

# Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs Professional Development Handbook

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This guide, also available electronically at the [Montana Team Nutrition Program website](#), provides information on professional standards for school nutrition professionals. For more information contact:

**Montana Team Nutrition Program**

Katie Bark, RDN, LN, SNS  
[kbark@montana.edu](mailto:kbark@montana.edu)  
phone: 406-994-5641

Molly Stenberg, RDN, LN  
[stenberg@montana.edu](mailto:stenberg@montana.edu)  
phone: 406-994-7217

Gretchen Groves, RDN, LN  
[gretchen.groves@montana.edu](mailto:gretchen.groves@montana.edu)  
phone: 406-994-5996

Montana State University  
325 Reid Hall, PO Box 173370  
Bozeman, MT 59717-3370  
[www.montana.edu/teamnutrition](http://www.montana.edu/teamnutrition)

**Montana Office of Public Instruction**

School Nutrition Programs  
Chris Emerson, MS, RD  
[cemerson@mt.gov](mailto:cemerson@mt.gov)

PO Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501  
Phone: 406-444-2501  
Fax: 406-444-1488  
<http://opi.mt.gov>

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**Reviewed by:** Katie Bark, RDN, LN, SNS; Gretchen Groves, RDN, LN; Aubree Roth, MS; Sarah Penix; Tracee Hume; Rochelle Davies, RDN, LN

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2. (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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# **USDA Professional Standards for All School Nutrition Program Staff**

USDA has established minimum professional standards requirements for school nutrition professionals who manage and operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

The standards, another key provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA), aim to institute minimum education standards for new State and local school nutrition directors as well as annual training standards for all school nutrition professionals. These standards will 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. This final rule will:

- 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; and
- Require minimum annual training for all new and current school nutrition professionals

A comprehensive professional standards website provides school nutrition program staff with information on how to comply with professional standards requirements. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals resources are available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/professional-standards>

## School Nutrition Program Staff Professional Standards

School Nutrition Program Position	Required Training Hours
<p><b>Program Director</b></p> <p>This person oversees all aspects of the School Nutrition Program in their district. This includes administering, planning, directing, assessing, implementing, and evaluating the program.</p>	12 annual training hours
<p><b>Program Manager</b></p> <p>Large districts that have a centralized kitchen and satellite kitchens often have a program manager for each satellite kitchen to oversee food production and service.</p>	10 annual training hours
<p><b>Program Staff working <math>\geq</math> 20 hours/week</b></p> <p>This is anyone that is employed to work in the School Nutrition Program.</p>	6 annual training hours
<p><b>All Program Staff working <math>&lt;</math> 20 hours/week</b></p>	4 annual training hours
<p><b>Any training that lasts 15 minutes or longer counts!</b></p> <p>“Teachable Moments” in your kitchen can be counted towards professional standards training hours.</p>	

### Training for Professional Standards is Categorized into 4 Key Areas:

- **Nutrition:** Menu Planning, Nutrition Education, General Nutrition
- **Operations:** Food Production, Serving Food (offer vs serve), Cashier and Point of Service, Purchasing/Procurement, Receiving and Storage, Food Safety and HACCP
- **Administration:** Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits, Program Management, Financial Management, Human Resources and Staff Training, Facilities and Equipment Planning
- **Communications and Marketing:** Communications, Marketing

### Documentation of training hours must be available for Administrative Review.

*There are professional standards training tracking tools available in [MAPS](#) under School Nutrition Programs > Applications > Download Forms > Professional Standards and through the USDA at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/professional-standards>*

## Hiring Standards for New School Food Service Directors

The following chart outlines the required qualifications for new school food service directors in Montana. To assist in the hiring process, a school food service director job description template can be accessed at the [Montana Team Nutrition Professional Development Webpage](#).

