Position Paper on the Role of the Food Service Dietitian[1]

Definition of Food Service

Food service is a multidimensional operation often described as a food service system model[2][3] transforming inputs (human labor and skills, materials, facilities and operational) to outputs (meals, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and financial accountability).

Food service is an increasingly complex context[4], which will always be in a process of change as new demands occur and vary from country to country.

Food and meals for vulnerable groups must be nutritious (for prevention or treatment) and tailored for specific individuals and groups, as well as being tasty, tempting and familiar they must be safe, sustainable and financially reasonable.

Role of the Food ServiceDietitian:

1. Play a key role in operations that provide meals for various target groups and settings e.g.: for the young in pre-schools and schools; for healthy adults in workplaces and prisons; for persons with disabilities, older adults and sick people in health and social care; as well as for staff and visitors in those settings. The clients who rely on this provision of food are often nutritionally vulnerable and they are partly or fully dependent on this provision to attain food and nutrition security.
2. Have a central role in initiating and formulating documents of visions, strategies, policies and guidelines for food service settings, based on steering documents from e.g. WHO, EU and member states. Moreover dietitians working in food service settings play a key role in transforming theory in those documents to practice in collaboration with interprofessional teams in everyday work.
3. Are uniquely qualified to provide food service for vulnerable groups, as their education and competences include: science and evidence based knowledge about food, nutrition and dietetics; organization and management of food service (financing, human resources and leadership); local governance and regulatory frameworks. All these aspects are balanced into decisions about how to plan, produce and serve meals that satisfy clients' needs and preferences as well as reaching goals of efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Can play varied roles, e.g.: i) to consult; ii) to manage; or iii) to direct the food service operations[5]. Being consultants requires expertise in such diverse topics as menu planning, special diets, food safety, sustainability, purchasing & procurement and kitchen design and redesign as well as education and communication. Managers may require all the previous skills in addition to the responsibility of managing the food service operation. A director of food services will have an overall responsibility for several food service operations including all the responsibilities related to that role.

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[1] In Europe there are three defined specialist roles for a dietitian: clinical, public health and food service. Each role has its own competences. See"*Dietitians in Europe Definition, Profession and Education"*. (EFAD 2016) http://www.efad.org/reportsandpapers/5276/5/0/80

[2] Spears MC, Vaden AC. *Foodservice Organizations: A Managerial and Systems Approach*. New York, NY: Collier Macmillan; 1985.

[3] Gregoire MB. *Food service Organizations: A Managerial and System Approach.* 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson; 2013.

[4] Practice Paper of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Principles of Productivity in Food and Nutrition Services: Applications in the 21st Century health Care Reforms Era. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.*2015;115(7):S1141-1147.

[5] The Academy Quality Management Committee and Scope of Practice Subcommittee of the Quality Management Committee. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Scope of Practice for the Registered Dietitian. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.*2013;113(6 suppl 2):S17-28.

About The European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD)

EFAD was established in 1978 with aims to:

- Promote the development of the dietetic profession
- Develop dietetics on a scientific and professional level in the common interest of the member associations
- Facilitate communication between national dietetic associations and other organisations – professional, educational, and governmental
- Encourage a better nutrition situation for the population of the member countries of Europe.

EFAD's ambitions:

- Realise the contribution that dietitians can make to the improvement of nutritional health in Europe.
- Support the role of all National Dietetic Associations to contribute to the sustainability of economic and social health through influencing decision-makers both locally and in Europe.
- Embed best quality and evidenced-based dietetic practice in Europe through collaboration and partnership
- Promote education and lifelong learning in order to raise and maintain European dietetic standards

Membership of EFAD is open all National Associations of Dietitians from member states of the European Union. EFAD currently has 35 National Dietetic Association Members and 37 Education Associate Members, representing over 35,000 dietitians in 29 European countries.

Definition of a Dietitian[1]:

A dietitian is a person with a qualification in Nutrition & Dietetics recognised by a national authority.
The dietitian applies the science of nutrition to the feeding and education of groups of people and individuals in both health and disease.

For further information please visit the web site: www.efad.org

Or contact secretariat@efad.org

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