

School Nutrition Director Education and Experience Requirements

Small School Enrollment of 2,499 or fewer

Eligible candidates for the director position at a small school food authority must have one of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with an academic major in a specific area¹.
- Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with any academic major and at least one year of relevant food service experience².
- Associate's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with an academic major in a specific area¹, and one year of relevant food service experience².
- High school diploma (or General Educational Diploma (GED)) and at least three years of relevant food service experience².

Note: Small schools with enrollment of less than 500 that face unique hiring difficulties may be granted flexibility for hiring a director who meets education criteria but has less than the required years relevant food service experience; contact the regional consultant assigned to your area or contact the Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services for additional guidance.

Medium School Enrollment of 2,500 to 9,999

Eligible candidates for the director position at a medium school food authority must have one of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with an academic major in a specific area¹.
- Bachelor's degree in any academic major and at least two years of relevant school nutrition experience.
- Associate's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with an academic major in a specific area¹, and at least two years of relevant school nutrition experience.
- High school diploma (or GED) and ten or more years of school nutrition program experience³.

Large School Enrollment of 10,000 or more

Eligible candidates for the director position at a large school food authority must have one of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree, or equivalent educational experience, with an academic major in a specific area¹.
- Bachelor's degree in any major and at least five years of experience managing school nutrition programs.
- High school diploma (or GED) and ten or more years of school nutrition program experience³.

Note: For large districts of 10,000 or more, SFAs are strongly encouraged to seek out individuals who possess a master's degree or are willing to work toward a master's degree in the fields listed below. At least one year of management experience, preferably in school nutrition, is strongly recommended. It is also strongly recommended that directors have at least three credit hours at the university level in food service management and at least three credit hours in nutritional sciences at the time of hire.

¹ Acceptable majors/areas of concentration for a Master's or Bachelor's degree: food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business or a related field.

² Relevant food service experience can be paid or unpaid and may include food ordering, preparation, nutrition education, financial management, customer service and other related tasks. Settings may include, but are not limited to, hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, cafeterias, university dining.

³ Effective July 1, 2024, via Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Final Rule.