

Weight Management Practitioner – Scope of Practice

1. The Role of a Weight Management Practitioner

The role of a Weight Management Practitioner is to provide clients with advice and practical solutions for losing weight or body fat. This is achieved by planning and delivering safe and effective weight management programs for individuals and/or groups focused on education for permanent lifestyle changes; primarily these programs would include exercise recommendations, lifestyle modifications, general non-medical nutrition information and/or behaviour modification techniques.

The role of a Weight Management Practitioner includes providing objective, unbiased feedback to clients and to determine the best course of action to meet the clients' individual needs. Weight Management Practitioners also help people to find a balance between the outcomes they want to achieve and the activities, food and lifestyle factors they enjoy.

Examples of employment areas for practitioners holding the Certificate IV in Weight Management 10576NAT include:

-) Weight Loss Consultant
-) Weight Management Practitioner
-) Motivational Weight Management Coach
-) Wellness Coach
-) Health Coach
-) Nutrition Coach

Examples of employment areas for practitioners holding the Diploma of Weight Management 10698NAT include:

-) Advanced Weight Management Practitioner
-) Weight Management Specialist
-) Advanced Health Coach

2. Scope of Practice

In summary the following guiding principles should be utilised to determine scope of practice for a Weight Management Practitioner, as per ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) code 451512 for Weight Loss Consultant:

<http://skillsgateway.training.qld.gov.au/Occupation/Detail?code=451512>

-) interviewing clients to work out their needs
-) treating emotional, psychological and physical imbalances of the body using natural techniques and diagnostic methods
-) monitoring and correcting imbalances in the body using muscle testing techniques
-) advising clients on dietary requirements and exercise programs
-) recording clients' weight and measurements
-) providing support and counselling

The Weight Management Practitioner Scope of Practice does not include:

-) Medical treatment, therapeutic treatment or rehabilitative prescriptions
-) Diagnostic tests or procedures
-) Recommendation of any product which would compromise health status.

2.1 Further Scope for Advanced Weight Management Practitioners

The complex nature of weight management places a need within the industry to provide highly skilled practitioners for those clients who present with more complex needs. Advanced practitioners/health coaches have the ability to apply specialised skills and knowledge above the level possessed by practitioners/coaches in planning, conducting and evaluating advanced weight management programs.

Advanced Weight Management Practitioners are able to recognise interrelated contributing factors to weight gain to identify program needs and to develop research-based programs, underpinned by an educative approach in the concept of the human body as a non-linear and complex adaptive system.

Advanced practitioners/coaches may work in supervisory roles, applying their skills and knowledge to assist team members with the identification of interrelated contributing factors and the development of advanced weight management programs. Such individuals, in recognising the boundaries of their role, do not replace personal trainers, nutritionists, life coaches, counsellors or any other health professional, but rather complement them - often working in conjunction with allied and medical health practitioners through referral pathways to provide a high level of client support, programming and team care.

They may work as individuals in their own business or they may work in organisations alongside other weight management specialists and staff, either as a member of the team or in a supervisory role overseeing the work of others. To that end, Advanced Weight Management Practitioners are able to perform the following functions:

- recognising differing levels of client health literacy and interpreting medical and health terminology appropriately
- recognising and responding to the range of complex factors that may contribute to client body weight regulation
- conducting advanced client health screening consultations and risk assessments to inform the development of personalised weight management programs
- developing and delivering advanced client weight management programs, including amending programs in response to individual client progress, referral parameters and providing support tools and resources to support clients
- working with others in a team or in a supervisory role in performing functions associated with the development, delivery and monitoring of advanced weight management programs.

3. Health Screening and Referral Guidelines

All Weight Management Practitioners must complete a health screening consultation seeking information relating to the general health status, presence of chronic disease, and medication use, and have this signed off by clients prior to undertaking a commitment to purchase any weight management products or services.

The health screening consultation must be designed in a way that (unless appropriate in-house experience exists) any positive response to chronic or high-risk conditions require that the client be referred to their primary care physician or other appropriate healthcare professional for written clearance to undertake a weight management program, and if necessary, any recommended referral parameters.

If such written consent is not provided then the Weight Management Practitioner must obtain the consent of the client to contact their primary care physician or other healthcare professional. This is to:

-) minimise the chances of the weight management program or product exacerbating a pre-existing ailment or medical circumstance;
-) gain professional medical input, where applicable, to enhance the chances of the weight management program or product benefiting a pre-existing ailment or medical circumstance.

The following conditions will automatically exclude a client automatically engaging in weight management services, except where the client has:

- a) received written clearance from their primary care physician or other healthcare professional, or
- b) the client is being co-managed by their primary care physician or other healthcare professional in addition to the services provided by their Weight Management Practitioner.

It is recommended that when working with such cases that the health care professional provide recommendations or modifications to suit the client's condition and recommend frequency of consultations with the physician who is co-managing the client.

