

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

## School Year 2025-26

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: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)

### 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 [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\)](#) of the NSLP, and [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP. This training program is intended for school food service professionals in the NSLP, SBP, ASP, 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.

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

### Training Hours

Completing all 18 modules of the CSDE's *What's in a Meal* training program provides **15.5 training hours** toward the annual training requirements of the USDA's Professional Standards. Training hours for each individual module are rounded down to the nearest 15-minute increment. Participants who complete only some modules will receive the specific number of training hours listed for each module in table 1 below. For example, a cafeteria manager who completes modules 2 and 3 earns 1 training hour.

**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 16:08)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 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 45:07)	0.75	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module introduces the meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). Topics include an overview of the federal legislation for school meals, the requirements for food-based menu planning (including meal components, servings, and meal pattern requirements), and key resources for guidance and training on the school meal patterns.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
3: National School Lunch Program (length: NSLP) Meal Pattern (length 20:05)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements of the NSLP meal pattern for grades K-12. 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 juices, the optional meal pattern for grades K-8, the weekly dietary specifications, and key resources for guidance and training on the NSLP meal patterns.
4: School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Pattern (length 25:20)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements of the SBP meal pattern for grades K-12. Topics include the daily and weekly servings of each meal component, the weekly requirement for 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.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
5: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern (length 27:32)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements of the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. Topics include the meal components and minimum servings, menu planning requirements and considerations (including the limit for creditable beverages, the weekly juice limit, the weekly WGR requirement, and the prohibition of grain-based desserts), water availability during snack service, additional state requirements for public schools, menu planning strategies for healthy snacks, and key resources for guidance and training on the ASP meal pattern.
6: Dietary Specifications (length 19:33)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the three dietary specifications for school meals (calories, saturated fat, and sodium) and the new specification for added sugars effective July 1, 2027, and describes key resources for guidance and training on meeting these requirements.
7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus (length 1:02:04)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 1120 Cycle Menus 1140 Standardized Recipes  Key Area: 2000 Operations <b>2100 FOOD PRODUCTION:</b> 2110 Standardized Recipes 2120 Food Production Records	This module reviews the documentation requirements for 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.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (length: 1:04:56 plus 15 minutes for worksheet activity)	1.25	Key Area: 2000 Operations <b>2100 FOOD PRODUCTION:</b> 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.
9: Milk Component (length 41:50)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 1160 Special Diets, including Food Allergies	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the milk component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. Topics include the required 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.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
10: Meats/Meat Alternates Component (length 1:07:33)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the MMA component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. Topics include the difference between MMA and protein, the required 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, and key resources for guidance and training on the MMA component.
11: Fruits Component (length 49:41)	0.75	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the fruits component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. Topics include the required 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.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
12: Vegetables Component (length 1:12:38)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the vegetables component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. Topics include the required servings, vegetable subgroups for lunch, the weekly 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.
13: Grains Component (length: 1:01:14)	1.0	<b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the grains component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. Topics include the required 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.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
14: Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement (length: 1:17:38 plus 15 minutes for worksheet activity)	1.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the weekly WGR requirement and the WGR criteria for the grains component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. 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 knowledge check on how to determine if commercial grain foods meet the WGR criteria and describes resources for guidance and training on the WGR criteria.



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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
15: Grain Ounce Equivalents (length: 1:01:27)	1.0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the required ounce equivalents (oz eq) for the grains component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. 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.
16: Water Availability During Meal Service (length: 14:21)	0	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition <b>1100 MENU PLANNING:</b> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the USDA's requirement for making plain potable water available to students during the meal service in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP for grades K-12. 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.

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

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
17: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (length: 1:00:09)	1.5	Key Area: 2000 Operations <b>2200 SERVING FOOD:</b> 2220 Offer versus Serve 2240 Serving Lines  <b>2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE:</b> 2310 Reimbursable Meals	This module reviews the OVS requirements for grades K-12 in the NSLP. Topics include the requirements for meal components and reimbursable meals with OVS, salad bars, identifying reimbursable meals, strategies for OVS success, meal identification signage, and key resources for guidance and training on OVS.
17: Knowledge Check: Meal or No Meal Lunch Edition (length 30:43)	.5	Key Area: 2000 Operations <b>2200 SERVING FOOD:</b> 2220 Offer versus Serve 2240 Serving Lines  <b>2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE:</b> 2310 Reimbursable Meals	This module is Meal or No Meal Lunch Edition, the knowledge check for module 17, Offer versus Serve in the National School Lunch Program. This knowledge check tests the participant's ability to identify reimbursable lunches for grades K-12 with OVS.
18: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) (length: 1:01:06)	1.5	Key Area: 2000 Operations <b>2200 SERVING FOOD:</b> 2220 Offer versus Serve 2240 Serving Lines  <b>2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE:</b> 2310 Reimbursable Meals	This module reviews the OVS requirements for grades K-12 in the SBP. Topics include the requirements for reimbursable breakfasts, menu planning considerations, required signage, identifying reimbursable meals, best practices for OVS, and key resources for guidance and training on OVS.
18: Knowledge Check: Meal or No Meal Breakfast Edition (length 21:19)	.25	Key Area: 2000 Operations <b>2200 SERVING FOOD:</b> 2220 Offer versus Serve 2240 Serving Lines  <b>2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE:</b> 2310 Reimbursable Meals	This module is Meal or No Meal Breakfast Edition, the knowledge check for Module 18: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the School Breakfast Program (SBP). This knowledge check tests the participant's ability to identify reimbursable breakfasts for grades K-12 with OVS.

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

### Resources

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

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Professional\\_Standards\\_Guide.pdf](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 & Training Topics (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/professional-standards/training-objectives-topics>

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>

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

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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/training/wiam/whats_in_a_meal_meeting_usda_professional_standards.pdf).

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email [louis.todisco@ct.gov](mailto:louis.todisco@ct.gov).

