



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

January 24, 2024

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** City and County Superintendents  
**FROM:** Eric G. Mackey *EGM*  
State Superintendent of Education  
**RE:** Guidance for Updated Hiring Standards and Annual Training Requirements for Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Directors and Personnel

The governing body of each organization operating the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs must employ a Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Director. On June 8, 2023, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted two new rules that became effective August 15, 2023. The new Professional Standards for School-based CNP Personnel (*Code of Alabama*, 1975, 290-080-030.05 and 290-080-030.06) supersedes the July 9, 1994, **Alabama Code** Supervision and Administration and Qualifications for Child Nutrition Program Director Certification. In addition, this memorandum replaces the April 26, 2017, memorandum *Child Nutrition Program Director Employment Standards* for Residential Childcare Institutions and Private Schools.

This guidance is being provided to ensure sponsors hire school nutrition professionals who have the knowledge, training, and tools needed to create nutritious, safe, and enjoyable school meals. The hiring and training standards adopted by the state of Alabama for school-based CNP Personnel closely align with the federal hiring standards for CNP personnel as required by the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* and the *Hiring Flexibility under Professional Standards of 2019*, including the slight revisions in 2021. Federal and state requirements for the position of CNP Director depend on the number of enrolled students in the system.

The new code sets forth:

- Minimum professional standards for school nutrition professionals who manage and operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.
- Minimum educational requirements for local school nutrition directors and managers.
- Annual training standards for all school nutrition professionals.
- Added options for obtaining the Alabama Professional CNP Director Certificate.

**Hiring Flexibilities**

The state agency highly recommends that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) hire certified CNP directors. However, when LEAs are not able to find certified directors to fill the position, the state CNP Director has the discretion to approve exceptions for hiring CNP directors in districts with student enrollment of 2,499 and fewer. Directors hired under this exception must meet the Alabama hiring standards within three years of date of hire, or federal funds may not be used to pay the person's salary thereafter. The Child Nutrition School Programs staff will work with school food authorities (SFAs) to determine eligibility and requirements necessary to meet the qualifications.

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) final rule also provides flexibilities for state agency discretion in determining hiring requirements for SFAs with fewer than 500 students. This flexibility only applies to charter schools, private schools, and select residential childcare institutions. These SFAs may submit a request to hire CNP directors with less than the required years of relevant foodservice experience provided the applicant has the minimum education requirements and the applicant completes the state required training within the first year of employment.

The SFA **will not be in program compliance** if unable to recruit and hire a qualified candidate under the above flexibilities. Consequently, the nonprofit school foodservice account cannot be used to pay the person's salary.

**Student Enrollment of 2,500 and Above**

SFAs with student enrollment 2,500 - 9,999 must meet federal standards to be paid from the nonprofit school foodservice account. However, if the candidate meets federal standards but does not meet state standards, the LEA may request the temporary exception available per **Alabama Code**. This exception allows the CNP director to be paid from the nonprofit school foodservice account for up to three years while the director completes the state standards. SFAs with student enrollment of 10,000 and above must meet federal and state hiring standards with no exceptions.

**Training Requirements**

All CNP personnel must comply with the continuing training requirements set forth in the updated Code. CNP directors hired during the school year 2024 will be granted a six (6) month extension to complete the first-year training requirements if needed.

For additional information please review the attached documents *Alabama Hiring and Professional Standards*, *Alabama CNP Director Certification*, and *USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Professionals*.

If you have questions regarding this memorandum, please contact the Child Nutrition School Programs staff at [cnpslp@alsde.edu](mailto:cnpslp@alsde.edu) or call (334) 694-4657.

EGM:AL:LWH

Attachment(s)

cc: Charter School Superintendents  
Private School Administrators  
Residential Childcare Institution Administrators

FY24-3007



# Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Hiring and Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Personnel

## Hiring Standards for New Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Directors

The governing body of each School Food Authority (SFA) shall employ a CNP Director. The CNP Director is responsible for the supervision and administration of the nutrition programs at the local education agency (LEA). Requirements for the position depend on the number of enrolled students in the system, as defined in the current federal and state Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Personnel. All school nutrition program directors must have completed at least eight hours of food safety training within five years prior to their starting date or complete eight hours of food safety training within 30 calendar days of their starting date.

### Student Enrollment of 2,500 or more (One of the following requirements must be met.)

- Bachelor's degree or higher 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.
- Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution in any academic major and one of the following:
  - a. An ALSDE recognized CNP Director certificate from another state.
  - b. The School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) credential from the School Nutrition Association (SNA).
- Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution in any academic major and at least five years of experience in the management of school nutrition programs.