-) Pregnancy
-) Coeliac disease and malabsorption diseases
-) Adolescent diabetes
-) Medications that contain: Mono-amine oxidase inhibitors, Lithium, Anticoagulants
-) Eating disorder or a history of an eating disorder
-) Obese or overweight children (until they have completed puberty)
-) Cancer
-) Diabetes insulin dependent
-) Epilepsy
-) Gall bladder disorder or Stones
-) Liver or kidney disease
-) Major surgery - three months post operatively
-) Breast feeding
-) Gout
-) Gastro intestinal disease
-) Medications - eg. steroids

-) Thyroid disease
-) Chest pain (undiagnosed) or severe shortness of breath
-) Angina
-) Cardiac arrhythmia
-) Heart disease/heart attack/coronary bypass surgery
-) Food allergies or sensitivities
-) Concurrent medically prescribed diet for health problems
-) Physical limitations that may reduce exercising capacity
-) Arthritis on medication
-) Clinical depression
-) Type II Diabetes only where insulin is not part of the therapy
-) High blood pressure or high blood cholesterol.

4. Clients

Weight Management Practitioners are qualified to plan and deliver weight management programs for adults and adolescents (13 years and over) in low and moderate risk groups.

Weight Management Practitioners may work with higher risk clients (whose conditions are stabilised and managed) after receiving written consent and, where appropriate, documented guidance from the clients' treating health care practitioner on any areas of the weight management program that may impact on the client's health condition/s.

5. Code of Conduct

The objectives of the Code of Conduct are to ensure that Weight Management Practitioners deal openly, honestly and fairly with clients and represent themselves in accordance with their training and accreditation. The Code of Conduct also ensures that clients are able to make informed choices about the weight management products and services they purchase, their legal rights and timely and appropriate resolution of disputes.

-) Advertising:
 - a. Any advertising or marketing conducted must be truthful, accurate and unambiguous and not make misleading or false comparisons with another competitor's products or services; it must not be misleading in any way. Misleading information includes, amongst other things, making false or misleading representations to a client as to the price, benefits or need for any weight management products or services.
 - b. Any advertised prices should fully disclose the entitlements covered and include a statement and any additional costs of any other products or services that are a necessary component of the weight management program.
 - c. Guarantees of weight management outcomes must not be made.
-) Disclosure:
 - a. At any time, upon request, all information that a client requests must be disclosed and must be truthful, accurate and unambiguous.
 - b. Each client must be provided with information outlining the nature of the weight management products and services being provided, full costs associated with the weight management products or services, contract or program period, the expectations of the client in order to make the weight management products and services successful, and when a client needs to seek medical advice.

- c. Clients must be provided with written information outlining their rights in relation to the purchase of the weight management products and services, including refunds, dispute resolution and cooling off period.

) Contractual Agreements

- a. All contracts must be in written in plain and legible English and clearly state the rights and responsibilities of both the client and the Weight Management Practitioner, and must also comply with the laws of the state or territory in question.
- b. Contracts must not contain unfair terms. Unfair terms include causing a significant imbalance in the parties' rights and obligations arising under the contract to the detriment of the client. Contracts must not, under any circumstances, attempt to exclude any statutory protection.
- c. All contracts must clearly identify the following:
 - i. all parties to the contract;
 - ii. the weight management products and services that are to be provided;
 - iii. the full cost of the weight management products and services, including all fees payable or that may be payable under the contract and itemised so that it is clear what the client is paying for;
 - iv. the frequency of all amounts payable under the contract;
 - v. the minimum term of the contract (this must not exceed a period of 12 months);
 - vi. what both parties are undertaking to do;
 - vii. the policies and procedures in case of a complaint or dispute, refund request and cooling off period (these must also comply with the laws of the state or territory in question).

) Complaint Resolution

- a. Weight Management Practitioners must develop clear written procedures for the internal resolution of complaints such as AS 4269 - 1995 Australian Standard for Complaints Handling.

) Sales Practices

- a. Weight Management Practitioners must act in an ethical and professional manner at all times and ensure that they do not use unfair or misleading sales methods to sell products or services.

) Data Management

- a. Weight Management Practitioners must have a policy for the collection of data and must collect data in accordance with that policy. This policy must comply with all laws and regulations in relation to the protection of the client's privacy, personal information, sensitive information and health information.

) Discrimination

- a. Weight Management Practitioners must not breach any law or regulation pertaining to discrimination or equal opportunity.

) Insurance

- a. Weight Management Practitioners shall maintain adequate insurances for the nature and size of the business being conducted and should seek independent legal or professional advice in relation to what constitutes 'adequate insurances'.

) Additional regulatory requirements

- a. Weight Management Practitioners are required to adhere to all relevant ethics, legislative or statutory requirements and regulations including (but not limited to):
 - i. Jurisdictional OH&S legislation
 - ii. Civil Liability Law
 - iii. Privacy Law
 - iv. Client Law
 - v. Anti-discrimination Law
 - vi. Criminal
 - vii. Other relevant setting-specific policies or regulations

6. Level of Training

Weight Management Practitioners are required, at minimum, to have an AQF Certificate II or III (ANZSCO Skill Level 4) from the ANZSCO Group Code 4515. This skill level can be met with the 10576NAT Certificate IV in Weight Management (or its successor). Alternatively, at least one year of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualifications listed above and, in some instances, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Advanced Weight Management Practitioners must hold the 10698NAT Diploma of Weight Management (or its successor).

7. Continuing Education

Weight Management Practitioners may advance their training and skills through continuing education, competency development and professional experience. In addition to the Certificate IV in Weight Management, Weight Management Practitioners may further enhance their skills and knowledge by studying the Diploma of Weight Management to attain the level of Advanced Weight Management Practitioner or Weight Management Specialist.

Extending scope of practice through additional study or certification may occur in related areas; the training, provision and scope of these services would be external to the Weight Management Practitioner's Scope of Practice.