expanding your social media presence, or obtaining a new certification? Initially you might feel confident about the knowledge and skills that you will need to be competent in your role. After taking on the new role or responsibility, you might feel humbled to discover that you have more to learn.

Being in a profession that is accountable to the public means achieving initial, entry-level competence and registration as an RDN or RD or NDTR or DTR and engaging in a professional development plan and lifelong learning. As nutrition and health evidence changes, so do the knowledge, skills, judgments, and attitudes needed for each practice role.

For more than a decade, the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR)-credentialed practitioners have completed the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP). Although these practitioners identify learning needs and document knowledge attained and how it applies to practice, the current PDP process does not always identify actual learning needs relevant to practitioners’ roles or responsibilities. Furthermore, the PDP learning need codes (LNCs) broadly emphasize knowledge, but not the profession’s skill, judgment and attitude requirements.

In 2012, CDR endeavored to identify the essential practice competencies that define the knowledge, skill, judgment, and attitude requirements across nutrition and dietetics practice and within focus areas necessary for competent, ethical, and safe practice. Over 2 years, stakeholder consultation and national validation survey research was conducted. CDR involved more than 12,000 practitioners in the research, writing, and validating of the distinct RDN/RD and NDTR/DTR competencies, which encompass the range of activities in the profession and recognize that practitioners fulfill many unique roles. The study generated two additional practice tools:

- **Performance indicators**: Leveled action statements that begin with phrases such as, “Evaluates the impact of…” (for RDNs or RDs) and “Identifies the impact of…” (for NDTRs or DTRs).
- **Practice illustrations**: Examples of the competencies in day-to-day practice.

Based on the research, CDR is making three changes to the PDP:

1. Streamline the current five-step PDP process to three steps,
2. Implement an online Goal Wizard to help practitioners identify their learning goals, and
3. Replace the LNCs with practice competency performance indicators.

See the What’s New side bar for more on what is and what is not changing in the PDP.
There is a 5-year phased implementation of the new PDP process. The first group includes RDNs or RDs and NDTRs or DTRs credentialed June 2, 2015-May 31, 2016, and those recertifying June 1, 2016-May 31, 2021. The last group to begin using the new PDP process will be credentialed practitioners recertifying June 1, 2020-May 31, 2025.

Numerous resources regarding the practice competencies are available for practitioners, educators, and continuing professional education (CPE) accredited providers on CDR’s website.

What’s New in the Competency-Based PDP Process?

*Three important changes:*

1. The PDP process is now three steps instead of five. Step 1 is the Learning Plan, Step 2 is the Activity Log, and Step 3 is Professional Development Evaluation.
2. To complete Step 1: Learning Plan, CDR has developed an online Goal Wizard, which uses a step-by-step decision algorithm to assist credentialed practitioners with identification of essential practice competencies and performance indicators that are relevant to their practice. Practitioners tailor their Learning Plans by adding or deleting practice competencies and performance indicators. A demonstration version of the Goal Wizard, called the Dream Wizard, is available for students or current practitioners who want more information about the Goal Wizard.
3. The knowledge-based LNCs that practitioners have identified in their Learning Plans will be replaced with the essential practice competencies and performance indicators that practitioners select. Accredited CPE providers will include applicable LNCs and competencies for each CPE offering throughout the transition to the new PDP process.

There are no changes to the following:

- Learning activity types for CPE.
- Total number of CPE units required. RDNs or RDs need to complete 75 CPEUs whereas NDTRs or DTRs need to complete 50 CPEUs in every 5-year recertification cycle.
- Requirement to keep certificates of completion. Practitioners still need to maintain records of these certificates in case of audit.

Questions?
Email competencies@eatright.org or cdr@eatright.org.