### Student Enrollment of 2,499 or less (One of the following requirements must be met.)

- Bachelor's degree or higher 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.
  - Bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution in any academic major and one of the following:
    - a. An ALSDE recognized CNP Director certificate from another state.
    - b. The School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) credential from the School Nutrition Association (SNA).
  - Bachelor's degree or higher in any academic major and at least one year of relevant institutional food service experience.
  - Associate degree from an accredited institution or equivalent educational experience, 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 and at least one year of institutional food service experience.
- NOTE:** Any individual employed under this requirement must earn a bachelor's degree in any major or earn the State recognized School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) credential within three years of the date of employment.

## Temporary Exception for Hiring CNP Directors

The ALSDE Director of Child Nutrition Programs may approve a request from an SFA to employ an individual as a CNP Director for up to three years from the date of employment who does not meet any option above but meets one of the options below:

**Option 1:** Holds at least an earned associate degree from an accredited institution; has two years of institutional food service work experience; completes State approved training for new CNP Directors; and earns the School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) Credential from the School Nutrition Association (SNA) within three years of the date of employment. Individuals must meet degree and specific coursework requirements prior to taking the **SNS Credentialing Exam**. **If the person does not earn a passing score within three years, federal funds may not be used to pay the person's salary.**

**Option 2:** Holds at least an earned bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution; completes state-approved training for new CNP Directors; and earns the School Nutrition Specialist Credential (SNS) from the School Nutrition Association (SNA) within three years of the date of employment. Individuals must meet degree and specific coursework requirements prior to taking the **SNS Credentialing Exam**. **If the person does not earn a passing score within three years, federal funds may not be used to pay the person's salary.**

**NOTE:** LEAs with a student enrollment of 2,500 – 9,999 must meet the federal hiring standards to be paid from the nonprofit school foodservice account and to be eligible for the Temporary Exception for Hiring CNP Directors per Alabama Code.



# Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Hiring and Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Personnel

## Hiring Standards for CNP Managers

Each site that provides meals shall employ a manager. Managers are not required to hold a certificate. A CNP Director may also serve as a site manager.

1. Each manager of a food service operation at the site level must have at least a high school equivalency diploma and three years of school food service experience or related work.
2. If an acceptable candidate meeting the educational requirement is not available, the governing body may employ a manager on the condition that the educational requirement be met within one year from the date of employment. A manager so employed who fails to meet the educational requirement within the prescribed time limits shall not be employed as a CNP manager.

## Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Professionals in Alabama

CNP Directors:	Must earn at least 12 hours of annual continuing education or training.
CNP Managers:	Must earn at least 10 hours of annual continuing education or training.
All other CNP Staff:	Must earn at least 6 hours of annual continuing education or training.
Part-Time Staff:	Staff who work less than 20 hours a week must have at least 4 hours of annual continuing education or training.

**NOTE:** Annual training requirements apply to the program year between July 1 and June 30. If hired January 1 or later, an employee must complete only half of the required training hours.

## Required Training for all CNP Directors

1. ALSDE approved food safety training must be completed every five years.
2. Civil Rights training must be completed annually.
3. Procurement training must be completed annually.

## New CNP Directors must complete ALSDE required trainings within the first year of employment.

1. Institute of Child Nutrition Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Course. (Past attendance accepted)
2. ALSDE New Director trainings and webinars.



# 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.



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

## **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](mailto:cnpslp@alsde.edu).



## Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Professionals Summary of Updates Effective May 2019

In the final rule, *Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010*, USDA established minimum professional standards requirements for school nutrition professionals who manage and operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The standards set the minimum education standards for new State and local school nutrition directors as well as annual training standards for all school nutrition professionals. These standards ensure school nutrition professionals have the knowledge, training, and tools they need to plan, prepare, and purchase healthy food to create nutritious, safe, and enjoyable school meals. The additional final rule, *Hiring Flexibility under Professional Standards*, establishes flexibilities for hiring standards under the Professional Standards regulations.

These final rules:

- Create minimum hiring standards for new school food authority (SFA) directors based on a school district's size;
- Establish minimum hiring standards for new State directors of school nutrition programs and State directors of distributing agencies;
- Add 4 flexibilities to the hiring standards for new school nutrition program directors in small local educational agencies (LEAs) and new State directors of school nutrition programs; and
- Require minimum annual training for all new and current school nutrition professionals.

