



Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for Chefs Working
in School Nutrition Programs

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Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for Chefs Working in School Nutrition Programs

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Institute of Child Nutrition

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PURPOSE

Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

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COMPETENCIES, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS FOR CHEFS WORKING IN SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021, the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Applied Research Division (ARD) completed the project, *Exploratory Investigation of the Roles, Responsibilities, and Impact of Chefs Working in School Nutrition Programs*, to identify the a) job functions and functional areas of school nutrition chefs; b) roles, job descriptions, and job titles of school nutrition chefs; c) educational attainment and employment background of school nutrition chefs; d) the primary functional areas in which school nutrition chefs operate in school nutrition programs; and e) other key functions and impact of chefs in school nutrition (Institute of Child Nutrition, 2021b). This research identified key job duties and responsibilities of the school chef, but it also identified the benefits and impact of chefs on school meals and school nutrition program operations. Chefs working in school districts is a burgeoning concept for school nutrition programs. It is essential that the competencies, knowledge, and skills required to successfully execute the role of the chef in a school nutrition program be identified. For this reason, the ICN ARD conducted a study to develop a competency framework for chefs working in school nutrition programs.

The *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for Chefs Working in School Nutrition Programs* study was conducted in three phases. The first phase was an expert panel work group that consisted of school nutrition professionals (school nutrition directors, administrators, and chefs; State agency professionals; the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service staff; and the ICN Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition [CICN] staff). This expert panel work group confirmed the functional areas, knowledge, and skill statements that were identified in previous ICN ARD research and confirmed competency statements developed by the research team. In the second phase, an electronic panel of school nutrition professionals (similar in composition to the group in phase one) validated the competencies, knowledge, and skill statements using an online questionnaire. The results of the project's second phase yielded 31 competency statements and 259 knowledge and skill statements. In the final phase of the project, school nutrition directors and chefs participated in an online expert panel meeting using the Zoom platform to review and make recommendations regarding the development of the resource and four user-friendly tools.

The resource, *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Chefs*, was developed to assist school nutrition administrators and chefs in identifying the knowledge and skills required to effectively work in a school environment. The resource contains 10 functional areas with 31 competencies and 259 knowledge and skill statements. The resource includes four modifiable tools to assist school nutrition administrators and school chefs with effective use of the resource to meet their school nutrition program needs. The tools include the following: a) a competency-based job description template, b) a competency-based interview guide, c) a competency-based performance plan, and d) a career development plan. Included in each tool are instructions to guide the user through the functionality of the form and to provide instruction on the use of the tool.

The *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Chefs* resource is an invaluable tool for school nutrition professionals seeking to create a chef position, train chefs recently hired, and/or for chefs interested in entering the school nutrition profession. School nutrition program administrators can use the competency-based resource in hiring, establishing performance expectations, providing employee feedback, training, and guiding career/workforce development. Chefs can use the competency-based resource to identify gaps in knowledge and skills required to become acclimated to the school nutrition program, to create a professional development plan, to identify mentors as resources, and to identify education and training resources.



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