

Grow in Your **CAREER.**



Become **SNA Certified!**

Certification Program

Revised, May 2006



**SCHOOL
NUTRITION
ASSOCIATION**

Making the right food choices, together.



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Certification Program

The Key to Excellence in School Foodservice & Nutrition Programs

One of the key purposes of the School Nutrition Association (SNA) are to develop and encourage the highest standards in school foodservice and nutrition programs and provide educational opportunities to ensure the professional development of its members. SNA has been guiding members in their professional development for more than 25 years through its certification program. The program provides a career ladder that you can use to progress in the field, whether you are an entry-level assistant, cook or manager who may one day want to become a director of a district-wide program.

Since the founding of the certification program in 1973, SNA has established a comprehensive program to guide school nutrition personnel in their professional development. The certification program includes standards for academic and specialized training, knowledge, and skills. The program was redesigned in 1996 to be more accessible and relevant to all levels of school foodservice and nutrition professionals. It was simplified from 20 certification levels to only three, based on the achievement of combined specified requirements for work experience, academic education, specialized training and continuing education.

The mission of the program is to “promote the continuous improvement of school foodservice and nutrition programs through the development and recognition of competent professionals.”

As part of the overall redesign, SNA also introduced its credentialing program for school foodservice and nutrition professionals who, at a minimum, must possess an associate’s degree or education equivalent. Every participant in this program is awarded the designation of School Foodservice & Nutrition Specialist (SFNS) after successful completion of a comprehensive, standardized examination.

For more information about the Credentialing program, contact SNA (800) 877-8822 or visit our website at www.schoolnutrition.org.

Purpose and Meaning of Certification

SNA, like many other professional associations, has adopted certification as a way to recognize professional achievement. Certification refers to a formalized process of evaluation by which an association grants recognition to an individual who has met the association's educational and experiential standards. SNA has established certification standards for academic education, specialized training and work experience as conditions of being awarded certification, and it has established standards for continuing education as a condition of maintaining certification.

The educational standards established by the revised certification program are based on the standards of practice and indicators in the *Keys to Excellence* that define nationally accepted standards for quality programs. The purposes of certifying school foodservice and nutrition personnel are to:

- ◆ provide a program for professional advancement; and
- ◆ establish standards of job performance that provide for professional credibility.
- ◆ give recognition to at all organizational levels for having achieved a specific level of professional development.

The standards provide certification of personnel who work at the state, district and school levels. Also, the certification criteria include both initial and continuing education requirements. Initial requirements for certification include academic education, specialized training and work experience.

Why Get Certified?

In today's busy world people expect the very best, especially from those responsible for feeding our nation's greatest resource — children. Given the increasing importance of eating healthy foods and well-balanced meals, as well as the growing public concern about food safety, becoming SNA certified adds credibility to your position and to your school's program as well.

FAQ: What are the benefits of becoming SNA certified?

Certification offers many benefits to qualified school foodservice and nutrition personnel. Among others, these benefits include:

- Increases your knowledge and skills of food safety, nutrition to create a healthy school environment;
- Enhanced your professional image with parents, children and school administrators
- Increases pride in one's work;
- Enables you to stay current in issues concerning school nutrition initiatives
- Demonstration of commitment to one's chosen profession

Who Is Eligible?

SNA's certification program is open to all qualified individuals and is voluntary. Each school foodservice and nutrition employee must decide for him or herself whether to seek certification, but all personnel are encouraged to consider the benefits and to take the necessary steps to meet the standards.

What Are the Certification Requirements?

There are three certification levels. To become certified at a particular level, you must meet the minimum work experience, academic and specialized training requirements defined for that level. Once the requirements are verified through proper documentation, certification will be granted to you for a three-year period. To renew and maintain certification beyond the initial three years, you must earn continuing education units with approved educational activities and programs.

Certification Requirements Summary

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Minimum Work Experience Requirement	1 year	1 year	1 year
Minimum Academic Education Requirement	Less than high school diploma/ GED	High School diploma/ GED	Post-secondary
Minimum Specialized Training Requirement	30 hours*	90 hours*	150 hours *
Minimum Continuing Education Requirement (per 3 year period)	15 hours	30 hours	45 hours

*Or 9 college-level semester hours in sanitation and safety, nutrition and foodservice management.

Certification is not dependent on job position or title. You can be certified at the highest level for which you qualify, according to the certification requirements, regardless of your current job.

By design, the certification plan encourages, but does not require, you to advance from one level to the next. For example, if you are certified at Level 1, you may choose to remain at that level by meeting continuing education requirements of 15 hours every three years.

Or you may advance to Level 2 by meeting additional academic and specialized training requirements. The advancement can occur when the requirements are met for the higher level.

