

ADA supports national restaurant menu labeling legislation

September 8 2010

The government's role in improving the nation's nutrition is now firmly established with nutritional labeling for restaurant meals now mandated across the United States as part of HR 3590 Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act. An article in the September issue of the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* explains how state and municipal labeling laws developed and how the new national law will supersede these and replace them with a uniform standard. It also addresses the American Dietetic Association's (ADA's) involvement and how these new regulations will impact registered dietitians (RDs) and dietetic technicians, registered (DTRs) as well as consumers.

With enactment of the new law and detailed regulations to be issued by the [Food and Drug Administration](#), restaurants and food vendors with 20 or more outlets will be required to post calories on menus, menu boards (including drive-through) and food display tags, with additional nutrient information (fat, saturated fat, carbohydrates, sodium, protein, and fiber) available in writing upon request. Calorie posting requirements will also apply to [vending machines](#) managed by companies that operate at least 20 machines.

This new legislation will ensure that restaurant diners are provided with tools to make informed, healthful choices regarding the foods they consume outside the home. The article provides insights into how this law may work, including recommendations for how RDs may play a critical part in a successful implementation of this national standard.

"ADA members are poised to become leaders in the push to offer information on more-healthy items at restaurants, to analyze and revise the nutrient information required of standard menu items, and to provide quality assurance that the posted information is accurate, as well as the likely future need of clients in understanding how to use this nutrient information in determining their daily dietary needs and making the most of what the law intends," commented an ADA Policy Initiatives and Advocacy staff member.

Jeanne Blankenship, MS, RD, CLE, ADA's vice president of Policy Initiatives and Advocacy, shared her thoughts regarding the first impact of the legislation that a majority of ADA members would notice, and how it might impact their practice plans: "Members may begin to see clients and patients who have seen the information on restaurant menus, but don't know how to use the information to make healthier choices. This is an opportunity for registered dietitians (RDs) and dietetic technicians, registered (DTRs), to help consumers as they struggle to achieve a healthy lifestyle. In states that have already adopted menu labeling, RDs and DTRs have already incorporated key messages into delivering nutrition education."

More information: The article is "A National Approach to Restaurant Menu Labeling: The Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act, Section 4205" by Karen Stein, MFA. It appears in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Volume 110, Issue 9 (September 2010).

Provided by Elsevier

Citation: ADA supports national restaurant menu labeling legislation (2010, September 8) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

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