

Professional Standards Frequently Asked Questions

What are hiring standards for new school nutrition program directors?

Hiring standards are **education** and **training** requirements for the school district employee who manages and operates the [National School Lunch Program](#)ⁱ (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Relevant school nutrition program experience is also needed by a new school nutrition program director.

What is the definition of a school nutrition program director?

A school nutrition program director, also referred to as a food service director (FSD) is the person who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school meals programs of all participating schools under the jurisdiction of the school food authority (SFA).

A FSD may have a different job title, such as program manager or coordinator – the job title may be different than the terms used in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Professional Standards rule. Regardless of title, the director is the person responsible for the majority of the duties. If job duties are divided among several staff members, e.g., business manager, administrative assistant, and head cook, one person must still be designated as the director.

Job responsibilities may include menu planning, food production, food safety, procurement, financial management, recordkeeping, personnel management, training, and program management.

Education and Experience Requirements for a New School Nutrition Program Director

What are the education requirements?

- Education requirements are Bachelor or Associate degrees, high school or GED diplomas, or equivalent educational experience.
- Education requirements are based on the total student enrollment numbers in a school district.
- If a FSD is overseeing several school districts, then the aggregate number of all students from all the districts is used in determining education requirements.

What is considered relevant school nutrition program experience?

- This refers to previous work experience in the NSLP and SBP or experience in other child nutrition programs, e.g., Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Can a FSD be working towards a degree when they are hired or must they have already obtained the degree?

- The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) School Nutrition Programs (SNP) requires that the FSD has the required education when hired.

What is the “grandfathered in” clause?

- FSDs hired prior to July 1, 2015, are “grandfathered in” and exempt from the professional standards requirements as long as they work in a district of the same student enrollment size.
- This allows for lateral movement and employment opportunities for a person who was hired prior to July 1, 2015, to move from one district to another, as long as the student enrollment size is the same or less.

Is there a requirement for food safety training for a new FSD?

- Eight hours of food safety training is required and needs to be no more than 5 years old or completed within 30 calendar days of the employee’s start date.
- Training requirement does not mean the FSD must have obtained food safety certification. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has a separate Certified Food Manager requirement.

What are the new flexibilities in work experience requirements for a new FSD in a district with 2,499 students or less?

- Districts with 2,499 students or less may hire a FSD with relevant food service experience, rather than school nutrition programs experience. Relevant food service experience may include managing operations at hospitals, healthcare facilities, nursing homes, restaurants, civic/community organization, or university dining services. This may also include documented volunteer or unpaid relevant food service experience.

What documentation will MDE look for to verify hiring of a new FSD meets the hiring standards?

- The following documentation will be required to be uploaded in the CNP application: college or high school diploma or transcripts, resume outlining past work experience, documentation of food safety training (if completed within the past five years), or other relevant documentation that demonstrates the applicant meets hiring standards.

Annual Training Requirements for School Food Service Staff

All school nutrition program employees are required to meet minimum annual training requirements. Training for employees should be specific to their job duties. Required annual training includes Civil Rights and Offer versus Serve (as applicable).

- Director – 12 hours annual training
 - Note: 8 hours of food safety training is required every five years
- Manager – 10 hours annual training
- All other staff working 20 hours or more/week – 6 hours annual training
- All other staff working < 20 hours/week – 4 hours annual training
 - Employees hired January 1 or later only require half of the required training hours
 - MDE counts annual training as training received from July 1 – June 30

Special Situations – Food Service Management Company or Vended Meal Contracts

If an SFA contracts with a food service management company (FSMC) or has a vended meal contract, USDA states that because the SFA maintains oversight of the school meal programs when contracting meal services, hiring, and training standards also apply to the SFA person overseeing the contact.

Education and Experience Requirements

At the SFA level, the person overseeing the contract must meet the education and experience requirements for a FSD, based on the student enrollment size.

At the SFA level, the employee placed on-site by the FSMC to manage the day-to day operations is considered the FSD and must meet education and experience requirements, based on the student enrollment size.

- Note: if the FSMC FSD oversees more than one account/district, then that person must meet the education and experience requirements for all accounts/districts.

Annual Training Requirements

At the SFA level, the person overseeing the contract must meet the annual training hour requirements for a FSD, which is 12 hours.

At the SFA level, the FSMC FSD must meet the annual training hour requirements for a FSD, which is 12 hours.

ⁱ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/part-210%E2%80%94national-school-lunch-program>