Those who are currently certified may upgrade to a higher level of certification by documenting that they meet the requirements for the higher level, minus the requirements they already meet by being certified at their current certification level. See page 15.

Work Experience Requirement

School foodservice and nutrition personnel require on-the-job experience in order to develop their knowledge and skills and improve their job effectiveness and productivity. Accordingly, SNA *requires* a minimum level of experience for certification.

For certification, you are expected to present evidence of **one year of experience in school foodservice and nutrition** gained within the past five years through one or more of the following types of employment:

- ◆ school foodservice and nutrition at the school, district, state or federal level;
- ◆ community nutrition programs (e.g., child care, Headstart);
- ◆ college/university staff/faculty, teaching and/or research in school foodservice and nutrition;
- ◆ state or national association staff; or
- ◆ trainers/consultants/industry staff providing services to the school foodservice and nutrition market.

NOTE: *The required documentation to prove work experience is simply your **supervisor's signature** on the certification application. This verifies that you have had at least one year of work experience in school foodservice and nutrition.*

Academic Education Requirement

Academic education is defined as those learning experiences designed to create or improve overall competence in broad knowledge areas, leading to a high school diploma, GED or college degree. SNA's recommended educational requirements for school foodservice and nutrition personnel establish a common foundation of knowledge and skills for each level.

NOTE:

The required documentation for academic education is a high school diploma, general equivalency diploma (GED) or a college/university transcript. (No documentation is required for Level 1.)

Specialized Training Requirements

Specialized training requirements are aligned with SNA's *Keys to Excellence: Standards of Practice for Nutrition Integrity*. *Keys to Excellence* contains the accepted standards for child nutrition programs in four key areas: Operations, Marketing/Communications, Nutrition and Administration. Specialized training is defined as those courses or programs designed to provide in-depth knowledge specific to job-related tasks or functions (i.e. sanitation, safety and nutrition) and given by approved sponsors. These courses are structured in content, instruction, and delivery; have a set curriculum with stated objectives and goals; and can be repeated and used nationally. Each level must meet the required amount of hours in specialized training that includes required courses. **Specialized training hours may be used for continuing education units, but continuing education units may NOT be used for specialized training.**

FAQ: Is there a time frame on specialized training when you are trying to become certified?

Specialized training courses for all levels must be current within five years of the candidate's application to the certification program, with the exception of college courses.

NOTE:

The required documents for the specialized training requirement are certificates that show course title, date of completion and number of approved hours and are signed by the instructor.

All specialized training courses, in order to be applicable for certification, must be submitted for approval by SNA, except when provided by one of the following organizations:

1. School Nutrition Association (SNA)
2. Child Nutrition Foundation (CNF)
3. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

4. State departments of education
5. Post-secondary education institutions (i.e. four-year colleges/universities, community/junior colleges)
6. National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI)
7. Vocational/technical schools, state-licensed
8. State departments of health
9. State school food service associations
10. National Restaurant Association (NRA)
11. Dietary Managers Association (DMA)
12. American Dietetic Association (ADA) and state affiliates

Required Courses for Specialized Training

The following courses are required for *all three levels*:

Sanitation & Safety (choose one of the following)

- ◆ Serving It Safe (SNA /CNF/USDA)
- ◆ ServeSafe (NRA)
- ◆ Sanitation and Safety Exam with Dietary Managers Association (DMA)
- ◆ SNA - approved state association course*

*One sanitation and safety course may be submitted and approved to meet this requirement per state; the state association determines the course to be submitted for approval. Once a course is approved, any state may use the course.

Nutrition (choose one of the following)

- ◆ Healthy EDGE: Building Healthy School Meals (CNF)
- ◆ SNA-approved state association course*

*One nutrition course may be submitted and approved to meet this requirement per state; the state association determines the course to be submitted for approval. Once a course is approved, any state may use the course.

The chart on the next page illustrates the number of hours required for each certification level, as well as required and recommended courses.

Specialized Training Requirement

Specialized Training	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Key Area # 1: Operations Required Course Options: Serving It Safe, Serve Safe, DMA’s Sanitation & Safety Exam, or SNA - approved State Association course.</p> <p>Electives: HACCP, Purchasing / Inventory, Menu Planning, Food Preparation / Culinary, Now You’re Cooking, Commodities.</p>	10	10	20
<p>Key Area # 2: Nutrition Required Course: Healthy EDGE: Building Healthy School Meals (CNF) or SNA approved state association course.</p>	10	10	20
<p>Key Area # 3: Administration Electives, Suggested Topics: Personnel Management / Personal Wellness / Interpersonal Skills, Financial Management, Cashiering, Record Keeping, Accounting.</p>		10	20
<p>Key Area # 4: Communications/Marketing Marketing, Promotion, Customer Service, Merchandising. Recommended Course: Promoting Healthy Eating</p>		10	20

General Electives (see page 10) <i>(Can take courses from any of the four key areas).</i>	10	50	70
Total Specialized Training Hours	30	90	150 or 9 Semester hours
College Courses (semester credits/hours)			
Sanitation & Safety / Microbiology			3
Nutrition			3
Foodservice Management			3
Total Semester Hours			9

6

To become eligible for applied level, please submit the corresponding required documentation. Specialized Training cannot date back further than five years of the date you apply for certification.

