




# Scope of Practice Worksheet

## How do you know what's in your scope of practice as a coach?

### It's not always obvious.

This Scope of Practice worksheet has a few questions you can ask yourself to decide whether you can and should address this with your client, and/or refer to another licensed and qualified professional.






### Quick-reference table: scope and referrals

ISSUE / ACTIVITY	WITHIN SCOPE FOR A NUTRITION COACH?	SAMPLE QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL FOR REFERRAL <sup>1</sup>
Helping coordinate interactions with other providers (e.g., helping clients increase awareness about their experiences, providing appropriate language, suggesting referrals, etc.)	 yes	
General support for deep health, fitness, performance, recovery, and overall wellbeing, using evidence-based approaches	 yes	
Health and medical issues		
Diagnosing, treating, and/or prescribing for specific medical issues (e.g., injuries, diseases)	 no	Medical doctor (MD) Particular specialties may also be appropriate, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dentist (DDS, DMD) for issues related to the mechanics of eating and jaw health</li><li>• Sports medicine doctor for joint and other athletic injuries</li><li>• Gastroenterologist for digestive issues</li><li>• Endocrinologist for hormonal issues</li><li>• OB/GYN for women's sexual and reproductive health issues</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Note that the specific designation may vary by country. Check to see what applies in your local area.

ISSUE / ACTIVITY	WITHIN SCOPE FOR A NUTRITION COACH?	SAMPLE QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL FOR REFERRAL <sup>1</sup>
Medical issues related to being over- or underweight (e.g., bariatric surgery, metabolic complications, anorexia, etc.)	 <b>no</b>	Medical doctor (MD)
Helping clients develop eating behaviors that help improve body composition and general health	 <b>yes</b>	
<b>Nutritional issues</b>		
Offering nutritional advice and prescriptions for specific medical issues (e.g., post-surgical nutrition, nutrition as part of a Type 2 diabetes treatment plan)	 <b>no</b>	Medical doctor (MD) Registered dietitian (RD)
General nutrition advice that is widely accepted as evidence-based (e.g., eat fruits and vegetables, eat enough protein, etc.)	 <b>yes</b>	
<b>Medications and supplements</b>		
Specific medications and medication-supplement interactions	 <b>no</b>	Medical doctor (MD) Pharmacist (PharmD, RPh)
Supplements generally regarded as safe for most people (e.g., independently tested: protein powder, omega-3, fiber, greens powders, vitamin C)	 <b>yes, but</b>  Consider consulting with pharmacist if client is taking any other medications or has any other health issues	

ISSUE / ACTIVITY	WITHIN SCOPE FOR A NUTRITION COACH?	SAMPLE QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL FOR REFERRAL <sup>1</sup>
<b>Food and eating disorders</b>		
Diagnosing and treating food and eating disorders	 <b>no</b>	Medical doctor (MD) Registered Dietitian (RD) Registered Psychologist (RDPsych, PsyD)
Helping clients learn and abide by hunger and fullness cues; teaching and practicing eating behaviors outside of clinical food and eating disorders	 <b>yes, but</b> encourage client to consult with healthcare provider if food and eating issues are significantly disrupting daily life and deep health	Medical doctor (MD) Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) Registered Psychologist or Psychotherapist (RDPsych, RPsych) Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) Doctor of Psychiatry (MD) Registered Dietitian (RD)
<b>Mental and emotional health</b>		
Diagnosing and treating mental and emotional health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, ADHD, bipolar, etc.)	 <b>no</b>	Medical doctor (MD) Doctor of Psychiatry (MD) * Note that MDs can prescribe medications for mental and emotional health issues Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) Registered Psychologist or Psychotherapist (RDPsych, RPsych) Licensed professional counselor (LPC/LCPC/LPCC/LMHC)
Helping clients develop behaviors to manage stress and/or improve general mental and emotional health (e.g., regular exercise, relaxation, sleep hygiene, eating properly, etc.)	 <b>yes</b>	

