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The Professional Development Portfolio Process: Setting Goals for Credentialing

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Abstract

Professional Development Portfolio (PDP), the new credentialing system for dietetics professionals, places the responsibility for learning, professional development, and career direction on the individual practitioner. This study used questionnaires and focus group interviews to determine whether dietitians engage in reflection, self-assessment, and goal setting, the critical components of PDP recertification. Volunteers (n=132) participated in 16 focus groups held during 8 state dietetic association meetings. Content analysis was conducted. Some subjects reflected using an informal non-structured process (42 text units), almost half (41%) performed annual self-assessments, and 25% set goals. Job availability, new practice areas, family obligations, and employer needs were key factors in goal formulation. Opportunities for self-direction, independent decision-making, and application of technical expertise were also considered in career choices and goal setting. Although few participants were currently

performing PDP critical components, we conclude dietetic practitioners can gain the necessary skills for professional development with the newly available *PDP Guide* to support the portfolio process. We recommend that dietitians (a) allow sufficient time for the reflection process, including the use of additional tools; (b) develop personal mission statements to drive the goal-setting process; and (c) use effectiveness criteria to critique their goals. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2002;102:1439-1444.



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