To change level (upgrade/downgrade) see page 15.

General Electives

General Electives must be courses that meet the definition of **specialized training** listed on page 6. These courses must fall under one of the four key areas of certification indicated on the chart on pages 8 and 9. This category allows individuals greater flexibility in taking courses that will benefit them most and their specific job responsibilities. For example, one individual may take a menu planning course, while another may prefer a cashiering course.

What Are Continuing Education Units?

CEU refers to such courses or activities as workshops, seminars, in-service training and further academic study that contributes to lifelong development of an individual's knowledge and/or skills. It helps the individual to maintain a certain level of professional competency and to keep up with changes in the profession.

Diversity of educational programs makes it difficult to set rigid standards for determining which continuing education courses or programs are acceptable. Despite this diversity, certain quality guidelines have been established:

- ◆ Courses must be pre-approved, except when developed or sponsored by the following organizations:
 1. School Nutrition Association (SNA)
 2. Child Nutrition Foundation (CNF)
 3. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 4. National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI)
 5. National Restaurant Association (NRA)
 6. Dietary Managers Association (DMA)
 7. State departments of education
 8. State departments of health
 9. State school food service associations
 10. Post-secondary education institutions (i.e. four-year colleges/universities, community/junior colleges)
 11. Vocational/technical schools, state-licensed
 12. American Dietetic Association (ADA) and state affiliates

- ◆ Each state approves activities held within that state for continuing education.
- ◆ SNA approves activities held in more than one state or other organizations' national conferences, as well as all correspondence courses, home study programs and distance education programs.
- ◆ One continuing education unit will be granted for each **full, continuous** hour of instruction in workshops and seminars. Registration, break periods and mealtime are excluded from the continuous hour of educational activity. You may earn credit in half-hour increments after the first hour.

FAQ: How many CEUs can I receive for college courses that I take during my certification period?

Conversion for college credit hours is as follows:

Each quarter credit = 11 continuing education units

Each semester credit = 16 continuing education units

- ◆ CEUs allowed for exhibits are limited to two per year and may not exceed six in a three-year period.
- ◆ It is each individual's responsibility to verify his or her attendance at an educational activity and to keep adequate records. All certified members will receive CEU Tracking Forms with their certification packets. Use the form to list activities for your records. You may submit documentation of attendance to SNA during your three -year certification period or at the time of renewal.
- ◆ Your SNA transcript of your CEU's may be viewed online at www.schoolnutrition.org. Click on *My SNA*.

FAQ: Can I request a transcript of my CEUs to be mailed to me? Yes, you can request a transcript at any time for a fee of \$5.00.

- ◆ Continuing education **MUST** be job-related.
- ◆ Continuing education units may **NOT** be carried over from one certification period to the next.

- ◆ Continuing education units may not be used for specialized training hours, but specialized training hours may be used for continuing education units. (Ex. Healthy EDGE)
- ◆ Besides traditional academic or training courses, Applicants may earn continuing education units from a variety of other activities. Such activities include but are not limited to:
 - Teaching (*first time for each course*) = **2 CEUs** per hour taught
 - Exhibits (*limited to 2 units per year, not to exceed 6 units in 3 years*) = **1 CEU**
 - Home study/correspondence courses = **education provider determines this.**
 - High school or GED completion = **5 CEUs**
 - Study group meetings whose purpose is to review and discuss at least two foodservice- or management-related articles (*limited to 2 units per year, not to exceed 6 units in 3 years*) = **1 CEU**
 - Successful completion of the quiz in *School Foodservice & Nutrition* = **1 CEU**
 - Publishing an article for a national journal/magazine = **2 CEUs**
 - SNA on-line chat quiz and wellness challenges = **1 CEU**
- ◆ The following is a list of acceptable documentation for CEUs:
 - **Certificates of completion**
 - **College/university transcripts**
 - **Registration or confirmation notices of attendance at conferences**
 - **Letter from educational provider**
 - **Copies of rosters**
 - **Documentation from allied associations**

How Do I Become SNA Certified?