Student Enrollment	Required Qualifications
<p><b>≥ 10,000 Students</b>                      Billings Public Schools                      Great Falls Public Schools</p>	<p><b>Must have at least one of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas.*</li> <li>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> a State-recognized certificate.</li> <li>Bachelor's degree in any academic major <b>and</b> at least 5 years experience in management of school nutrition programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2,500-9,999 Students</b>                      Belgrade Public Schools                      Bozeman Public Schools                      Butte Public Schools                      Helena Public Schools                      Kalispell Public Schools                      Missoula County Public Schools</p>	<p><b>Must have at least one of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas.*</li> <li>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> a State-recognized certificate.</li> <li>Bachelor's degree in any academic major <b>and</b> at least 2 years of relevant experience in school nutrition programs.</li> <li>Associate's degree or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas,* <b>and</b> at least 2 years of relevant experience in school nutrition programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>≤ 2,499 Students</b>                      51 Sponsors in Montana</p>	<p><b>Must have at least one of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas*.</li> <li>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> a State-recognized certificate.</li> <li>Bachelor's degree in any academic major, <b>and</b> at least one year of relevant experience in school nutrition programs.</li> <li>Associate's degree or equivalent educational experience, with academic major in specific areas,* <b>and</b> at least one year of relevant experience in school nutrition programs.</li> <li>High school diploma (or GED) <b>and</b> at least 3 years of relevant experience inschool nutrition programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>&lt; 500 Students</b>                      199 Sponsors in Montana</p>	<p><b>OPI School Nutrition Programs can approve a candidate who meets the educational standards as listed for schools with ≤ 2,499 students but has less than 3 years of experience. A request for hire form can be accessed on <a href="#">OPI School Nutrition</a>.</b></p>

\*Specific majors/areas of concentration: food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field.

# Essential Skills, Knowledge, and Competencies of School Food Service Directors

The Applied Research Division of the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) published a 2017 update of **Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills Needed by School Nutrition Managers for the 21st Century**. This multiphase research project utilized expertise from school nutrition professionals, site visits, focus groups, printed publications, and internet sources to identify essential competencies, knowledge, and skills found in a successful food service director. The ICN identified 8 key functional areas (Figure 1) that are performed by food service directors within a local school nutrition operation. Functional areas are defined the broad grouping or divisions of job responsibilities that are performed by food service directors. The 8 key functional areas are:



1. Sanitation, Safety and Security  
2. Financial Management and Accountability  
3. Facility and Property Management  
4. Nutrition and Menu Management  
5. Personnel Management  
6. Procurement and Inventory Management  
7. Marketing, Communication, and Customer Service  
8. Meal Preparation and Service

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Figure 1

It is appropriate for a school food service director to complete professional development hours that focus on these 8 key functional areas in order to achieve competency. Professional development activities may be knowledge based, skills based, or a combination of both. When developing a professional development training plan, a person may choose to focus on the functional areas in which they have the least experience and/or competency with. If you are a new food service director, it may be helpful to create a professional development plan that allows you to achieve competency in each of the eight areas over time. [View the full list](#) of knowledge and skill statements associated with each competency.

## Mission and Values Based Professionalism

School food service directors and staff play an essential role in the school environment, so it is important to reflect upon the values and mission of child nutrition programs. Keep your eye on the prize (healthy children who are ready to learn) and motivation on the overall goal of your program. Remember to ask yourself the following questions regularly:

- What is the mission of your school nutrition program?
- What function do we serve within the greater school and learning environment?
- Who are our customers? For whom does this organization exist?
- Why does this organization exist? What need is this program meeting?

# Professional Development Opportunities

## OPI School Nutrition Programs

Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs offers in-person and remote professional development opportunities for all levels of program staff. To request in-person or remote training and technical assistance, contact your regional specialist or OPI SNP at 406-444-2501, or consult [the list of annual trainings and workshops](#) on the OPI School Nutrition Programs Website.

OPI SNP offers weekly webinars on professional development topics such as Verification, USDA Foods and DOD Fresh, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Administrative Review Process, and many other topics. In addition to scheduled live webinars, archived webinars are posted within the Download Forms area of [the Montana Agreement and Payment Systems](#) (MAPS). Archived webinars can be accessed through MAPS by clicking *School Nutrition Programs > Applications > Download Forms > Webinar Wednesdays*.

### School Nutrition Program Fall Workshops

Montana OPI School Nutrition Programs offers School Nutrition Program regional workshops each fall for school district clerks and food service directors. At these regional trainings, led by OPI SNP Specialists, participants can learn about operating USDA Child Nutrition Meal Programs, including meal pattern requirements, administrative management, and regulatory updates. See the [schedule of trainings](#) on the OPI SNP Website under Professional Standards and Training or directly contact OPI SNP at 406-444-2501 for additional information.

### Summer Food Service Program Workshops

Montana OPI School Nutrition Programs offers training on the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) that helps operators learn about the SFSP program, meet training requirements, network and learn with other SFSP operators, and meet program partners. [Learn more about SFSP](#), SFSP training opportunities, or contact Kim Lloyd, SFSP Program Manager, at [kimberly.lloyd@mt.gov](mailto:kimberly.lloyd@mt.gov) or 406-444-0772.

