

Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the What's in a Meal Training Modules

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rule, *Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the HHFKA of 2010*, requires minimum education standards and annual training standards for school nutrition professionals who manage and operate the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) and [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#). These standards ensure that school nutrition personnel have the knowledge, training, and tools needed to plan, prepare, and purchase healthy products to create nutritious, safe, and enjoyable school meals. This document summarizes the training hours and professional standards topics provided by the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*.

Training Description

The CSDE's *What's in a Meal* training program is a series of recorded modules that provide comprehensive guidance on complying with the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the NSLP, SBP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. This training program is intended for school food service professionals in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO, including food service directors, managers, and staff.

USDA Key Areas and Training Topics

The CSDE's *What's in a Meal* training program meets the USDA's Professional Standards training topics for the key areas of 1000 Nutrition and 2000 Operations. Training topics for these key areas are indicated below:

- 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements, 1120 Cycle Menus, 1140 Standardized Recipes, and 1160 Special Diets, including Food Allergies
- 2100 FOOD PRODUCTION: 2110 Standardized Recipes, 2120 Food Production Records, and 2150 CN Labeling and Crediting
- 2200 SERVING FOOD: 2220 Offer versus Serve and 2240 Serving Lines
- 2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE: 2310 Reimbursable Meals

Table 1 summarizes the specific Professional Standards training topics addressed in each module.

Training Hours

Completing all 16 modules of the CSDE's *What's in a Meal* training program provides **15.25 training hours** toward the annual training requirements of the USDA's Professional Standards. Completing less than 16 modules provides the specific training hours indicated for each module (refer to table 1). For example, a cafeteria manager who only completes modules 15 and 16 earns 3 training hours.

Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the What's in a Meal Training Modules

Table 1: Professional Standards Contribution of CSDE's What's in a Meal Training Modules

Module	Training hours *	Key area and training topics	Description
1: Introduction to Training (length 17:58)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module introduces the <i>What's in a Meal</i> training program, provides an overview of the modules and training objectives, identifies common acronyms and abbreviations, and describes key resources for guidance and training.
2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns (length 42:58)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module introduces the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. Topics include an overview of the federal legislation for school meals, identifies the requirements for food-based menu planning (including meal components, servings, and meal pattern requirements), and describes resources for guidance and training on the school meal patterns.
3: National School Lunch Program (length: NSLP) Meal Pattern (length 20:57)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the lunch meal pattern requirements. Topics include the daily and weekly servings of each meal component, the weekly requirements for vegetable subgroups and whole grain-rich (WGR) foods, the weekly limits for grain-based desserts and juice, the optional meal pattern for grades K-8, the weekly dietary specifications, and key resources for guidance and training on the NSLP meal patterns.

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4: School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Pattern (length 19:38)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the breakfast meal pattern requirements. Topics include the daily and weekly servings of each meal component, the weekly requirement for whole grain-rich (WGR) foods, offering meats/meat alternates (MMA) at breakfast, the weekly juice limit, the optional breakfast meal patterns (grades K-8, grades 6-12, and grades K-12), the weekly dietary specifications, and key resources for guidance and training on the SBP meal patterns.
5: Dietary Specifications (length 19:38)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the four dietary specifications for school meals (calories, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars) and describes key resources for guidance and training on the dietary specifications.
6: Meal Pattern Documentation Part A – School Menus (length 1:03:19)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 1120 Cycle Menus 1140 Standardized Recipes Key Area: 2000 Operations 2100 FOOD PRODUCTION: 2110 Standardized Recipes 2120 Food Production Records	This module reviews the documentation requirements for school menus for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool. Topics include menus, production records, standardized recipes, the USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs, documentation for the Buy American Requirement, nutrition information for commercial processed foods, and key resources for guidance and training on documentation for school menus.

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6: Meal Pattern Documentation Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products (length: 1:07:04 plus 15 minutes for worksheet activity)	1.25	Key Area: 2000 Operations 2100 FOOD PRODUCTION: 2150 CN Labeling and Crediting	This module reviews the documentation requirements for crediting commercial processed products in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool. Topics include an introduction to crediting foods, crediting documentation for commercial processed foods, i.e., Child Nutrition (CN) labels and product formulation statements (PFS), key resources for guidance and training on crediting documentation, and a knowledge check on how to review the creditable ingredients in a PFS.
7: Milk Component (length 41:28)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 1160 Special Diets, including Food Allergies	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the milk component. Topics include the required daily and weekly servings, allowable types of milk, requirements for fluid milk substitutes in school meals, a knowledge check on milk substitutes for non-disability reasons, serving requirements for milk, noncreditable milk, and key resources for guidance and training on the milk component.