School foodservice and nutrition personnel who wish to apply for certification must:

1. Fill out the designated application form, available from SNA, or downloaded from our website at **www.schoolnutrition.org**.
2. Obtain all required documents to establish that you meet the initial certification criteria. Documents that may be required include a high school diploma/GED certificate, training certificates and/or college transcripts.
3. Enclose the certification fee with the application. The certification fees are dependent on the level you are applying for and are listed on the application.
4. Submit the completed application, correct certification fee and verification documents to the address listed on the application.
5. SNA reviews and approves the application. You will receive a letter of explanation if your application is incomplete and a list of what you need to submit in order to become certified. If complete, a record for each applicant is established in the national certification database. Due to the volume of applications that SNA receives, processing and mailing of the certification packets will take several weeks.
6. After SNA has approved your application, you will receive a certification packet, which includes:
 - A certificate indicating the certification period;
 - Instructions explaining responsibility for certification renewal and procedures for renewal;
 - A wallet-sized certification card; and
 - A CEU Tracking Form

Initial certification will be in effect for a three-year period and is renewable every three years, assuming that you satisfy the criteria for renewal.

How Do I Maintain My Certification? (Recertification)

1. Initial certification is valid for three years. Three months before an individual's certification is due to expire, SNA notifies the applicant by mail of the need to renew his or her certification that includes an application. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to renew on time. **NOTE:** *There is a ninety (90) day grace period for renewal. However all accredited classes must be completed prior to the certification expiration date. If renewal is not completed by the end of the grace period, members must apply for a new certification.*
2. For recertification, an applicant must complete the required number of continuing education hours required during the three-year certification period. Continuing education units required are:

<u>Certification Level</u>	<u>Continuing Education</u>
Level 1	15 hours
Level 2	30 hours
Level 3	45 hours

3. Applicants are responsible for maintaining records of their CEU hours and will be required to substantiate these hours when they apply for recertification, unless documentation has been submitted to SNA prior to expiration date. The renewal application will indicate the amount of CEUs that SNA has on file for you.
4. The applicant completes and submits the certification renewal form, payment and, if necessary, documentation of having earned the required number of CEUs, to SNA. SNA reviews and approves the renewal form. Applicants who do not include the required documentation or who submit an incomplete application will receive letter of explanation concerning what is needed to complete the application process.
5. The renewal application, a renewal fee and required CEU's must be submitted to SNA by the applicant's expiration date.

6. When renewal requirements are met, the Applicant will receive a certification packet similar to the initial certification packet received.
7. Certification will be in effect for another three-year period from the renewal date. Certification is renewable every three years, assuming that the individual satisfies the criteria for renewal.

NOTE:

In order to pay the member rate at time of renewal, you must have been a member during the entire three-year certification period. Otherwise, you will be required to pay the non-member rate.

Can I Move from One Certification Level to the Next?

You may move from one level to another by attaining the additional number of academic and specialized training hours for the new level within your three - year renewal period.

If you desire to advance from one level to the next, you may do so when you meet the requirements for the higher level. You must provide documentation demonstrating that you have met the academic and specialized training requirements for the higher level, and you must pay the certification fee.

If you change levels (upgrade/downgrade), you will be given a new expiration date and will be expected to meet the continuing education requirements for the new level at that expiration date.

*You may lower your certification level by submitting the required CEUs for that level, along with your certification application and appropriate fee.

Current Applicants may upgrade to a higher level of certification by documenting they meet the requirements for the higher level, minus the requirements they already meet by being certified at their current certification level.

(Continued on page 16)

For instance, if you currently are certified at Level 1 and would like to apply for Level 2, you would only need to document 60 specialized training hours in the specific key areas. You would not need to meet the 30 specialized training hours again from Level 1.

FAQ: When upgrading from Level 1 to Level 2, 60 additional hours of specialized training are required in specific key areas. What are the specific key areas, and how many hours are required in each key area? 10 hours in Key Area #3, 10 hours in Key Area #4 and 40 hours of General Electives. Remember, General Electives can fall under any of the four key areas (see page 10).

Level 2 (90 hours) – Level 1 (30 hours) current level of certification = 60 hour difference.

Applicant Responsibilities and Record-Keeping

All Applicants are expected to exercise the following responsibilities:

1. Maintain a record of all activities qualifying for continuing education units. This includes the type of education or activity, when and where it was undertaken and the number of hours for each activity.
2. Complete the required number of continuing education units during the three-year period.
3. Submit documentation of continuing education activities during the three-year certification period or with recertification application to SNA.
4. Fill out the necessary continuing education attendance form when attending activities. Keep copies of certificates, attendance verification, etc.
5. Renew certification by the expiration date.



CERTIFICATION CONTINUING EDUCATION TRACKING FORM

Name & SNA Membership Number

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Certification End Date

Continuing Education Activity/ Location	Type of Activity	Program Sponsor	Date Completed	CEUs Earned	*Approved Key Area

**If specialized training is listed, please attach a certificate of completion.*

Supervisor's Signature

Date



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