



Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Alabama Professional CNP Director Certification Requirements

Effective August 15, 2023, CNP Directors in school systems with a student enrollment of 2,500 and above must have a valid Alabama Professional Child Nutrition Program Director Certificate issued by the Educator Certification Section of the ALSDE. Smaller school systems with an enrollment of 2,499 or less are strongly encouraged to hire certified CNP Directors but may request an exception for continued employment in CNP.

NOTE: To obtain CNP Director Certification the candidate must meet all requirements listed below the selected option.

Option 1: Bachelor's Degree in Field and Relevant Experience

- At least an earned bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with an academic major in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, food science, community nutrition and marketing, hospitality management, or a related field. At least four of the courses must be in food and nutrition.
- A minimum of 1400 clock hours of compensated food service management experience, or an acceptable alternative to be approved by the State Superintendent of Education, to include but not limited to, supervisory and/or administrative experience attained within the five years immediately preceding the date of application.

Option 2: Bachelor's Degree, Specified Coursework and Relevant Experience

- An earned bachelor's degree earned from an accredited institution in any major.
- Specific coursework within three years from the date of employment:
 - Nine semester hours in food and nutrition,
 - Three semester hours in quantity food production,
 - Three semester hours in quantity purchasing,
 - Three semester hours in personnel management, and
 - Three semester hours in accounting.
- Verified minimum of 1400 clock hours of compensated food service experience.

Option 3: Bachelor's Degree and School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) Credential

- An earned bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in any major.
- The School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) Credential from the School Nutrition Association (SNA).

NOTE: See SNS requirements on the SNA website. [SNS-Credentialing-Exam-Handbook.pdf \(schoolnutrition.org\)](https://www.schoolnutrition.org/SNS-Credentialing-Exam-Handbook.pdf)

Option 4: Bachelor's Degree and Relevant Experience

- An earned bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in any major.
- A minimum of 5 years CNP experience at the level of a school food service manager or higher.

Option 5: Bachelor's Degree and a CNP Director Certificate from Another State

- An earned bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in any major.
- A CNP Director Certificate from another state.



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Certification Exception for CNP Directors in Small School Systems (enrollment of 2,499 or less)

Within three years from the CNP director's date of hire, smaller school systems with an enrollment of 2,499 or less may request an exception for continued employment of an individual who does not hold at least an earned bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. If the CNP director does not meet one of the above certification options, the individual must meet all the following criteria within three years of the date of hire for continued employment as the Child Nutrition Program Director:

- A high school diploma (or GED).
- At least three years of school food service management experience.
- State-approved training for new Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Directors.
- A Level 4 Certificate from the School Nutrition Association (SNA).

NOTE: See Level 4 Certificate requirements on the SNA website. [Certificate-program-guide.pdf \(schoolnutrition.org\)](https://www.schoolnutrition.org/certificate-program-guide.pdf)

Note: Persons not meeting the Alabama Temporary Exception for Hiring Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Director's standards cannot continue to be paid out of CNP funds (**Code of Alabama**, 1975, 290-080-030-.05).

The LEA may request an exception from the ALSDE State Director of Child Nutrition Programs at cnpslp@alsde.edu.