



Certified Practicing Nutritionist – Older Persons and Aged Care/Geriatric Care Role Statement

- *Derived from mappings to the My Aged Care Quality Learning Framework*

This Role Statement is derived from the detailed mappings of the Certified Practicing Nutritionist Competencies, Competency Elements and Competency Element Performance Indicators, to the *My Aged Care Quality Learning Framework*. It affirms the readiness of Certified Practicing Nutritionists (CPNs) to work as skilled and accountable members of the aged care workforce, dedicated to enhancing nutritional health outcomes and supporting dignity and quality of life for older Australians. It explains the role of CPNs in supporting the health and wellbeing of older people. Further, it describes the knowledge, skills and professional competencies CPNs bring to the care of older Australians, and how they contribute to person-centred, evidence-informed, and collaborative nutrition care.

Role Overview

CPNs can play a vital role in supporting older Australians to achieve and maintain optimal health, independence, and quality of life. They are equipped to provide comprehensive, evidence-informed, person-centred nutrition care that supports older individuals across community, residential, and clinical care settings. Their role encompasses nutritional assessment and diagnosis, nutritional intervention planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, nutrition education, advocacy, collaboration, and leadership (in nutrition care). A CPN when working with older persons and in aged/geriatric care provides evidence-based nutritional services that are person-centred, trauma-sensitive, and aligned with wellness and reablement principles.

CPNs working with older persons and in aged/geriatric care, can provide tailored/personalised nutrition care, including but not limited to, home-based support under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), and private practice consulting. CPNs apply a wellness and reablement approach, support trauma-informed care, uphold cultural safety, and facilitate collaborative, evidence-based nutritional service delivery.

Core Functions

1. Managing the Client Journey (MAC.1)

CPNs conduct comprehensive, client-centred health and nutrition assessments tailored to the needs of older people. These assessments incorporate presenting symptoms, expectations, basic cognitive capacity, and functional needs. They record and manage client health information with accuracy, confidentiality, and clinical relevance to ensure effective communication and continuity of care. Where appropriate, they refer clients to other qualified health professionals, ensuring care remains within scope and integrated with other services. Additionally, they can apply relevant public health and

epidemiological knowledge to address both individual and population-level nutrition issues affecting older adults.

CPNs can also guide clients and carers through available nutrition related aged care services, supports, and nutrition-related programs, by recognising eligibility criteria and service pathways.

2. Navigating My Aged Care (MAC.2)

CPNs can assist older clients and their carers to understand and access nutrition related aged care supports, funding and referral pathways using appropriate communication channels and professional language. They communicate effectively with clients, families, and professionals across access points, ensuring clarity, sensitivity, and responsiveness to individual needs. CPNs can also collaborate across the aged care workforce and broader health system, to support integrated service delivery and optimal client outcomes.

3. Using Technology (MAC.3)

CPNs use electronic health records to document and share relevant data and ensure client understanding of the relevant documentation.

4. Working Ethically and Legally (MAC.4)

CPNs deliver nutrition care in accordance with their professional duty of care and ethical responsibilities and appropriately uphold privacy, confidentiality and consent in all their interactions with older persons and aged care activities. They maintain high standards of professional integrity, working within scope of practice and referring to other health professionals when a client's needs extend beyond their expertise.

5. Communication (MAC.5)

CPNs adapt their communication to accommodate cultural, cognitive, and linguistic diversity, including the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients. They apply person-centred, trauma-sensitive, respectful, and inclusive communication strategies to build rapport and trust with older people and their families. Using their counselling skills they appropriately navigate complex and sensitive discussions such as health and cognitive decline, with professionalism, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. Using their motivational interviewing and counselling techniques, they promote client engagement in nutritional care planning and decision-making and support dietary behaviour change.

6. Supporting Wellness and Reablement (MAC.6)

CPNs support wellness and reablement by promoting independence and functional capacity through strengths-based assessment, planning, and service delivery. They set achievable, client-centred nutrition goals aligned with the individual's preferences and capabilities and deliver reablement-focused interventions such as food therapy, therapeutic supplementation, and dietary adaptations.

CPNs educate and empower older people to maintain health, prevent decline, and actively participate in their care through personalised dietary strategies. They apply food-first approaches, dietary fortification, and appropriate use of oral nutrition supplements to optimise nutritional status.

Their work is informed by knowledge of conditions that impact nutrition in older adults, such as frailty, sarcopenia, dysphagia, dementia, polypharmacy, malnutrition, and chronic illness - enabling timely, tailored interventions that align with wellness and reablement principles.