### Local School Wellness Policy Course

This free, self-paced course will help you create or enhance a school wellness policy and assist you in completing the school wellness policy assessment. It was created for the OPI Teacher Learning Hub by OPI School Nutrition Programs specialists. [Access the class via the OPI Teacher Learning Hub](#). You will need to create a free account to take the class.



## Montana Team Nutrition Program

The Montana Team Nutrition Program works in close collaboration with Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs and is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Team Nutrition Training Grant Program. Montana Team Nutrition is housed within the Department of Health and Human Development at Montana State University and collaborates with the Food and Health Lab and MSU Extension Nutrition Education Programs. Montana Team Nutrition staff provide training and technical assistance to school staff, community members, and local and statewide partners. Montana Team Nutrition offers technical assistance and training in the following areas:

- Smart and Pleasant Mealtimes, including Smarter Lunchrooms, behavioral economics, and comfortable cafeterias
- Nutrition education
- Farm to school and Montana Harvest of the Month
- School wellness policy, including recess before lunch, school wellness policy assessment and implementation, and school wellness regional workshops
- Menu planning, culinary techniques, school Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), and emergency food service planning
- Peer mentoring and consultation from experienced directors, food service experts, chefs, and administrators



Detailed offerings are listed below. For a schedule of trainings, check [Montana Team Nutrition](#). To request face-to-face or remote professional development and technical assistance on any of these topics, please contact Montana Team Nutrition at 406-994-5641 or email Katie Bark at [kbark@montana.edu](mailto:kbark@montana.edu)

### Montana School Food Service Peer Educator Network

The Montana School Food Service Peer Educator Network is comprised of exemplary school food service directors and nutrition professionals who are available to support and mentor school food service staff throughout the state in providing healthy and cost-effective school meals to Montana kids. [Access the contact list of peer educators and request training or technical assistance.](#)

### Montana Chefs to Schools Network

A group of outstanding chefs from Montana communities comprise the Montana Team Nutrition's Montana Chefs to Schools Network. The purpose of the network is to connect chefs with child nutrition (both schools and early care education) professionals to assist in culinary education professional development opportunities. The chefs can also assist with culinary or food education activities for youth throughout Montana communities. [Access a contact list of the chefs and request training or technical assistance.](#)

### **Montana Cook Fresh Training**

Do you and your staff want to cook more meals from scratch? Montana Team Nutrition offers on-site and remote training and technical assistance for school food service staff to enhance culinary skills, menu planning, recipe development, procurement methods, service and marketing of wholesome foods to students. For more information, contact Katie Bark at [kbark@montana.edu](mailto:kbark@montana.edu) or 406-994-5641.

### **Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institute**

Montana Team Nutrition offers this weeklong professional development workshop for directors, managers, or head cooks to enhance school food service management and culinary skills. Sharpen your knowledge and skills on a variety of management topics from procurement through service. Learning topics include food production and culinary skills, scratch cooking utilizing USDA foods and fresh, local foods, merchandizing, behavioral cues, farm to school, school wellness policy, and many more.. For more information, contact Katie Bark at [kbark@montana.edu](mailto:kbark@montana.edu) or 406-994-5641 or visit the [Montana Team Nutrition Cook Fresh Institute webpage](#).

### **School Wellness Training**

Montana Team Nutrition offers free in-person or remote training to help school food service professionals and community members learn how a local school wellness policy can help create healthy environments. For more information, contact Molly Stenberg at [stenberg@montana.edu](mailto:stenberg@montana.edu) or 406-994-7217, or review the [School Wellness Policy information](#).

### **Farm to School Trainings and Events**

Montana Team Nutrition and farm to school partners offer several trainings and events each year to support school and communities in farm to school topics such as: serving local foods, school gardens and farms, farm to school based education, beef to school, Montana Harvest of the Month, and more. For more information, contact Aubree Roth, Montana Farm to School Coordinator, at [aubree.roth@montana.edu](mailto:aubree.roth@montana.edu) or 406-994-5996, or consult [Farm to School Trainings and Events](#).

### **Farm to School Summit**

The Montana Farm to School Summit is held biennially and moves locations. The 2021 Montana Farm to School Summit: Digging Deeper will be held in August 2021 in Helena, Montana. Learn and share how schools are practicing farm to school initiatives across Montana through workshops, experiential learning, and networking opportunities. Visit [Farm to School Summit](#) to learn more.

