

STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-0640, appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This qualification standard establishes the Clinical Dietetic Technician, occupation under VA's title 38 hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the authority established under Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, P.L. 111-163. The VA Secretary has authority under 38 U.S.C. § 7402 to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments. This converts the Clinical Dietetic Technician from the title 5 competitive service (Appendix II-F22) to the hybrid title 38 excepted service. The new standard is effective on the date of this publication. This qualification standard is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer \(OCHCO\) \(va.gov\)](#).
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVES:** [VA Directive 5005, Staffing, April 15, 2002](#).
- 5. RELATED HANDBOOK:** VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G17.
- 6. RESCISSIONS:** VA Handbook 5005, Appendix F22, Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-640-4/6, Qualification Standard.

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Cassandra M. Law
Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and Administration/
Operations, Security, and Preparedness

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

FORMER VA HANDBOOK REFERENCE: Not applicable
EFFECTIVE DATE: May 22, 2024

**CLINICAL DIETETIC TECHNICIAN
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0640
Veterans Health Administration**

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment or placement as a Clinical Dietetic Technician (CDT), in Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA CDTs in the General Schedule (GS)-0640 series. CDTs are paraprofessionals who assist and support Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) in providing nutrition care to patients. Their duties include interviewing patients and using pre-established criteria to identify patients at nutritional risk; gathering information from, and documenting in the medical record; developing nutritional care plans for patients at an appropriate level of care; monitoring and assisting in the evaluation of food intake; adjusting meal patterns and nourishments for selected patients to accommodate preferences and tolerances; counseling selected patients about their prescribed diets; and teaching selected classes for groups of patients.
2. **AUTHORITIES.**
 - a. [P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010.](#)
 - b. [38 U.S.C. § 7401, Appointments in Veterans Health Administration.](#)
 - c. [38 U.S.C § 7402, Qualifications of appointees.](#)
 - d. [38 U.S.C § 7403, Period of appointments; promotions.](#)
 - e. [38 U.S.C § 7405, Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments, and without-compensation appointments.](#)
 - f. [38 U.S.C § 7407, Administrative provisions for §§ 7505 and 7406 appointments.](#)
3. **DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources (HR) Officer is delegated appointing authority, to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions and authority to effect management approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees, and facilities for which service is provided.
 - b. **Approving Official.** The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director, Facility Director, or Under Secretary for Health or designee (for VHA central office appointments) is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in the hybrid occupations.
 - c. **Experience.**

- (1) To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with current CDTs. Experience satisfying this requirement may be paid or non-paid employment as a CDT in the health care field.
 - (2) **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to a full-time workweek. For example, an individual employed 20 hours per week, or on a half-time basis, would receive one full-time work week of credit for each two weeks of service.
 - (3) **Quality of Experience.** Qualifying experience must be at a level comparable to CDT experience at the next lower grade level of the position being filled. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity, and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time.
- d. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is the GS-07 grade level.
 - e. **Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics.** Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) is the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' accrediting agency for education programs preparing students for careers as registered dietitian nutritionists or nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered.
 - f. **Dietetic Technician, Registered (DTR) and Nutrition and Dietetics Technician Registered (NDTR).** DTR and NDTR credentials are the same, have identical meanings and legal trademark definitions and both are qualifying. The difference between DTR and NDTR is in name only due to an option by the professional academy. In this standard, the term DTR is used.
 - g. **Certified Dietary Manager.** Certified Dietary Manager, Certified Food Protection Professional (CDM, CFPP) credential will be referred to as the CDM. The Certifying Board for Dietary Managers (CDBM) is the credentialing agency responsible for this certification.
- 4. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.** To qualify for appointment to this position, all applicants must possess the following:
- a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States (U.S.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).
 - b. **Experience and/or Education.**

(1) **Education.** Completion of an associate's or higher degree program in Dietetic Technology, Dietetics or another related field of study that is accredited by ACEND®. A list of ACEND® accredited programs are located on the ACEND® website or at [ACEND Accredited Programs Directory](https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend/accredited-programs/program-directory) (<https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend/accredited-programs/program-directory>).

