

SECTION 6

WAYS DIETITIANS CAN ASSIST HOME CARE CLIENTS AND SERVICES

6.1 SUMMARY OF ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF DIETITIANS IN HOME-BASED CARE

Actual and potential ways dietitians can assist home care clients and services with food and nutrition issues include:

1) Consultancy, training and provision of resources to services providers:

All food, nutrition and health problems in frail older people, people with disabilities and people who are financially disadvantaged living in alternative accommodation:

- a) Policy development
- b) Consultancy to service providers on how they can resolve simple food and nutrition issues for individual clients and groups of clients
- c) Provision of in-service sessions for all levels of home care service providers (co-ordinators, case managers, assessment officers, home carers, trained nurses, allied health teams, doctors)
- d) Advocacy and specialist liaison on food and nutrition issues with other services
- e) Information about available local dietitians such as their geographical location and general or particular interests

2) Development of community resources to support home care:

- a) General information on food and nutrition issues
- b) Service provider information on food and nutrition issues
- c) Local shopping and transport services
- d) Local food supply (commercial) and other food-related activities
- e) Meals on Wheels recipients
- f) Community food services
- g) Delivered meals from other food services
- h) Consultation and liaison with service providers

3) Policy development:

- a) Food and health issues
- b) Nutrition and health issues
- c) Community food supply and food service issues

4) Community food services:

Consultation and information about some or all of the following aspects of Community Food Services:

- a) Relationship to local commercial and other food-related activities
- b) Community food service review
- c) Food service training

- d) Food service menus
- e) Food service management
- f) Modified/special diets
- g) Enteral feeding
- h) Nutritional supplements

5) Direct client services:

When a person is unable to respond to simple types of intervention, the dietitian has the knowledge and skill to investigate the problem in some detail, and provide information which has been geared to be of use to the particular person.

- a) **Assessment of dietary patterns and intake.**
- b) **Assessment of nutritional status:**
 - Identify complications of poor nutrition and malnutrition, nutritional care
 - Review food - medication interactions
 - Problem solving - weight loss, poor appetite, eating and digesting difficulties
 - Identify factors which decrease/increase food and fluid intake, which if acted upon could improve health
- c) **Assess the appropriateness of a modified or special diet:**
 - Does the person need it?
 - What does the diet involve?
 - How can it be best supplied?
- d) **Intervention:**
 - Assist in change of attitude from prevention of premature health problems (heart disease etc.) to prevention of frailty and supportive nourishment.
 - Assist high dependency clients with feeding problems
 - Counsel and educate adults and carers about ways in which a person can make minimal changes to their food and fluid intake, and so improve their enjoyment of food and quality of life and retain their independence
 - Suggest removal of unnecessary food restrictions for a person, introducing food variety
 - Solve person problems relating to lack of food access, and food adequacy with respect to budgetary constraints
 - Provide information on cost-effective shopping, simple ways of shopping, how to read food labels
 - Conduct supermarket tours
 - Provide information on household management-food hygiene, menu plans, recipes, food and drink preparation, and the use of kitchen equipment

- Provide of additional nutritional support when an individual is unable to meet their own needs; This involves supplementing energy or nutrients, changing the timing, size or composition of meals, and texture modification
 - Liaise with other service providers
- e) **Adult support and monitoring**

Some indications for client referral to a dietitian

- **I have gained or lost 5 kg (10 lb) or more without trying in the last six months***
- **My appetite is poor and food doesn't taste good to me**
- **I have trouble chewing and swallowing***
- **My pills are upsetting me and I can't eat**

- **I treat illness with vitamin supplements**
- **I have many nutrition questions or need advice about what to eat**

- **I spend less than \$30 a week on food**
- **I usually need help shopping for food**

- **I have an illness that the doctor told me needs a special diet***
- **I am supposed to be on a special diet, but I have trouble following it**

* Personal safety issues