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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

PEACH POLICY PAPERS

PPC Chair's Corner

By Robin Steagall, MSPP, RDN, LDN

Summer in Georgia is a time for enjoying fresh peaches and garden tomatoes, summer vacations, and (hopefully) taking time to slow down and enjoy spending time with friends and family. Recently I had the chance to spend time with my mother and listen to her memories about working as a young nurse in West Virginia, going with my grandmother to vote every November, and the fun she had volunteering for local elections. She reminded me that my grandmother was 3yrs old when the 19th Amendment was ratified and women in every state had the constitutional right to vote.

My mother and grandmother lived through decades of hard-fought progress on issues that impacted their lives and they taught me the importance of advocating for the issues that matter to me. Volunteering as a member of the Public Policy Committee has provided fantastic opportunities to advocate for the profession of dietetics and nutrition policies impacting our communities.

Our work on the PPC focuses on furthering the mission of the Georgia Academy to increase the visibility of dietitians as experts in nutrition and ensure that all Georgians have access to a diverse pool of credentialed nutrition professionals providing evidence-based nutrition science. It is our goal to support the mission in a way that reflects the Georgia Academy's values of integrity, service, engagement, and inclusion. The work of the PPC will focus on the following Strategic Plan goals:

- Advocate for increased reimbursement for MNT
- Enhance and protect state licensure laws
- Improve network adequacy in Georgia

The success of the Georgia Academy depends on our members and your willingness to participate in advocacy. Last year our members helped the PPC achieve major success at defending our licensure and expanding coverage and reimbursement for pediatric MNT. We look forward to keeping this momentum and we will share ways for you to get involved throughout the year. Here are ways you can help now:

1. **Build relationships:** Send a note of introduction to your state representative. Find your rep [here](#).
2. **Stay informed:** All academy members can participate in monthly community of interest policy discussions. Information can be found [here](#).
3. **Take action:** Vote in state and local elections – key election dates are below. Attend or host a campaign event with GAND-PAC. Complete the Academy [Action Alerts](#).
4. **Donate:** Support our funding efforts by donating to the Licensure Defense Fund [here](#).

I will leave you with a quote from the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you." Let us continue working to advance our mission in ways that reflect our values of integrity, service, engagement, and inclusion.

ACTION ITEMS

Things to Know

- Help wanted – Consumer Protection Coordinator. Contact Robin at robinsteagallRD@gmail.com if you are interested in learning more.
- Check your GA voter registration status or register to vote [here](#).
- Donate to the GAND Licensure Defense Fund [online](#) or Venmo/PayPal @EatrightGA – put licensure defense in the comment section
- Donate to GAND-PAC [here](#).
- Do you have an NPI #? If not, find out more [here](#) and register for free.
- The Academy [Action Alerts](#) are a quick & easy way to advocate for nutrition-related bills & you can take action on current alerts [here](#). Options for members & non-members to participate!



GEORGIA MEDICAID MNT REIMBURSEMENT UPDATE

The Georgia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (GAND) is excited to announce that the updated reimbursement rates for licensed dietitians providing Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) for Georgia Medicaid/Medicaid CMO pediatric patients (<21) are now published.

These updated rates were part of a 2022 legislative effort led by GAND's Public Policy Committee with the support of Cornerstone Communications Group. In addition to the substantial rate increase, GAND was also able to advocate for the addition of CPT Code 97804; medical nutrition therapy in a group setting (2 or more patients).

CPT Code	Description	Service Limits	Previous Rate	Updated Rate
97802	MNT initial assessment	1 visit per year (Maximum billable units per day: 8) 1 unit = 15 minutes	\$14.89/unit	28.09/unit
97803	MNT follow-up	12 visits per year (Maximum billable units per day: 8) 1 unit = 15 minutes	\$14.89/unit	28.09/unit (15 minutes)
97804	MNT group session (2 or more patients)	Undefined 1 unit = 30 minutes	N/A	13.00/unit (30 minutes)

GAND will be providing a tip sheet for Georgia Medicaid provider enrollment for those interested. The Nutrition Services Payment Specialist for GAND is available to assist with enrollment, billing and payment questions.

Please contact info@eatrightgeorgia.org for more information.

Congratulations to the entire team who worked tirelessly to get these rates increased and a special thank you to Caitlin Waddle who led the way – see her in action below!

Advocacy in Action

Medicaid Reimbursement Meeting



Left: Robin Steagall, Center: Chairman Butch Parrish,
Right: Caitlin Waddle

Advocacy in Action

Medicaid Reimbursement Testimony



Caitlin Waddle providing testimony for increasing Medicaid reimbursement for dietitians in GA.

GAND - POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (GAND-PAC)

FUNDRAISING EVENT SUMMARY

On May 16, 2022, Sharon Cooper for State House hosted a fundraising reception for Representative Sharon Cooper at the home of Martha Onderkirk and George Jenkins.