**USDA Professional Standards Training Database** (<https://professionalstandards.fns.usda.gov>) has free to low-cost trainings available and is updated regularly. You can search the database by key areas, topics, type of training, and more.

**USDA Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool (PSTTT)** (<https://pstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov>) is an optional, free, record-keeping web-based tool that can be used to track required training hours.

### Training Standards for School Nutrition Program Professionals (All LEA Sizes)

Job Category	Annual Training Requirements <sup>1</sup>
<b>All Directors</b>	At least <b>12</b> hours of annual continuing education/training. This required continuing education/training is in addition to the food safety training required in the first year of employment.
<b>All Managers</b>	At least <b>10</b> hours of annual continuing education/training.
<b>All Other Staff</b> (Work at least 20 hours or more per week)	At least <b>6</b> hours of annual continuing education/training.
<b>Part-Time Staff</b> (Work <20 hours per week)	At least <b>4</b> hours of annual continuing education/training, regardless of the number of part-time hours worked.

<sup>1</sup> Annual training requirements apply to the 12 months between July 1 and June 30.

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

### Training Requirements for State Agency Directors

State Director of School Nutrition Programs	State Director of Distributing Agencies
Each year, at least <b>15</b> hours of annual continuing education/training.	Each year, at least <b>15</b> hours of annual continuing education/training.
Must PROVIDE, or ensure that State agency staff receives, annual continuing education/training.	Must PROVIDE, or ensure that State food distribution staff receives, annual continuing education/training. <sup>1</sup>
Must also PROVIDE a minimum of <b>18</b> hours of training to SFAs each year. <sup>1</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> Training is an approved use of State Administrative Expenses (SAE) funds and a variety of training formats are allowed. States may use contractors or partner with other organizations (e.g., School Nutrition Association, Institute of Child Nutrition) to provide training.

## Hiring Standards for New School Nutrition Program Directors

New directors — those hired on or after July 1, 2015 — are subject to the education requirements below. School Nutrition Program Directors are the individuals responsible for the operation of school nutrition programs for all schools under the local educational agency (LEA).

Minimum Requirements for Directors	Student Enrollment 2,499 or less	Student Enrollment 2,500-9,999	Student Enrollment 10,000 or more
<b>Minimum Education Standards</b>	<p>Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas;<sup>1</sup></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors;</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> at least <b>1</b> year of relevant food service experience;</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Associate's degree or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas,<sup>1</sup> and at least 1 year of relevant food service experience;</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>High school diploma (or GED) <b>and</b> 3 years of relevant food service experience.<sup>2,3</sup></p>	<p>Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas;<sup>1</sup></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors;</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> at least <b>2</b> years of relevant school nutrition programs experience;</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Associate's degree or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas,<sup>1</sup> <b>and</b> at least <b>2</b> years of relevant school nutrition programs experience.</p>	<p>Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas;<sup>1</sup></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors;</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> at least <b>5</b> years experience in management of school nutrition programs.</p>
<b>Minimum Prior Training Standards</b>	At least <b>8</b> hours of food safety training is required either not more than <b>5</b> years prior to their starting date or completed within <b>30</b> calendar days of employee's starting date.		

<sup>1</sup> Related majors include food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field. Consult your State agency for more information about equivalent educational experience.

<sup>2</sup> For LEAs with fewer than 500 students, and at the State agency's discretion, the SFA can be approved to hire a school nutrition program director who has less than the required years of food service experience, provided the applicant has the minimum education specified in the hiring standards for LEAs with 2,499 students or fewer.

<sup>3</sup> At the discretion of the State agency, and on an individual basis, the SFA can hire a new director with documented volunteer or unpaid relevant food service experience.

## Hiring Standards for New State Directors

	State Director of School Nutrition Programs	State Director of Distributing Agencies
<b>Education</b>	<p>Bachelor's degree in a related field;<sup>1</sup></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Master's or doctorate degree in one of the specified fields<sup>1</sup> regardless as to field of the bachelor's degree.</p>	Bachelor's degree with any major.
<b>Knowledge &amp; Experience</b>	Extensive relevant knowledge and experience in areas such as institutional food service operations, management, business, and/or nutrition education.	
<b>Skills &amp; Abilities</b>	Additional abilities and skills needed to lead, manage, and supervise people to support the mission of school nutrition programs.	

<sup>1</sup> Related majors include food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field. State agencies with questions should contact the appropriate FNS Regional Office.