

## **The Essential Guide to Clinical Compensation** | Sara Griffin, MS, RDN, CNSC

This guide is designed to start conversations in your workplace. Take what you need. This guide is not all-inclusive. Please watch the companion lecture, for a thorough explanation of each tip.

### Ten tips for jumpstarting clinical compensation conversations

*If you're not already doing these things, start doing them today*

1. Stop apologizing
2. Practice at the top of your license
3. Distinguish yourself from Dietary
4. Start saying no
5. Communicate professionally with the interdisciplinary team (no more hiding in your office!)
6. Work on some PI projects (ideally, 2-3 per year)
7. Put serious effort into your work-life balance
8. Precept dietetic interns with a smile on your face 😊
9. Do things that showcase your value and keep track of them (start a list and keep track of tasks, projects, achievements (numbers are the most powerful) see the resources page at the end of this module for a template to get you started).
10. Start being direct and clear with your colleagues & boss



### Five things to do before you create your pitch

*Once you're ready to begin the process of negotiating a raise, do these five things first*

1. Find out what other dietitians of your experience and credentials are making (the [2021 Academy Compensation & Benefits Survey](#)\*, the [RDN Salary Calculator](#)\*, and the [Nutrition Professionals Salary Survey](#) are my favorite resources). These are all **low ball estimates**, but are useful because they show what the average is. Always ask for more.
2. Find out what your organization is hiring dietitians at today. Search for active job postings in your area. Ideally, by the same organization (contract company, or hospital system) as you work for. Print out these job postings in case they are taken down or the positions are filled before you make your pitch.
3. Ask your colleagues what they make.
4. If your organization has a career ladder, study it meticulously. Write down goals for the next 1-2 years.
5. Ask your colleagues to join you in this process.

[The National Labor Relations Act \(NLRA\) legally protects employees who discuss compensation with other employees](#)\*\*.

If your employer threatens you, has a policy against discussing compensation, or tells you not to discuss compensation, **this is illegal**. You can report them to the Federal government.

Check local legislation in your state for state-specific laws, as they may differ.

\*Note that both of these resources are based off salary data collected in 2021. [US inflation has risen 17% since then](#). So, \$30/hr in 2021 is now equivalent \$35.10. Of course, not all employers are able to offer employees wages that keep pace with inflation (especially when inflation is extraordinarily high). But, this is valuable information to add to your pitch.

\*\*Federal employees and union employees may have different rights, and different requirements per their contract or union.



### Things to negotiate for as a clinical dietitian:

Many employers have stock options, hybrid/WFH options, and many other options employees can negotiate. This is uncommon in the clinical dietetics space. We typically can't negotiate remote work (though you should definitely try!), and we don't get stock options. Here are some ideas of things you can ask for instead:

- Sign-on or retention bonus
- Continuing education days to attend a conference or webinar paid
- Reimbursement for continuing education
- Reimbursement for exams, including study materials
- One-time bonus if you obtain a credential (CNSC, CDCES, etc.)
- Time to study at work
- Remote work (particularly if you have a management position or any job that requires administrative work; you can request time at home to do trainings, webinars, continuing education, even charting. For example, you could request to work remotely every Wednesday)

### Additional recommended reading & research:

- Worthmore Negotiations (website & more) - helping professional women thrive
- Money Mindset Dietitian (website, podcast, Instagram)  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/make-more-money-as-a-dietitian/id1468694153>
- Ellevest (a financial company by, and for, women) - website, Instagram, group and 1-on-1 coaching

### One final pep talk:

I've heard from some clinical dietitians that they don't have time, this isn't worth it, or they just don't care enough to ask for more \$. If you accept a job at \$24/hr and your friend negotiates and gets \$27/hr, over the course of your career that equates to \$250,000. Most people change positions every 5 years or so, so this could easily mean \$1.3M. Let me say that again. \$1.3M. Do you have time now?

**There has never been a better time to advocate for yourself.** With national shortages of healthcare workers, facilities are trying to retain staff. The pandemic has shown the value of the dietitian and we have been recognized as the healthcare heroes that we are.

**2024 is THE YEAR** for you to advocate for yourself.

I'm proud of you. You can do this.

*-Sara*