7. Recording Information (MAC.7)

CPNs maintain clear, accurate, and confidential documentation to support continuity and quality of care. They ensure that client records are systematic, clinically relevant, and aligned with professional guidelines. This includes documenting assessments, interventions, and care plans in ways that facilitate collaboration, review, and effective decision-making.

8. Provision of Quality Assessments (MAC.8)

CPNs, apply their knowledge to make decisions in relation to client needs and goals, and the need for subsidised nutrition services. CPNs conduct comprehensive clinical, dietary and nutritional assessments, drawing on observation, physical examination, client history, dietary analysis, pathology testing and diagnostic reasoning, to identify nutrition-related issues. They apply professional judgement and evidence-informed decision-making in developing tailored nutrition interventions and plans, including the use of therapeutic diets, personalised menu planning, and appropriate therapeutic nutritional supplementation. Application of therapeutic diets, therapeutic nutritional supplementation, and client-specific menu planning is directly linked to comprehensive, high-quality assessments and clinical decision-making in aged care/geriatric nutrition.

CPNs regularly monitor client progress, reassess goals, and adjust care as required to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness of the nutritional plan. They maintain systematic documentation and can contribute to reviews of care plans and service delivery. All assessments and reviews are supported by clear, systematic documentation aligned with professional clinical standards, to facilitate recommendations and approvals for appropriate and subsidised services where applicable.

9. Responding to Vulnerability (MAC.9)

CPNs apply a trauma and culturally sensitive, and safe approach to care for older people experiencing vulnerability, psychological trauma, memory and cognition issues, or complex care needs. They identify signs of trauma and vulnerability through careful history taking, observation, and engagement with the client and their support network.

CPNs implement care strategies that are person-centred, respectful, and responsive, using established counselling techniques to manage challenging behaviours and emotional distress. They involve families and carers in assessment and planning, where appropriate, to ensure shared understanding of care needs.

Where additional support is needed, CPNs collaborate with other health professionals such as referral to medical, mental health and palliative care professionals, contributing to a multidisciplinary response that addresses the full scope of the older person's well-being.

10. Providing Client-Centred Care (MAC.10)

CPNs provide and deliver individualised, respectful care that supports the identity, autonomy, and preferences of older people. Their approach is consistent with the principles of the Aged Care Diversity Framework, recognising and responding to the cultural, social, cognitive, and linguistic diversity of the population they serve.

CPNs promote inclusion and uphold dignity, particularly for those from marginalised or culturally diverse backgrounds, ensuring all nutritional assessments and interventions reflect the client's values, background, and lived experience. They are equipped to work collaboratively with food services, care staff, families, and other support networks to tailor mealtime experiences and nutritional strategies that align with the older person's individual goals, preferences and needs, reflecting a truly person-centred approach to nutritional care.

11. Displaying Resilience (MAC.11)

CPNs demonstrate resilience by reflecting on their emotional wellbeing, identifying when support is needed, and implementing appropriate self-care strategies to sustain their capacity to deliver high-quality care. They maintain professionalism and personal wellbeing, recognising that managing stress, setting boundaries, and accessing support networks are essential to long-term sustainability in aged care practice. This commitment enables CPNs to remain engaged, effective, and responsive within the emotionally demanding contexts of supporting older Australians.

12. Managing and Leading (MAC.12)

CPNs actively engage in their own and/or others' performance and development. They are equipped to engage with professional audits, policy development, mentoring and peer/staff education, and through this they demonstrate their leadership, strategic contribution, and quality improvement capacity within aged/geriatric nutritional care context.

CPNs can participate in strategic planning, policy development, and system-wide initiatives that promote continuous improvement in nutritional service delivery. They maintain lifelong learning and reflective practice to ensure clinical competence and alignment with best practice in aged and geriatric nutritional care.

Summary statement

Certified Practicing Nutritionists (CPNs) can play a vital role in improving the health and wellbeing of older Australians. They are critical to enhancing nutrition-related health outcomes in that they bring a specialised, client-centred, and evidence-informed approach to older persons and aged/geriatric nutritional care, empowering older Australians through personalised nutritional support, to live with dignity, independence, and wellbeing throughout their ageing journey. Through comprehensive assessment, individualised planning, and continuous review, they address complex age-related nutritional needs with professionalism and compassion. CPNs can be key contributors to a safe, effective, and reablement-focused aged care system.