OR

(2) **Experience.** Completion of one (1) year of clinical experience in dietetics, and the possession of an active Certified Dietary Manager (CDM) certification. The experience must have been received after possession of the CDM certification.

OR

(3) **Experience/Education Combination.** Equivalent combinations of experience and education are qualifying.

c. **Licensure/Certification/Registration.**

(1) **List of Licensure/Certification/Registration.** Possession of the DTR credential from the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), the credentialing agency of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, is required for the Advanced CDT (Clinical), GS-08 assignment.

(2) **Exception for Non-registered CDT**

(a) Non-registered applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for licensure, may be given a temporary appointment as a CDT under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2).

(b) Non-registered individuals shall only provide care under the supervision of a credentialed CDT at or above the full performance level.

(c) Non-registered individuals may only be appointed at the entry level and may not be promoted/converted until certification is obtained.

(d) Temporary appointments of non-registered CDTs may not be extended beyond two years or converted to a new temporary appointment.

(3) **Failure to Obtain Registration.** In all cases, CDTs must actively pursue meeting requirements for registration starting from the date of their placement into the occupation. At the time of appointment, the Human Resources (HR) Office staff in collaboration with the supervisor will provide the employee with the written requirements for registration, including the time by which the registration, must be obtained and the consequences for not becoming registered by the deadline. Failure to obtain registration during this time period may result in termination of employment.

- (4) **Loss of Credential.** Management officials, in collaboration with HR office staff must immediately relieve employees who fail to maintain the required registration of the duties and responsibilities associated with this occupation, which may also result in separation from employment.
 - (5) HR Office staff must appoint CDTs according to the provisions in Chapter 3, Section B, paragraph 16 of this part, who have, or have ever had, their CDT registration revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited, or issued/placed in a probationary status.
- d. **Grandfathering Provision.** Employees in VHA in this occupation, under a permanent, appropriate, and legal placement on the effective date of the qualification standard, are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade and/or assignment held, including positive education and licensure/registration/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard but met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed, the following provisions apply:
- (1) Employees may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level or changed to lower grade within the occupation but may not be promoted beyond the journeyman level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.
 - (2) Employees in an occupation that requires a licensure/certification/registration only at higher grade levels must meet the licensure/certification/registration requirement before they can be promoted to those higher grade levels.
 - (3) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.
 - (4) Employees retained in this occupation under this provision and subsequently leave the occupation lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.
 - (5) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification/registration that meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.
- NOTE:** This provision is not intended to regularize appointments/placements.
- e. **Foreign Education.** To be creditable, education completed outside the U.S. must be deemed at least equivalent to that gained in a conventional U.S. program by a private organization specializing in the interpretation of foreign educational credentials.

f. **Physical Requirements.** See [VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service](#) for requirements.

g. **English Language Proficiency.** CDT candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

5. OFFICIAL POSITION TITLES. All official documents relating to a position (e.g., functional statements and personnel actions) must use the approved official title and grade level as described below. For recruitment purposes, HR offices will use the titles shown in paragraphs 6a-6f in the job opportunity announcement. See VA Handbook 5003, Part I for information on the use of official titles and organizational titles.

- a. Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-05.
- b. Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-06.
- c. Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-07.
- d. Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-08.
- e. Clinical Dietetic Technician (Administrative), GS-08.
- f. Supervisory Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-08.

6. GRADE DETERMINATIONS. In addition to the basic requirements for employment, candidates must meet the following grade determining criteria for appointments at the grade levels specified.

a. **Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-05.**

(1) **Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(2) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve in CDT entry-level developmental positions. It is expected that the CDT receives guidance from higher-level staff members or supervisors and require frequent and direct supervision. The CDT is responsible for screening patients, which includes but is not limited to, collecting nutritionally relevant data such as diagnoses, medications, clinical symptoms, laboratory values, dietary history, and anthropometrics. The CDT will receive and record patient information regarding allergies, patient meal preferences and enter this information into the applicable software program(s) including the medical record. The CDT may recommend modification of the diet order for texture/consistency, tolerance, and supplemental feedings as appropriate. The CDT will assist clinical dietitians and the food service section in provision of medical nutrition therapy appropriate to the age-related needs of patients across the continuum of care and provide nutrition education for patients at the direction of a registered dietitian.

b. Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-06.

