

Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Preschool Meal Pattern 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, *Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs*.

Training Description

The CSDE's *Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs* is a series of 10 recorded modules that provide comprehensive guidance on complying with the preschool meal patterns for the NSLP, SBP, Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. This training program applies to all sponsors of the school nutrition programs that serve meals and snacks to preschoolers, including public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

USDA Key Areas and Training Topics

The CSDE's *Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs* 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
- 2200 SERVING FOOD: 2220 Offer versus Serve and 2240 Serving Lines

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

Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules

Training Hours

Completing all 10 modules provides **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, food service staff who complete modules 1 and 2 earn 0.75 training hour.

Table 1: Professional Standards Contribution of CSDE's Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
1: Introduction to Training (length 15:08)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module introduces the Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, provides an overview of the modules and training objectives, identifies common acronyms and abbreviations, and describes key resources for guidance and training.
2: Preschool Meal Patterns (length 35:23)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module introduces the preschool 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 preschool meal pattern legislation, the requirements for food-based menu planning (including meal components, servings, and meal pattern requirements), menu planning considerations for breakfast, lunch, and snack, and resources for guidance and training on the preschool meal patterns.

Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
3: Meal Pattern Comparison of Preschool and Grades K-12 (length 37:55)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module compares the preschool meal patterns to the meal patterns for grades K-12 and highlights the key differences and identifies resources for guidance and training.
4: Milk Component (length 30:17)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the milk component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. Topics include the required servings, allowable types of milk, the menu documentation requirement for the type of milk, the requirements for fluid milk substitutes in preschool meals, a knowledge check noncreditable milk, serving requirements for milk, noncreditable milk, and resources for guidance and training on the milk component.
5: Meats/Meat Alternates Component (46:25)	0.75	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the MMA component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. Topics include an overview of the MMA requirements, the required meal servings, crediting requirements for different types of MMA (commercial processed products, cheeses, beans, peas, and lentils (including roasted legumes and pasta made of 100 percent bean, pea, or lentil flour), nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, yogurt and soy yogurt, tofu, tempeh, surimi, alternate protein products (APPs)), noncreditable MMA, and resources for guidance and training on the MMA component.

Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules

Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
6: Vegetables Component (length 30:23)	0.5	<p>Key Area: 1000 Nutrition</p> <p>1100 MENU PLANNING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 	<p>This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the vegetables component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. Topics include the required servings, crediting requirements for different types of vegetables (raw leafy greens, canned vegetables, legumes, dried vegetables, and soups), noncreditable vegetables, the USDA's best practices for vegetables in preschool meals and snacks, and resources for guidance and training on the vegetables component.</p>
7: Fruits Component (length 21:01)	0.25	<p>Key Area: 1000 Nutrition</p> <p>1100 MENU PLANNING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 1120 Cycle Menus 1140 Standardized Recipes <p>Key Area: 2000 Operations</p> <p>2100 FOOD PRODUCTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2110 Standardized Recipes 2120 Food Production Records 	<p>This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the fruits component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. Topics include the required servings, the juice limit, crediting requirements for different types of fruits (fresh fruits, frozen fruits, canned fruits, dried fruits, pureed fruits and vegetables, smoothies made with pureed fruits and vegetables, and coconut), noncreditable fruits, the USDA's best practices for fruits in preschool meals and snacks, and resources for guidance and training on the fruits component.</p>

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Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
8: Grains Component (length 37:54)	0.5	Key Area: 2000 Operations 2100 FOOD PRODUCTION: 2150 CN Labeling and Crediting	This module reviews the requirements and crediting information for the grains component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. Topics include the required servings, allowable grains and grain products, the preschool WGR requirement and menu planning considerations, the preschool WGR criteria and methods to determine if foods are WGR, the restrictions for grain-based desserts including a knowledge check on grain-based desserts, serving the same grain foods to preschool and grades K-12, methods for determining a grain food's oz eq contribution, and resources for guidance and training on the grains component.
9: Meal Service for Preschoolers (length 31:04)	0.5	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements 1160 Special Diets, including Food Allergies	This module includes the requirements and considerations for the preschool meal service options. Topics include the allowable types of meal service (pre-plated meal service, cafeteria-style meal service, family-style meal service, and combination-style meal service), the requirements for classroom meals, considerations for offer versus serve (OVS) with co-mingled meal service, the USDA's requirement for making potable water available to students during the meal service, and resources for guidance and training on meal service.

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Module	Training hours	Key area and training topics	Description
10: Co-mingled Meal Service (length 22:27)	0.25	Key Area: 1000 Nutrition 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements	This module reviews the requirements and considerations for co-mingled meals in the NSLP and SBP and co-mingled snacks in the ASP. Topics include how the meal pattern for the older grades applies to co-mingled meals or snacks, reasons to avoid co-mingled meal service, how to avoid co-mingled meal service, and when the preschool meal patterns apply. This module also includes a knowledge check about co-mingled meal service and resources for guidance and training.

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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

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/preschool-meal-pattern-training>

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>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in 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/preschool/preschool_meal_pattern_training_usda_professional_standards.pdf.

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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
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