



Professional Standards

Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide

OVERVIEW

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established minimum Professional Standards for school nutrition professionals who manage and operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

The standards are a key provision of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) and have been in effect since July 1, 2015. The standards provide minimum education standards for new state and local school nutrition directors based on school district's size, as well as annual training requirements for all school nutrition professionals. Training for USDA Professional Standards must be in all or one of the four key areas listed below, depending on individual training goals.

- Key Area 1: Nutrition
- Key Area 2: Operations
- Key Area 3: Administration
- Key Area 4: Communications and Marketing

State agencies must monitor compliance with these regulations during an administrative review.

TERMS TO KNOW

Director – The person responsible for the day to day management of a school food authority (SFA).

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) – A branch under USDA that administers the food and nutrition assistance programs, providing regulations and guidance materials.

Key area – A unit encompassing several topics and specific training subjects to assist those who are planning trainings or receiving training to cover specific objectives.

Local education agency (LEA) – A term established by the USDA that refers to school district level management, sometimes called School Food Authority (SFA).

Learning objectives – A list of training topics in the four key areas of Nutrition, Operations, Administration, and Communications/Marketing.

School Food Authority (SFA) – The school district’s governing body, as denoted by USDA and State agencies, to be held responsible for carrying out the federal regulations of federally subsidized meal programs.

School year (SY) – The months of the year during which school is in session.

Tracking spreadsheet – A tool used to track and identify specific USDA Professional Standards topics that have been covered in training. Documentation is required at the SFA level as well as the State agency level and must be kept on file for the current year plus three past years.

WHAT ARE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS?

The Professional Standards rule requires a minimum amount of annual training hours for all state directors of school nutrition programs, state director of distributing agencies, school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff. Required training topic areas vary according to position and job requirements. There are also minimum hiring standards for new state directors of school nutrition programs, state directors of distributing agencies that oversee USDA Foods, and school nutrition program directors.

The final rule eases hiring options for small school districts; adds hiring options that emphasize program experience; and reduces the required annual training hours for all SFA personnel. It is required that some form of documentation be kept on file to show Professional Standards compliance; options include the FNS online tracking tool and two Professional Standards tracking resources available in MyIdahoCNP under Download Forms in the Professional Standards section.

Hiring Standards for Directors

Hiring standards are dependent upon the student enrollment of the school district. If a director oversees more than one SFA, the sum of the student enrollment determines the hiring standard – the program director has to meet the hiring standards for the LEA size that reflects the total student enrollment.

- Districts with Student Enrollment of **10,000 or more**
 - Bachelor’s degree with academic major in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field (OR)
 - Bachelor’s degree in any academic major and at least 5 years of experience in management of school nutrition programs (AND)
 - At least 8 hours of food safety training, either not more than 5 years prior to their starting date or completed within 30 days of employee’s start date

- Districts with Student Enrollment of **2,500 to 9,999**
 - Bachelor’s degree with academic major in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field (OR)
 - Bachelor’s degree in any academic major and at least 2 years of experience in management of school nutrition programs (OR)
 - Associate’s degree or equivalent educational experience with major in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field and at least 2 years of relevant school nutrition programs experience (AND)
 - At least 8 hours of food safety training, either not more than 5 years prior to their starting date or completed within 30 days of employee’s start date
- Districts with Student Enrollment of **2,499 or less**
 - Bachelor’s degree with academic major in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field (OR)
 - Bachelor’s degree in any academic major and at least 1 year of experience in management of school nutrition programs (OR)
 - Associate’s degree or equivalent educational experience with major in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field and at least 1 year of relevant school nutrition programs experience (OR)
 - High school diploma (or GED) and at least 3 years of relevant experience in school nutrition programs (AND)
 - At least 8 hours of food safety training, either not more than 5 years prior to their starting date or completed within 30 days of employee’s start date
- Districts with Student Enrollment **less than 500**
 - The State agency may approve a candidate who meets the education standard but has less than the required 3 years of experience (AND)
 - At least 8 hours of food safety training, either not more than 5 years prior to their starting date or completed within 30 days of employee’s start date

Training standards

Training standards apply to **all** school nutrition program employees, regardless of student enrollment in the school district or size of the LEA.

Note: If hired January 1 or later, an employee must only complete half of the required training hours.

- Directors: At least 12 hours of annual continuing education/training. These required hours are in addition to the food safety training required in the first year of employment.
- Managers: At least 10 hours of annual continuing education/training.
- Staff working an average of at least 20 hours per week: At least 6 hours of annual continuing education/training.

- Part time staff working less than 20 hours per week: Each year, at least 4 hours annual continuing education/training, regardless of the number of part-time hours worked.

Training options

Job-specific training may be accomplished by options that include:

- Online courses
- Structured, on-the-job training relevant to the position
- In-service training
- Local school nutrition organization educational events
- State agency-sponsored training
- Training conducted for staff (HACCP, Civil Rights, OVS)
- Meetings sponsored by food service partners (food shows, one hour per year allowed)
- Conferences with applicable training
- College courses with job-specific content
- Webinars

WHY ARE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

Professional Standards help ensure school nutrition personnel have the knowledge, training, and tools they need to plan, prepare, and purchase healthy products to create nutritious, safe, and enjoyable school meals.

RESOURCES

Additional resources may be available for this topic. Please check the Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide website for copies of manuals, user guides, and helpful links to relevant subject matters.

For Questions Contact

Child Nutrition Programs
Idaho State Department of Education
650 W State Street, Boise, ID 83702
208 332 6820 | www.sde.idaho.gov

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1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

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