- (1) **Experience.** One year of specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade.

NOTE: Possession of the Dietetic Technician, Registered (DTR) credential can be substituted for the one year of specialized experience.

- (2) **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience or certification requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge of nutrition screening process.
- (b) Knowledge of programs and systems used to manage diverse patient diet orders and preferences.
- (c) Skill in conducting diet education to selected groups of patients and individuals.
- (d) Ability to work collaboratively with patients and coworkers to provide nutrition care.

- (3) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve in CDT developmental positions. It is expected that the CDT receives guidance from higher-level staff members or supervisors and requires minimal supervision. The CDT may modify diet orders for texture/consistency, tolerance, and supplemental feedings as appropriate. The CDT assists the RDN with screening and evaluation of nutrition care needs of patients, development of nutritional care plans including nutrition interventions, and diet counseling outlined by the RDN. The incumbent may assist in related duties that support performance improvement activities for the service.

c. Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-07.

- (1) **Experience.** One year of specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade.

- (2) **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience or certification requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge in Medical Nutrition Therapy pertaining to completing nutrition assessments.
- (b) Knowledge of food service operations.

- (c) Skill in conducting nutrition intervention, patient interviewing, and nutrition counseling as part of the nutrition care process.
 - (d) Ability to organize, evaluate, and execute teaching plans to provide nutrition education for selected groups of patients and individuals.
 - (e) Ability to effectively communicate nutrition education and care plans with patients, family members, coworkers, internal customers, and external customers.
- (3) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve as full performance level CDTs. They are knowledgeable of a variety of complex diet orders. The CDT will conduct screening and evaluation of nutrition care needs of patients, development of nutritional care plans including nutrition interventions, and diet counseling in collaboration with the RDN. The employee makes recommendations for adjustments to improve patient's recovery and/or teaching plan, evaluates (instruction, demonstration, facilitation) and works collaboratively with the patient and family to develop strategies to meet their learning needs. The CDT educates patients or employees, in groups or individually, and/or those accompanying the patient regarding medical nutrition therapies. The employee serves as a preceptor for dietetic technician affiliated programs and associated tasks as applicable. The CDT assists with administrative or clerical functions associated with food service operations.

d. **Advanced Clinical Dietetic Technician (Clinical), GS-08.**

- (1) **Experience.** One year of specialized experience comparable to the next lower level which demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the duties of the position to be filled.
- (2) **Registration.** Must hold the DTR credential from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- (3) **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience and registration requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of clinical policies and procedures pertaining to nutrition and food service operations.

- (b) Skill in conducting Nutrition Focused Physical Exams.
 - (c) Skill in communicating with various populations and interdisciplinary team members for the purpose of nutrition program management.
 - (d) Ability to independently develop and implement nutritional care plans for patients.
 - (e) Ability to coordinate program-specific operations or initiatives for process improvement.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must be of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the advanced level, the Advanced CDT (Clinical) assist the RDN in screening and evaluation of nutrition care needs of patients, development of nutritional care plans, diet counseling and recordkeeping. The employee develops and implements nutritional care plans guided by standards of care and documents in medical record. The CDT will interact effectively with inter- and/or intra-department medical and support personnel to meet patient care goals and provide timely response to requests. The employee makes recommendations for patients' diet prescriptions and/or nourishments within established guidelines according to patient needs and preferences. They modify tray tickets, standing orders, supplements, and pertinent clinical care computerized reports. This employee must make clinical judgment decisions related to patient care nutrition-focused physical exams and, where appropriate, consults with a dietitian, supervisor, or other members of the health care team regarding patient concerns. The employee will provide direction to other clinical dietetic staff regarding clinical operations or provide oversight of a departmental program. The employee completes the criteria for basic initial and follow-up nutritional assessments of patients on modified diets, special formulas, and diet allergies.

e. Advanced Clinical Dietetic Technician (Administrative), GS-08.

