

Summary of the Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals

USDA established minimum professional standards requirements for school nutrition professionals who manage and operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The standards ensure school nutrition professionals have the knowledge and training to plan and prepare healthy food to create nutritious, safe, and enjoyable school meals.

Professional Standards:

- Require minimum annual training for all school nutrition professionals.
- Set minimum hiring standards for new school food authority (SFA) directors and new State directors of school nutrition programs and distributing agencies.

USDA's Professional Standards Trainings and Tracker Tool (PSTTT) (<https://pstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov>) helps school nutrition professionals search for relevant Professional Standards trainings and track their annually required training hours.

Training Standards for School Nutrition Professionals

Job Category	Annual Training Requirements ¹	Additional Information
Directors	At least 12 hours	This required training is in addition to the food safety training required in the first year of employment.
Managers	At least 10 hours	
Staff	At least 6 hours	Applies to those who work 20 hours or more per week.
Part-Time Staff	At least 4 hours ²	Applies to those who work fewer than 20 hours per week.
Temporary and acting employees, substitutes, and volunteers	Varies by State	Any annual training requirements are at the discretion of the State agency and may be required within 30 days of starting.

¹ Annual training requirements apply to the 12 months between July 1 and June 30. If hired January 1 or later, an employee must complete half of the required training hours.

² The minimum training hours are regardless of the number of part-time hours worked.

Training Standards for State Agency Directors

Job Title	Annual Training Requirements ¹	Provide Training to State Staff	Provide Training to SFAs
State Director of School Nutrition Programs	At least 15 hours	Yes	Yes: minimum of 18 hours each year. ²
State Director of Distributing Agencies ³	At least 15 hours	Yes	N/A

¹ Annual training requirements apply to the 12 months between July 1 and June 30.

² 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.

³ Director who oversees the management and distribution of USDA Foods to schools.

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Hiring Standards for New School Nutrition Program Directors

School Nutrition Program Directors are the individuals responsible for the operation of school nutrition programs for all schools under the local educational agency (LEA). New directors are subject to the education requirements below.

Minimum Standards for Directors	Student Enrollment 2,499 or Less	Student Enrollment 2,500-9,999	Student Enrollment 10,000 or More
Education	Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas; ¹ OR Bachelor's degree in any academic major, and State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors; OR Bachelor's degree in any academic major, and at least 1 year of relevant food service experience; OR Associate's degree or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas, ¹ and at least 1 year of relevant food service experience; OR High school diploma (or GED) and 3 years of relevant food service experience. ^{2,3}	Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas; ¹ OR Bachelor's degree in any academic major, and State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors; OR Bachelor's degree in any academic major, and at least 2 years of relevant school nutrition programs experience; OR Associate's degree or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas, ¹ and at least 2 years of relevant school nutrition programs experience. ⁴	Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas; ¹ OR Bachelor's degree in any academic major, and State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors; OR Bachelor's degree in any academic major, and at least 5 years experience in management of school nutrition programs. ⁴
Prior Training	At least 8 hours of food safety training is required no more than 5 years prior to their start date or completed within 30 calendar days of starting.		

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ At the discretion of the State agency, and on an individual basis, the SFA can hire a new director with 10 or more years of school nutrition program experience but who does not hold a bachelor's or an associate's degree in a medium or large LEA.

Hiring Standards for New State Directors

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

¹ 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 FNA Regional Office.

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