ISSUE / ACTIVITY	WITHIN SCOPE FOR A NUTRITION COACH?	SAMPLE QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL FOR REFERRAL <sup>1</sup>
Providing social support	 <b>yes</b>	
Mental skills training (e.g. goal setting, developing growth mindset, problem solving, etc.)	 <b>yes</b>	
<b>Testing and assessment</b>		
Specific medical tests to assess and interpret health status (e.g., bloodwork, MRI, psychiatric evaluation, sleep lab, genetic tests, etc.)	 <b>no</b>	Medical doctor (MD) Genetic testing counselor (for genetic tests)
General assessment (e.g., body weight, body composition, food journals, overall mood and energy levels, etc.)	 <b>yes, but</b> encourage client to consult with healthcare provider if any identified issues (such as body composition or stress levels) are significantly disrupting daily life and deep health	Any of the listed providers, depending on the issue
Physical performance assessment (e.g., athletic performance, mobility, etc.)	 <b>yes, but</b> encourage client to consult with healthcare provider if any identified issues (such as pain) are significantly disrupting daily life and deep health	Medical doctor (MD) Physical therapist or physiotherapist (PT) Certified Strength & Conditioning Sp (CSCS) Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC)

## Scope of practice questions to ask yourself

### FORMAL TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

**Are you formally certified, licensed, or otherwise credentialed by a post-secondary institution and/or professional organization to deal with a particular health topic or concern?**

Formal designations are granted by accredited institutions and professional organizations (e.g., College of Dietitians, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, etc.).

Most licensed professions require postgraduate training such as a Masters or doctoral degree.

**If you hold a private certification, what was the nature of your instruction and the duration of your training?**

A weekend certification or a short online course does not qualify you for much.

**If you hold a private certification, is that certification recognized by legitimate post-secondary institutions or professional organizations?**

(E.g., the American Psychological Association, American College of Sports Medicine)

See if that certification is accredited for Continuing Education Credits (CECs) or Continuing Education Units (CEUs) by post-secondary institutions or professional organizations.

**If you hold a private certification, were you required to complete formal assessments?**

E.g., exams, supervised practicums, graded written assignments, etc.

### SUPERVISION AND MENTORSHIP

**Have you received targeted supervision and mentorship on a particular health topic or concern?**

**Have you completed some type of apprenticeship under the direction of another professional?**

Some types of education are more informal, e.g., working as a junior strength and conditioning coach under the direct supervision of a senior coach.

### REGIONAL REGULATION

**Is it legal for you to practice within your particular jurisdiction?**

What local legislation, regulation, and/or policies govern your practice? What can you do and call yourself within this region? Does your local region recognize your formal credentials?

For instance, within the United States, rules may vary by state. Within Canada, rules vary by province. If you received a designation in one country, it may not apply to another country.

## Scope of practice checklist

<b>I am formally certified, licensed, or otherwise credentialed by a post-secondary institution and/or professional organization to deal with a particular topic or concern.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>If I hold a private certification: I received at least 40 hours of instruction on a particular topic or concern.</b> (This may be less for upgrades to existing qualifications.)	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>If I hold a private certification: The certification education is recognized by legitimate post-secondary institutions or professional organizations.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>If I hold a private certification: I was required to complete some type of formal assessment on a particular topic or concern.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>I have received targeted supervision and mentorship on a particular topic or concern.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>It's legal for me to practice as I am doing within my particular jurisdiction.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>My work with a client addresses ONLY the topics I am qualified to discuss, in the way that I'm permitted to discuss them.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>I've reviewed the quick-reference table above and my work falls within the boundaries of appropriate scope.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N
<b>I know what type of other professional I could refer to, if needed.</b>	<input type="radio"/> Y	<input type="radio"/> N

### IF YOU CLICKED "NO" TO ANY OF THESE, HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS.

- Pursue or complete a higher-level certification (e.g., Level 1, Level 2, or licensed credential if needed).
- Review your local regulations and consult with a local attorney for clarification if needed.
- Review the table above to ensure you are staying within your scope.
- Identify at least one relevant qualified professional to have in your referral network. Over time, build this referral network to include a wide range of credentialed providers.