



## Certified Practicing Nutritionist (CPN) - Disability Role Statement

- *Derived from mappings to the NDIS Allied Health Capability Framework Disability and Complex Support Needs*

This Disability Role Statement is based on the detailed mappings of the Certified Practicing Nutritionist Competencies, Competency Elements and Competency Element Performance Indicators, against the *NDIS Allied Health Capability Framework Disability and Complex Support Needs*. It demonstrates the scope and value of Certified Practicing Nutritionists (CPNs) in supporting people with disability and recognises the distinct and essential contribution of CPNs in delivering NDIS-funded nutrition supports.

CPNs are degree qualified allied health professionals whose professional competencies enable them to provide evidence-based nutrition support to people with disability and complex support needs. Operating within an ethical, person-centred, and evidence-informed framework, CPNs play a key role in promoting health, independence, and wellbeing through the development and delivery of tailored nutritional care plans and interventions.

The CPNs' role is grounded in the principles of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including enabling choice and control, promoting inclusion and participation, and supporting people to pursue their goals. CPNs work collaboratively with individuals, their families, formal and informal supports, and multidisciplinary teams, to deliver safe, quality therapeutic nutritional care that is responsive to the diversity and complexity of individual needs.

---

## Core functions of the Certified Practicing Nutritionist role

### 1. Understands disability and complex support needs

CPNs recognise the rights and diversity of people with disability, including physical, cognitive, sensory, and psychosocial disabilities. They gather and analyse information about the client - considering nutritional, physical, emotional, social, and cultural contexts—through health assessments and apply clinical reasoning to identify nutritional support needs linked to the individual's disability. This includes:

- Recognising the increased risk of malnutrition, nutrient deficiencies, and mealtime issues in people with disability.
- Identifying impacts of disability on eating, swallowing, digestion, or meal preparation capacity.
- Developing evidence-informed strategies and plans to support safe and adequate nutritional intake including personalised meal plans and nutrition care plans.
- Supporting clients through the prescribing of nutritional supplements where nutritionally or medically indicated.

## 2. Promotes independence and informed choice

CPNs empower participants by promoting informed decision-making in all aspects of nutritional care, ensuring nutritional care plans are clearly explained, consent is obtained, and personal preferences are acknowledged. They support skill-building for greater independence in meal planning and preparation where possible, aligning with NDIS expectations that support fosters long-term self-management.

## 3. Works in partnership to set and achieve goals

CPNs use a person-centred approach to co-design nutritional goals that are functional, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with broader aspirations for social and economic participation. They assess capacity and tailor interventions that reflect individual goals, developmental stage, and life context.

## 4. Thinks flexibly and tailors' interventions

CPNs adapt therapeutic nutrition support interventions based on the lived experience and environment of the individual. This includes working with those requiring help understanding nutrition, planning meals, shopping, or preparing meals. CPNs can also identify when support workers, carers or informal supports may require training to assist with implementation and provide that training.

## 5. Communicates effectively

CPNs apply accessible communication strategies using appropriate language, cultural awareness, and communication aids where necessary. They foster trust, respect, and shared understanding with individuals, their families and carers, and communicate nutrition-related risks, benefits, and recommendations clearly and respectfully.

## 6. Works collaboratively with the person's supports

CPNs recognise the value of formal and informal supports in the person's life and actively engage them in care planning and implementation. They share relevant information with consent, refer appropriately, and provide training to supports on safe implementation of the plan.

## 7. Operates within Scope of Practice

CPNs adhere to their professional scope and the NDIS delineation of roles between health and disability systems and to the boundaries of the NDIS nutrition supports item. They provide therapeutic nutrition supports which may include dietary modification, personalised meal planning, education in nutrition and meal preparation, and the targeted prescribing of nutritional supplementation (when needed). CPN's are unique to other allied health providers of NDIS nutrition supports in that they are qualified to prescribe therapeutic nutritional supplements, and this nutritional prescribing capacity is legislatively underpinned by Section 42AA of the Therapeutic Goods Act (1989). CPNs refer to or collaborate with other health professionals as needed. CPNs do not engage with the provision of enteral nutrition.

## 8. Collaborates interprofessionally

CPNs actively engage in interdisciplinary care, understanding the contribution of other disciplines in meeting complex needs. They initiate and receive referrals, contribute to service coordination, and share information using structured and accessible reporting formats.

## 9. Navigates the NDIS

CPNs understand the NDIS funding criteria, guidelines, and terminology relevant to disability-related nutrition supports. They provide the necessary documentation and evidence—including tailored nutrition plans or reports, to support plan development and reassessment. Within their scope of practice, they support individuals to advocate for themselves and/or act as advocates when appropriate.

## 10. Collaborates across service systems

CPNs understand and operate across multiple service systems, including health and disability. They can contribute to effective transitions between services, especially for participants leaving hospital or entering supported accommodation by ensuring continuity of nutritional care through accurate and adequate documentation and appropriate and authorised sharing of information.

## 11. Acts ethically and resolves conflicts

CPNs practice in alignment with professional codes of ethics and practice guidelines, respecting cultural values, family dynamics, and rights of people with disability. They recognise and balance duty of care with dignity, informed choice, and risk management, particularly when complex or conflicting priorities arise in the course of providing therapeutic nutrition supports.

## 12. Promotes quality, safety and inclusion

CPNs ensure inclusive and culturally safe practices, particularly when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants or other culturally diverse communities. They create clinical environments and engage in clinical practices that promote health and inclusion, and where required, support staff in managing the impacts of vicarious trauma.

---

## Summary

Certified Practicing Nutritionists are integral to delivering person-centred, culturally safe, and evidence-based therapeutic nutrition supports under the NDIS. Their role extends beyond nutritional assessment and meal planning to encompass appropriate nutritional advocacy, collaboration, support coordination, and capacity-building for individuals and their support networks. Through their scope and multidisciplinary engagement, CPNs contribute to the broader goals of inclusion, participation, and quality of life for people with disability.