Kristin Cuculovski (GAND Legislative Secretary) and Ashley Matthews (GAND President-Elect) were in attendance and among the first to arrive and were greeted at the door by Representative Cooper for introductions. Later during the event Kristin and Ashley shared information regarding dietitians in Georgia and current resources available for Georgia citizens who are being impacted by the infant formula shortage. Leave behind and contact information were left with Representative Cooper's staff members.

Call to Action!!! The GAND-PAC Board of Trustees is looking for three additional trustees! Being a PAC trustee is a great opportunity for anyone interested in getting more engaged with public policy! Contact Holly Porter at hollybporter@me.com



Left: Ashley Matthews, Center: Rep. Sharon Cooper, Right: Kristin Cuculovski



Become a GAND-PAC member today by donating [here](#). The GAND-PAC is a separate segregated fund of GAND and there is no reprisal for not contributing. Your contribution, in any amount, will help impact laws and programs focused on optimal nutritional health for all Georgians by providing support for pro-nutrition candidates for state office.

Are you interested in supporting a candidate's fundraiser or campaign? Complete this [request form](#).

Are you interested in hosting a fundraiser or event for a candidate? Complete this [request form](#).

Board of Trustees: Holly Porter (Chair): hollybporter@me.com, Kristin Cuculovski (Secretary), Joan Fischer (Treasurer), Robin Steagall, Ashley Matthews (liaison to the GAND Board), Cicely Thomas (liaison to the GAND Board)

GEORGIA ELECTION INFORMATION & IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline to register to vote: **Tuesday, October 11, 2022** – [Register to vote](#)
 General Election: **Tuesday, November 8, 2022**



Absentee ballot applications for the November 8, 2022 election can only be accepted between August 22nd – October 28th. Once an application has been received by the Elections Office it will be reviewed and verified and then an absentee ballot will be mailed to your address between 22-29 days prior to the election, or as soon as ballots are available prior to a runoff.

October 17, 2022 = Advanced Voting (absentee, in-person) begins for November General Election
 October 22 and 29, 2022 = Mandatory Saturday voting for the November General Election
 October 28, 2022 = Last day to submit absentee ballot application for the November General

Election Runoff Date for General Election = Tuesday, December 6, 2022

MEET THE TEAM



Nutrition Services Payment Specialist

By Sue Tocher, MS, RDN, LD, CDCES

My name is Sue Tocher and I am serving as the Nutrition Services Payment Specialist (NSPS) for the Georgia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Public Policy Committee. I am the owner of my private practice, Nourishing Notions, LLC.

Describe the NSPS position: I am new to the position but recently attended the Academy's orientation for NSPS's. They describe this position as being a resource to members of GAND and to help coordinate local advocacy efforts to expand coverage and payment for nutrition services.

Why did you decide to join the GAND PPC? I attended the Advocacy Day in March that was coordinated by GAND's public policy committee. At the time they had been working diligently on blocking a bill that would allow non-dietitians to bill for nutritional services. Up until then I did not understand how our licensure as RDN's was in danger. I was so impressed with the group of RDN's from the PPC I met that day and thankful to be made aware of the work they are doing that I decided I wanted to get involved and help.

What does advocacy mean to you? I was a manager in a previous role and I always thought of myself as being a voice at the table to represent our patients, staff and to protect the integrity of our services. I look at this role much the same way. I'm a fan of the saying "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" (just ask my teenage son). We have to stay abreast of the things that impact our profession and speak up, otherwise decisions will be made for us.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to get involved? Come to a PPC event like I did. Advocacy Day in March was so educational. Read our newsletters and stay abreast of things that are going on politically that have a negative and/or positive effect on RDN services .

Fun Fact? I played hockey while living in Canada for three years.

GAND PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PPC MEMBERS

Public Policy Chair (PPC) - Robin Steagall, MSPP, RDN, LDN

Georgia Academy President - Ashley Matthews, MS, RDN, LD, CNSC, PMP

Georgia Academy President-Elect - Cicely Thomas, M.Ed, RDN, LD

State Policy Representative (SPR) - Caitlin Waddle, MS, RDN, LD

State Regulatory Specialist (SRS) - Alex Webb, RDN, LD

Nutrition Services Payment Specialist (NSPS) - Sue Tocher, MS, RDN, LD, CDCES

Consumer Protection Coordinator (CPC) - open

Legislative Affairs Secretary - Kristin Cuculovski, MS, RDN, CSO, LD/N

State Legislative Monitor - open

PPC LIAISONS

Augusta District Liaison - Sunitha Zechariah, PhD, RDN, LD, CNSC, FAND

Greater Atlanta District Liaison - open

West GA Area District Liaison - Melissa Brillhart, MA, RD, LD

Student Liaison - Alana Ahrens - Georgia State University

PPC TASK FORCE

Task Force Member - Michelle Gooden