

California

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Title: Developing and Implementing California's Ketogenic Diet Policy

People Involved: Policy development was a statewide collaboration with Registered Dietitians working in Special Care Centers (SCC) and input from pediatricians with expertise in a number of sub-specialties.

Background/Introduction: Numerous attempts had been made by the Department of Health Care Services to develop and implement a ketogenic diet policy in the 1990s and early 2000s. The policy did not move forward due to a lack of scientific evidence to support the use of the diet. In 2008, The International Ketogenic Diet Study Group published recommendations and guidelines for the clinical management of children receiving the ketogenic diet. These recommendations provided evidence-based research supporting the diet's effectiveness, which led to a greater acceptance of the diet as a non-pharmacologic treatment for epilepsy by the medical community. Due to increased support and requests for the diet, development of the policy by the state was revived in 2013.

Project Goals:

1. To improve the health and/or quality of life of children with seizure disorders and other conditions that respond to the ketogenic diet.
2. To create a policy that would allow California Children's Services (CCS) the ability to efficiently implement the ketogenic diet at the county level instead of requiring state approval.

Methods: In addition to the guidelines released in 2008 and other evidence-based research, we relied on RDs throughout the state to provide input into the policy. In fact, the CCS/SCC RDs played an integral part in developing the policy. To ensure the policy would receive physician endorsement, we also collaborated with a number of physicians throughout the state. Lastly, we looked at individual requests by physicians, which were typically instigated by parents for using the diet for conditions other than epilepsy.

Results: The ketogenic diet policy was implemented as an EPSDT-SS benefit in October 2014 and is being used for a variety of disorders. It can now be approved and implemented faster and more efficiently.

Summary/Discussion: The policy has led to an increase in the use of the ketogenic diet to treat children with seizure disorders as well as other conditions. There is no longer an extended wait time between requesting the diet and beginning the diet. *Recent notes from a medical record: "Child's mood and behavior are excellent and much improved since 'child' has been on the ketogenic diet. It is gratifying to see what a significant improvement it (diet) has made."