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8: Meats/Meat Alternates Component (length 1:07:52)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the MMA component. Topics include the difference between MMA and protein, required daily and weekly servings, offering MMA at breakfast, main dish requirement for lunch, crediting requirements for different types of MMA (commercial processed products, dried meats, cheeses, eggs, beans, peas, and lentils (including roasted beans, peas, and lentils and pasta made of 100 percent bean, pea, or lentils flour), nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, yogurt and soy yogurt, tofu, tempeh, surimi, alternate protein products (APPs), noncreditable MMA, the USDA's optional best practices for MMA, and key resources for guidance and training on the MMA component.
9: Fruits Component (length 45:22)	0.75	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the fruits component. Topics include the required daily and weekly servings, the weekly juice limit, crediting requirements for different types of fruits (whole fresh fruits, frozen fruits, canned fruits, dried fruits, fruit juice, coconut, and pureed fruits including fruit smoothies), noncreditable fruits, a knowledge check on crediting fruits, and key resources for guidance and training on the fruits component.

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Module	Training hours *	Key area and training topics	Description
10: Vegetables Component (length 1:14:20)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the vegetables component. Topics include the required daily and weekly servings, vegetable subgroups, juice limit, crediting requirements for different types of vegetables (vegetable juice, raw leafy greens, canned vegetables, hominy, dried vegetables, pureed vegetables, vegetable smoothies, soups, mixed vegetables, vegetable and fruit mixtures, and vegetable flour pasta), noncreditable vegetables, a knowledge check on crediting vegetables, and key resources for guidance and training on the vegetables component.
11: Grains Component (length: 1:01:37)	1.0	1100 MENU PLANNING: Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the grains component. Topics include the required daily and weekly servings, allowable grains and grain products, creditable grain ingredients, how to identify whole and enriched grains, the crediting requirements for different types of grains (breakfast cereals, commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, and grain foods made from scratch), restrictions for crediting grain-based desserts, and key resources for guidance and training on the grains component.

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12: Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement (length: 1:18:17 plus 15 minutes for worksheet activity)	1.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the weekly WGR requirement and the WGR criteria for the grains component. Topics include the WGR criteria for different types of grains (commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, and grain foods made from scratch), the limit for noncreditable grains and when to ignore noncreditable grains, how to determine if commercial grain products and standardized recipes are WGR, the required WGR documentation for commercial grain products, and when a PFS is required for WGR foods. This module also includes a quiz on how to determine if commercial grain foods meet the WGR criteria and describes resources for guidance and training on the WGR criteria.

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13: Grain Ounce Equivalents (length: 1:03:49)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the required ounce equivalents (oz eq) for the grains component. Topics include the USDA's oz eq chart for nine different grain groups (groups A-I), <i>Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs</i> , the required quantities for each grain group to provide 1 oz eq, considerations for crediting sliced breads, how to determine the oz eq contribution of a commercial grain food or standardized recipe using the two allowable methods (Exhibit A and creditable grains), choosing a calculation method, rounding rules for oz eq calculations, when method 2 (creditable grains) is required for commercial grain products, and examples of how to use methods 1 and 2. This module also describes resources for guidance and training on grain oz eq.
14: Water Requirement (length: 14:20)	0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the USDA's requirement for making plain potable water available to students during the meal service. Topics include an overview of the water requirements, examples of how to offer water, implementation considerations, allowable costs, and key resources for guidance and training on the water requirement.

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15: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the NSLP (length: 1:41:07)	1.5	Key Area: 2000 Operations 2200 SERVING FOOD: 2220 Offer versus Serve 2240 Serving Lines 2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE: 2310 Reimbursable Meals	This module reviews the OVS requirements for the NSLP. Topics include the requirements for food components and reimbursable meals with OVS, salad bars, identifying reimbursable meals, strategies for OVS success, and meal identification signage. This module also describes resources for guidance and training on OVS and includes Meal or No Meal, a quiz on identifying reimbursable lunches with OVS.
16: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the SBP (length: 1:32:08)	1.5	Key Area: 2000 Operations 2200 SERVING FOOD: 2220 Offer versus Serve 2240 Serving Lines 2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE: 2310 Reimbursable Meals	This module reviews the OVS requirements for the SBP. Topics include the requirements for reimbursable breakfasts, menu planning considerations, required signage, identifying reimbursable meals, and best practices for OVS. This module also describes resources for guidance and training on OVS and includes Meal or No Meal: Breakfast Edition, a quiz on identifying reimbursable breakfasts with OVS.

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Resources

Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Professional_Standards_Guide.pdf

Professional Standards (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/professional-standards>

Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/professional-standards-for-school-nutrition-professionals>

Professional Standards Learning Objectives (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/ps_learningobjectives.pdf

Professional Standards Training Topics (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/ps_trainingtopics.pdf

USDA final rule, Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the HHFKA of 2010:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/fr-030215>

What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE's Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/training/wiam/whats_in_a_meal_meeting_usda_professional_standards.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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