



A DIETITIAN'S GUIDE TO
**BUILDING A
PRIVATE
PRACTICE**

Paige Smathers, RDN, CD



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DISCLAIMER

The contents of this e-book are a result of my own research and experience and should not replace legal counsel or financial consultation with a qualified professional.

I have collected resources, experiences, wisdom, and advice in various areas of private practice and included them in this e-book. Many of the concepts and ideas compiled in this e-book are not my own. In those cases, I will provide sources so you can do your own research.

The forms and practice documents shared in this guide are not intended to be reproduced without consent. The forms are examples only and should be altered to meet your particular needs and should not be used in part or entirely without consulting with an attorney.

It is assumed that those purchasing and reading this guide are registered dietitians with the Commission on Dietetic Registration (or equivalent if in a country outside of the US), already meeting the requirements to legally practice medical nutrition therapy in your country, state or province. It is assumed that you have done all necessary training, education and credentialing to comply with your local laws and regulations in accordance with your licensure.

Finally, there are many iterations of private practice for registered dietitians. I practice medical nutrition therapy in the outpatient setting and do not work in foodservice or residential care settings, so the guidance contained in this guide will reflect the settings in which I have experience.





WELCOME

I'm so glad you're here. Private practice is such a wonderful way for dietitians to be creative, earn a great living, and make a positive impact. This e-book will guide you through the logistics and the most effective mindsets to prepare yourself to be successful as an entrepreneur and private practice owner. You can do this!

Paige





HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This e-book is intended to help dietitians gather the resources and confidence they'll need to begin the process of building a private practice. The book is intended to be read cover to cover, step by step with a checklist at the end containing all the things to do before officially opening your doors. Readers are also welcome to read sections that most appeal to them and disregard sections that are not relevant. I have included links throughout the e-book to outside websites, which will be listed with an underline. I have also included links throughout the e-book to help you navigate from section to section. Hover over a keyword and when it's clickable it will take you to the appropriate section.

I have been in private practice since 2014 and have had many roles during that time. I started off cash-only and moved to a group practice in 2018 and started accepting insurance in 2020. I have had periods of time where I am very "out there" publicly with my work with social media and podcasting, and periods of time where I have focused my efforts and energy more locally. I will speak to the pros and cons of various approaches and structures throughout this e-book.

A note about wording: I generally use the word "client" to describe the people that I work with. It's also totally appropriate to call them "patients" but I decided in the beginning to stick with the word client so I'll use that word throughout this e-book.

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THE CHECKLIST



THE FIRST QUESTION:

DO I START A PRIVATE PRACTICE OR JOIN ONE?

As a private practice owner, I have received many phone calls and emails through the years from friends and colleagues wondering about starting a private practice. The first thing I always explore with them is whether starting a private practice is the right fit or whether joining an existing practice is a better fit. Starting a private practice tends to be a great fit for people who like wearing a lot of hats, enjoy figuring things out, don't mind the vulnerability/responsibility of making all the decisions, and who are willing to figure things out as they go. Joining a practice is a better fit for people who want to do great work and go home at the end of the day and not think about work and/or for those who don't want all the responsibilities and different hats. There's no wrong or right answer here, but an important one to consider before we dive in.

Side note: it's possible to go home and let go of work at the end of the day even if you're a private practice owner, it may just take time, healthy boundaries, and experience to figure out your flow.





DEFINE YOUR BUSINESS

Let's explore your values, your mission, and your goals for your practice. Once you're clear on your big picture (which may change through time, and that's okay) you'll feel more confident in the nitty-gritty of creating systems that support your WHY.

NAME YOUR BUSINESS

We're jumping right in! This is one of the hardest parts about starting a practice—figuring out what you'll call it.

It may seem frivolous or unimportant, but the name of your business matters. The good news is, though, you can always change it. Some states allow a DBA (Doing Business As) if you decide to change your name after you initially get going. All of this is to say: a business name matters, but don't allow choosing a name to hold you up because you can always change it later if needed.

I see many people create businesses with complicated, fancy names that are difficult to remember and/or hard to understand. I recommend choosing a name that is short, makes sense upon first glance, and is easy to remember. There are many ways to choose a name and here are some options to get you thinking.

Local Business

Consider choosing a name that conveys a local presence. Something like Salt Lake City Nutrition Counseling is a completely fine name and works great.

Your Name

Another easy option for naming is to name your practice after yourself. My legal business name is Paige Smathers Nutrition, LLC because I felt too overwhelmed at first to come up with a name that felt right.

Your Values

As I gained experience in my journey as a private practice owner, I began to feel that there must be a name for my practice that would encapsulate what we do. Because the scope of my work is emotional and crosses over with psychology and because so many people view food and nutrition through such a negative lens, I came up with the name Positive Nutrition as it encompasses our approach and philosophy and is easily understandable at first glance.

Something that Inspires You

Some people create practices with names that are unrelated to the work they do, but hold special meaning to the practice owner. "Aspen Grove Nutrition Counseling" or "Wildflower Nutrition Therapy" are examples of practice names that may be derived from inspiration of the owner.

Once you've picked your name, you'll want to ensure you protect it. Here's information from the U.S. Small Business Association website:

"There are four different ways to register your business name. Each way of registering your name serves a different purpose, and some may be legally required depending on your business structure and location.

- Entity name protects you at a state level
- Trademark protects you at a federal level
- Doing business as (DBA) doesn't give legal protection, but it might be legally required
- Domain name protects your business website address

Each of these name registrations are legally independent. Most small businesses try to use the same name for each kind of registration, but you're not normally required to."

Domain Name

I recommend checking availability of your desired name on domain name purchasing sites prior to officially deciding on your name. Go to <https://www.godaddy.com/> or a similar site and search for domain names. Aim for a domain name that is short, easy to remember, and is as similar to your business name as possible.