



Identifying Knowledge and Skill Statements Needed for  
Child Care Providers in CACFP Operations

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# Identifying Knowledge and Skill Statements Needed for Child Care Providers in CACFP Operations

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# **Institute of Child Nutrition**

## **The University of Mississippi**

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The purpose of the Institute of Child Nutrition is to improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

### **MISSION**

The mission of the Institute of Child Nutrition is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

### **VISION**

The vision of the Institute of Child Nutrition is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

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## **IDENTIFYING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL STATEMENTS NEEDED FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS IN CACFP OPERATIONS**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since its inception, the Institute for Child Nutrition, Applied Research Division (ICN, ARD) has been a leader in identifying the competencies, knowledge, and skills needed by professionals working in child nutrition. The first work on identifying the competencies, knowledge, and skills was completed for school nutrition (SN) directors/supervisors in the mid-1990s. This is the first time in ICN history that competencies, knowledge, and skills identification had taken place for professionals working with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

The CACFP has changed over the years. As services within the CACFP program have continued to expand, demands on child care providers have also increased. Examples of how changes impact child care operations are obvious in the legislation. In the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998, snack service was approved for children up to age 18 in at-risk after-school programs. This update in the law expanded the number of children served. In the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) 2010, meal reimbursement for at-risk afterschool programs was extended to all states, further expanding the number of children served. Other changes put in place by the HHFKA were modified requirements for submission of renewal applications; requirements for CACFP to follow the most recent version of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans when addressing fluid milk served; and requirements to ensure the availability of water throughout the day for all recipients. These changes may be perceived as an increase in workload and knowledge, skills, and abilities for individuals responsible for the

CACFP within child care settings. Because of these changes and others, the need to identify the appropriate knowledge and skills need by professionals working in the CACFP to effectively maintain nutrition standards in the child care setting is extremely important.

Providers working with the CACFP have additional responsibilities. They oversee all aspects of foodservice operations in the child care setting. The purpose of this study was to identify the appropriate knowledge and skills that professionals working with the CACFP believe are imperative. The specific objectives were to:

- Identify and develop a literature-based set of knowledge and skill statements;
- Verify whether the knowledge and skill statements are important to the job responsibilities of child care providers; and
- Determine at what point the child care providers should be able to know/perform the knowledge/skill statements.

To accomplish these objectives, the researcher used the following definitions:

- **Child Care Providers** are individuals who provide care, nutrition services, and education to children from birth through 12 years of age in child care centers and child care homes.
- **Functional Areas** are the broad groupings or divisions of job responsibilities that are performed by child care providers within the local child care operation. These categories serve as the umbrella for all job responsibilities that occur on a daily, weekly, seasonal, or yearly basis.
- **Competencies** are the areas of expertise and accountability within each functional area that are necessary to ensure that the purpose(s) of the job are met. They may include knowledge and skills as well as various levels of motivation.

- **Knowledge** is the information a person has in specific content areas that is necessary for successful performance in a competency area.
- **Skills** are the abilities to perform certain physical, mental, and/or interpersonal tasks that are necessary for successful performance in a competency area.

This research project was developed in two phases, with the involvement of child care professionals in both phases. Phase I used an expert panel consisting of child care directors, sponsoring agency professionals, and state agency professionals who identified the six functional areas that include the job responsibilities of child care professionals working within the boundaries of the CACFP. The expert panel members also came to agreement on the competency, knowledge, and skill statements needed in each functional area. The Phase II review panel members confirmed whether the knowledge and skill statements were important to the job responsibilities of a child care provider, and confirmed whether the competency statements were matching up with the supporting knowledge and skill statements.

Six functional areas were identified that complete the job responsibilities for professionals working in the CACFP: Administration, Procurement, Compliance, Health and Safety, Nutrition and Meal Management, and Education and Training. In addition to the six functional areas, the Phase II review panel also identified 173 knowledge and skill statements. These knowledge and skill statements were classified as knowledge and skills needed either when a professional is hired or at an advanced stage in the professional's career. Of the 173 statements, 67 statements were identified as knowledge and skills needed when hired into a child care facility operating under the CACFP, and 106 statements were identified as advanced knowledge and skills.

The functional areas, competencies, knowledge, and skills identified in this research project offer guidance to the role of the child care professional at all levels. Child care professionals and child care administrators can use the knowledge and skill statements as a framework for identifying qualified staff for entry-level and advanced-level positions in the child care setting. The statements can also be a resource to assess current training programs by identifying strengths and weakness and training results. Individuals working in the CACFP can use the knowledge and skill statements as a tool to identify steps toward advancing their knowledge and skills while working in a CACFP setting to identify training needs. Finally, the competencies, knowledge, and skills framework can be a guide for professional development, job description development, assessment and evaluation, and as training development.