### **Montana Team Nutrition and Montana Harvest of the Month YouTube Channels**

[Montana Team Nutrition](#) and the [Montana Harvest of the Month](#) YouTube channels provide training on demand. Past webinar recordings are available to view at your convenience and include topics such as smarter lunchrooms, school wellness, local food procurement, school gardens, and many more.

## **SNA and MTSNA Professional Organizations**

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) is a nonprofit, professional organization for Child Nutrition Program Personnel. Its mission is “To advance good nutrition for all children.” SNA membership includes state and local food service directors and supervisors, food service managers and other food service workers and educators throughout the United States.

Membership is open to persons engaged in nonprofit school food service or related activities in public, private, and parochial schools, and colleges and universities. SNA has affiliated school food service associations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam. The Montana School Nutrition Association (MTSNA) is the state affiliate for Montana.

### **SNA and MTSNA Membership Benefits**

Benefits of SNA and MTSNA membership include:

- Receiving SNA’s journal, *School Foodservice and Nutrition*, an award-winning magazine that provides an important line of communication among members, officers, industry and SNA staff. It includes the latest information on administrative procedures, management and organization, personnel practices, food preparation and equipment.
- Opportunities to participate in national and state conferences at a discounted rate
- Scholarships
- Low-cost insurance
- Access to the SNA website that offers a wealth of information and many resources exclusively for members
- Membership dues help maintain federal support for child nutrition programs since SNA is an advocate for Child Nutrition Programs in Washington D.C.
- The opportunity to gain recognition as a professional in the field of child nutrition by becoming certified or credentialed by SNA

To learn more about SNA, visit national SNA [www.schoolnutrition.org](http://www.schoolnutrition.org), and the Montana School Nutrition Association at [www.mtsna.org](http://www.mtsna.org).

### **Montana School Nutrition Association Conference**

The Montana School Nutrition Association (MTSNA) holds an annual conference that provides three days of professional development, training, vendor showcases, and opportunity to network with peers. The conference is usually held in June and is held in a rotating location each year. For more information, visit the Montana School Nutrition Association at [www.mtsna.org](http://www.mtsna.org).

## **SNA Certification and Credentialing**

SNA's Certificate Program is based on the standards of practice in SNA's Keys to Excellence Program and aligns with USDA Professional Standards. Getting your Certificate in School Nutrition from SNA shows your commitment to your profession. SNA's certificate program aligns with USDA Professional Standards making it easier for you to keep up with the requirements. Earning your Certificate in School Nutrition will:

- Provide a career ladder you can use to advance in the field.
- Add credibility to your position and to your school's program.
- Enhance your professional image with supervisors, parents, and administrators.
- Stay current on the latest issues and solutions related to your job.

Download the [SNA Certificate in School Nutrition Program Guide](#) to view the initial requirements and learn how the program aligns with USDA Professional Standards. To learn more or to download the application form, visit [How to Earn Your SNA Certificate](#).

SNA also offers a credentialing program. Candidates must meet eligibility requirements and demonstrate their knowledge by passing an exam. Successful candidates are awarded the credential of School Nutrition Specialist (SNS). The Credentialing Program includes standards for academic and specialized professional development, knowledge and skills. To learn more about SNA certification and credentialing, information is available at <https://schoolnutrition.org/certificate-and-credentialing/>.

## **Safe Food Handling and Certified Food Protection Manager Resources**

Montana requires that school food service managers complete a certification process for safe food handling. A list of several approved Certified Food Protection Manager training programs can be found at Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPPHS), Food and Consumer Safety Division, Certified Food Protection Manager Training. Each of the following trainings are approved in Montana to meet the Certified Food Protection Manager requirement of the Food Code:

- [ServSafe](#)
- [Learn2Serv](#)
- [State Food Safety](#)
- [National Registry of Food Safety Professionals](#)
- [Prometric Food Safety Trainings](#)
- [Paster Training Inc SURE Food Safety Manager Online Course](#)

To find more information on safe food handling certification for managers and other staff, visit [Montana Team Nutrition](#) or [Montana DPHHS Food and Consumer Safety Division](#). You may also contact your local sanitarian, regional specialist, or Montana OPI SNP at 406-444-2501.

## **National School Nutrition Resources and Trainings**

There are also many online professional development opportunities offered nationally. Recommended resources to explore include:

- [School Nutrition Association Training Zone](#)
- [Institute of Child Nutrition \(ICN\) eLearning Portal](#)
- [Chef Ann Foundation and LunchBox](#)
- [Lunch Assist](#)