

CNS State-By-State Practice Rights

Updated May 2026

Key Terms

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT): Nutrition services provided for managing diseases or medical conditions. Its definition varies by state. Many states restrict MNT to licensed professionals, while others allow CNSs to practice under specific exemptions or within clearly defined non-MNT parameters.

Exclusive Scope: A legal designation meaning only licensed professionals may perform the defined practice. Title Protection only means unlicensed individuals cannot use a protected title, but the practice itself is not restricted.

Overview

This document covers 53 jurisdictions: the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

Of those 53 jurisdictions:

- 51 permit CNSs to legally practice some level of personalized nutrition counseling.
- 24 formally recognize CNSs — in most of these, CNSs are typically eligible for state licensure or certification because state requirements closely align with the education, experience, and exam requirements for the CNS credential. In most cases, an applicant must submit evidence of their education, experience, and examination to the state — not simply proof of their CNS credential.
- 2 states (Alabama and South Dakota) do not permit CNSs to practice any nutrition counseling.

Section 1: Jurisdictions That Formally Recognize CNSs

The 24 jurisdictions below formally recognize CNSs through licensure, certification, or statutory title protection. In 23 of these, CNSs are typically eligible for licensure or certification. Virginia is included because CNSs receive title protection in state statute, though there is no licensing board.

Note: Not all jurisdictions define MNT explicitly; it may be incorporated into broader definitions of nutrition and dietetics practice. State definitions of MNT also vary.

Alaska	Licensure	Title protection / no exclusive scope
Connecticut	Certification	Title protection / no exclusive scope
Delaware	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for "practice of dietetics and nutrition therapy"; no specific mention of MNT
District of Columbia	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
Florida	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT

Georgia	Licensure	Exclusive scope - Bill passed May 2026 - more details to come
Guam	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
Illinois	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
Kentucky	Licensure (dietitians) / Certification (nutritionists)	Title protection / exclusive scope with very broad exceptions
Maryland	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
Massachusetts	Licensure	Title protection / no exclusive scope
Minnesota	Licensure	Exclusive scope to engage in "dietetics or nutrition practice"; no mention of MNT; broad exemption for alternative and complementary care providers
Montana	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT - bill passed in 2025; more details to come
Nebraska	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT. Note: As of May 2026, Nebraska has not begun issuing licenses for CNSs
New Jersey	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT once available. Bill implementation in progress; as of May 2026, the board is in the rules and regulations stage.
New Mexico	Licensure	Exclusive scope for "nutrition or dietetics practice"; no mention of MNT; broad exemptions + Unlicensed Health Care Practice Act. Applies to those with a master's or doctoral degree in human nutrition, nutrition education, foods and nutrition, or public health nutrition. As of May 2026 - CDR exam is required to get license (CNSs are eligible).
New York	Certification	Title protection / no exclusive scope
North Carolina	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
North Dakota	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
Pennsylvania	Licensure	Title protection / no exclusive scope
Puerto Rico	Licensure	Exclusive scope — license required for MNT
Tennessee	Licensure	Exclusive scope - Bill passed May 2026 - more details to come
Washington	Certification	Title protection / no exclusive scope
Virginia	Statutory title protection only (no licensing board)	Title protection / no exclusive scope — recognition in statute only

Section 2: Other Jurisdictions Where CNSs Can Legally Practice

In the remaining jurisdictions below permit CNSs to practice some level of nutrition counseling, but do not formally recognize the CNS credential through licensure or certification.

Important: Each state's laws are different. The scope of practice permitted, applicable exemptions, disclosure requirements, and any restrictions on MNT vary significantly from state to state. CNSs should review the specific statutes and regulations in their state — and consult legal counsel if needed — before practicing.

1. Arizona
2. Arkansas
3. California
4. Colorado
5. Hawaii
6. Idaho
7. Indiana
8. Iowa
9. Kansas
10. Louisiana
11. Maine
12. Michigan
13. Mississippi — *Exclusive scope state — CNSs cannot be licensed. However, following rule revisions in 2022, CNSs may practice all nutrition services except MNT, with required disclosures.*
14. Missouri — *Exclusive scope state — CNSs cannot be licensed. However, an exemption passed in 2021 allows CNSs to practice all nutrition services except MNT, with required disclosures.*
15. Nevada
16. New Hampshire
17. Ohio — *Currently, licenses can only be issued via reciprocity.*
18. Oklahoma
19. Oregon
20. Rhode Island
21. South Carolina
22. Texas
23. Utah
24. Vermont
25. West Virginia
26. Wisconsin
27. Wyoming

Section 3: States Where CNSs Cannot Practice

In the 2 states below, CNSs are not permitted to practice any nutrition counseling under current law.

28. Alabama

29. South Dakota

This document reflects the regulatory landscape as of May 2026. State laws change frequently — verify current requirements with the relevant state licensing board before practicing.