

Careers for Dietitians in Patient Care - Community Setting

Anna Vassallo

I graduated from Deakin University in 2002 with a Masters of Nutrition and Dietetics. I initially worked in the acute setting as a Cardiac Coach at Austin Health for three years and then moved across to the community health sector where I have been ever since. I am currently employed on a permanent part time basis at three Melbourne Community Health Centres. I work one day a week at Banyule Community Health in a diabetes clinic and two days per week at ISIS Primary Care in Brimbank. I also work two days per week at Darebin Community Health in the Child and Family multidisciplinary team as the Dietetics and Diabetes Educators Clinical Leader.



Interview

What does a community dietitian do?

I provide individual and group dietetic services to clients from the local community. I provide nutrition assessments and on-going management for clients with a range of health care needs such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, weight management and family feeding issues. I also work closely with other health disciplines to provide interdisciplinary care and will refer clients to other services as appropriate. Community health also provides the opportunity to work on health promotion projects. I am currently part of the Healthy Families and Food Security health promotion project teams.

Where does a community dietitian work?

I work mostly in an office from the community health centre site. There are occasions when other agencies that operate from the same municipality will request services. This may involve off site visits.

What experience and qualifications do you need to work in as a community dietitian?

There are no additional qualifications, other than being eligible for membership with the Dietitian's Association of Australia. Experience in health promotion can be an advantage as well as having an understanding and appreciation of the social model of health and the social determinants of health.

What are the highlights?

Having the opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary capacity. The workplace culture also tends to be one that embraces a holistic style of client care.

Advice for students who are interested in working as a community dietitian?

Consider contacting your local community health centre and offering to volunteer your time and skills to allow you to assess whether community health is the place for you.