

Role of the Diabetes Educator

Definition

Diabetes educators are healthcare professionals who focus on helping people with and at risk for diabetes and related conditions achieve behavior change goals which, in turn, lead to better clinical outcomes and improved health status. Diabetes educators apply in-depth knowledge and skills in the biological and social sciences, communication, counseling, and education to provide self-management education/self-management training.

Scope

Diabetes educators are highly skilled professionals integral to the multidisciplinary diabetes care team.

- The role of the diabetes educator can be assumed by professionals from a variety of health disciplines, including, but not limited to: Registered nurses, registered dietitians, pharmacists, physicians, mental health professionals, podiatrists, optometrists, and exercise physiologists. Some services, such as nutrition counseling, medication counseling and psychological support services, however, may be provided in collaboration with a licensed dietitian, registered pharmacist, a licensed psychologist or social worker, or a psychiatric and mental health clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner.
- Mastery of the knowledge and skills to be a diabetes educator is obtained through professional practice experience, continuing education, individual study, and mentorship.
 - Many diabetes educators have earned the Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) credential and/or some have become Board Certified in Advanced Diabetes Management (BC-ADM).
- Services provided by diabetes educators are eligible for third party reimbursement. In addition to coverage for diabetes self-management training/education (DSMT/E), services for discipline-specific counseling, such as medical nutrition therapy provided by dietitians/nutritionists, medication therapy management services provided by pharmacists or nurse practitioners, or counseling services provided by qualified social workers, psychologists and/or advanced practice registered nurses can also be billed.

Diabetes Educators:

- Provide their services in hospitals, physician offices, outpatient settings, pharmacies, managed care organizations, home health care agencies, local community and other settings.
- Facilitate behavior change by counseling patients and families on how to adopt informed lifestyle decisions and incorporate healthier choices into their self-management.
 - Diabetes educators focus on seven key behaviors that promote successful self-management. Called the AADE7™ Self-Care Behaviors, they are: Healthy eating, being active, monitoring, taking medication, problem solving, healthy coping and reducing risks.
- Provide self-management training/education, and Diabetes Self-Management Support (DSMS) and other interventions to prevent the development of diabetes. An important part of sustaining outcomes (or continual improvement) is to ensure that ongoing support and reinforcement is provided (by a variety of different professionals and non-professionals—including diabetes educators).
- Are the key to coordination of the interdisciplinary diabetes team and development of the plan of care for the individual patient.
- Possess the skills and competencies to provide education about diabetes self-management to other health care providers. Diabetes educators may educate and supervise other health professionals, community health workers and other personnel who interface with people with diabetes and their families and care givers. In this way, the role of the diabetes educator can be augmented by community health workers and others who provide DSMS.