
THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

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THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

TITLE	Leadership Characteristics of Dietetic Professionals in Ohio
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OBJECTIVE	The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics and leadership behaviors of dietitians, with a focus on possible relation to dietetic specialty.

METHODOLOGY

One thousand potential participants were randomly selected from a population of 3,162 registered dietitians (RDs) licensed in Ohio and 444 completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and provided demographic information. The typical respondent was female (97%), Caucasian (98%), employed (93%), married (77%), had worked in the field for more than 15 years (59%), and with at least a college degree (56%). The two most common age ranges were 45-49 years (18%) and 50-54 years (17%), while 44 percent of the sample were 44 years or younger. The predominant dietetic specialty were Clinical/MNT (53%) and Public Health/Community Nutrition (17%).

KEY FINDINGS

The most frequent leadership practice was Enable, followed by Encourage and Model, then Challenge and Inspire. RDs report engaging in the Five Practices somewhat less when compared with the LPI normative database.

Statistical analyses suggested a significant relationship between dietetic specialty and leadership practices, with dietitians who indicated their specialty to be business/entrepreneurial consistently

reporting higher frequency on the Five Practices than dietitians claiming other specialties. Higher levels of formal education generally resulted in higher levels of engagement in the Five Practices; as did being employed (versus being unemployed). Dietitians who regularly participated in dietetic organizations reported higher scores on Inspire, Challenge and Enable. The results also showed that the more non-dietetic leadership positions that an individual held the more frequently would the person indicate engaging in the five leadership practices; a similar pattern was found as years of work experience in the field increased.