- (1) **Experience.** One year of specialized experience comparable to the next lower level which demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the duties of the position to be filled.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge in food safety.
 - (b) Skill in communicating verbally and in writing with various populations and interdisciplinary team members.
 - (c) Skill in running various reports and maintaining software files from various computer systems.
 - (d) Skill in performing quality control audits pertaining to food production and meal service.
 - (e) Ability to coordinate program specific operations or initiatives for process improvement.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must be of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the advanced level, the Advanced CDT (Administrative) performs required food production, service quality control audits and Hazards Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) monitoring in conjunction with Food Production/service staff. The Advanced CDT (Administrative) provides clerical, assistant, or technician level support from within an administrative office. The employee gathers data and information to assist in the preparation of studies and analyses of manpower and workload requirements in organizations. This employee will modify tray tickets, standing orders, supplements, and pertinent production/service computerized reports. The Advanced CDT (Administrative) coordinates, develops, and maintains computer software files to support the functions of Nutrition and Food Services Department. The employee serves as the Serv Safe Instructor for the Nutrition and Food Service Department. This employee can support other areas that host events involving outside food sources. The employee may coordinate activities for dietetic technician interns, as applicable. This employee may also conduct inspections, or assist with inspections of halfway homes, residential care homes, and other patient care activities under supervision and dependent on the facility needs.

f. Supervisory Clinical Dietetic Technician, GS-08.

- (1) **Experience.** One year of experience comparable to the next lower level, which demonstrates the knowledge, skills and abilities related to the duties of the position to be filled.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge in clinical policies or procedures to assess staff compliance with regulatory guidelines pertaining to nutrition and food operations.
 - (b) Skill in running various reports and maintaining software files from various computer systems.
 - (c) Skill in performing quality control audits pertaining to food production and meal service.
 - (d) Ability to supervise subordinate staff (i.e., plan, organize, delegate, direct, control, and review activities and performance).
 - (e) Ability to evaluate nutritional care plans of subordinate staff to ensure they meet nutrition standards.
 - (f) Ability to serve as a food safety expert providing technical guidance, direction, and staff training.
 - (g) Ability to coordinate program specific operations or initiatives for process improvement.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all supervisory assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must spend 25% or more of their time providing administrative and technical supervision over staff who are at the full performance grade level or below. The Supervisory CDT plans, schedules and assigns work, accepts, amends, or rejects completed work, assures production and accuracy requirements are met, interviews and selects candidates; recommends performance standards and appraises performance, approves leave, hear and resolve complaints, and effects minor disciplinary actions. The employee may serve as the Nutrition Communications Center (NCC) Coordinator for the facility and resolve issues relating to Nutrition and Food Service Systems as they arise throughout the medical center. Employees in this assignment are responsible for inspecting assigned kitchen and/or storage areas of Nutrition and Food Services to ensure the facility is in compliance with the FDA Food Code, VHA Food Management Handbook guidelines, and environment of care regulations concerning sanitation and safety and takes correction action as appropriate. This employee also performs technical work in support of the clinical section and NCC within the NFS department, working to assist Dietitians, Diet Aides, and Food Service Workers by completing a wide number and variety of technical assignments. The Supervisory CDT develops and supports effective team interactions and employee engagement through open and honest communication and is receptive to feedback, mentoring and developing others. The employee develops and supports relationships that create an environment where individuals and team members learn and grow professionally. The employee helps promote and support a positive and psychologically safe work environment. The incumbent is a working supervisor and directs

subordinates' work to conform to Nutrition and Food Services, national and facility's mission, goals, procedures, and policies.

7. DEVIATIONS.

- a. The establishment of a position and subsequent placement of an individual in a grade or assignment not described in the hybrid title 38 qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee prior to placement.
- b. Under no circumstance will educational requirements necessary to meet basic qualifications or assignment specific educational requirements be waived.
- c. Under no circumstance will the credential (i.e., license, certification, and/or registration) requirements to meet basic qualifications or assignment specific credentials be waived unless an exception provision is provided in the qualification standard.
- d. In rare and unusual circumstance(s), the Under Secretary for Health or designee may approve requests for reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an individual whose composite record of experience, accomplishments, performance, and qualifications warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the grade and/or assignment.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059)