# Superintendent’s Memo #188-19


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: August 2, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Professional Standards for Hiring New School Nutrition Directors –

## Updated

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update to Superintendent’s Memo #331-18, and to inform you of flexibilities in the professional hiring standards issued in the final federal rule that became effective April 30, 2019. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must meet United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) professional standards when hiring a new director to manage their school nutrition programs. The *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* requires that USDA create professional standards for state and local school nutrition program personnel, including hiring standards for new school nutrition directors. Regulations outlining the professional standards can be found at 7 CFR §210.30.

### New Flexibilities

The newly published final federal rule adds flexibilities to the hiring standards for new school program directors in small LEAs under the professional hiring standards regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). These changes are expected to expand the pool of candidates qualified to serve as leaders in the school nutrition program while continuing to ensure that school nutrition professionals are able to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. The flexibilities are:

* First, to address hiring challenges faced by small LEAs, which are those with 2,499 or fewer students, this rule requires relevant food service experience rather that school nutrition program experience for new school nutrition program directors;
* Second, documented volunteer or unpaid work is considered as relevant experience for new school nutrition program directors in LEAs with 2,500 or fewer students.
* Third, in LEAs with fewer than 500 students, VDOE has the discretion to accept less than the required years of food service experience when the school nutrition director applicant has the minimum required education.

### Requirements for New Directors

SFAs must ensure that all newly hired school nutrition program directors meet the minimum hiring standards, complete the minimum annual training requirements, and attend the VDOE sponsored new director training. SFAs must complete Attachment A and submit the form to the school nutrition program office within 30 days of employment of a new director. Documentation that the new director meets the minimum hiring standards must be attached. The director, or designated person responsible for the operation of the school nutrition program, must be the contact for all VDOE SNP communications. VDOE will monitor compliance with the professional standards as part of the administrative review process.

### Hiring Standards for New School Nutrition Program Directors

Hiring criteria depend on LEA enrollment size. As enrollment increases program demands and complexity increase as well. Minimum requirements are higher for LEAs with enrollments of 10,000 or more students than for smaller divisions. In each enrollment category, the standards encourage directors with the minimum education degree to pursue advanced coursework toward the next higher degree in a related field. USDA developed the [*Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs*](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/tn/ps_guide.pdf) as a resource for SFAs in hiring and training staff. Along with the hiring standards below, the new director must acquire eight hours of food safety training within five years prior or within 30 days after their start date. The hiring criteria are detailed below.

#### Category 1– 2,499 students or less

* Bachelor’s Degree in a specific/related major\* (experience preferred, not required); **OR**
* Bachelor’s Degree in any academic major **AND** one year of relevant food service experience; **OR**
* Associate’s Degree in specific/related major\* **AND** one year of relevant food service experience; **OR**
* High School Diploma (or GED) **AND** 3 years\*\* of relevant food service experience.

#### Category 2 – 2,500 students to 9,999 students

* Bachelor’s Degree in a specific/related major\* (experience preferred, not required); **OR**
* Bachelor’s Degree in any academic major **AND** two years of relevant school nutrition experience; **OR**
* Associate’s Degree in specific/related major\* AND two years of relevant school nutrition experience.

#### Category 3 – 10,000 students or more

* Bachelor’s Degree in a specific/related major\* (experience preferred, not required); **OR**
* Bachelor’s Degree in any academic major **AND** state recognized certificate for school nutrition directors\*\*\*; **OR**
* Bachelor’s Degree in any major **AND** five years of school nutrition program management.

\*Specific/related major: Academic major or concentration in food and nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, business, or a related field.

\*\*For LEA enrollments less than 500, the VDOE may approve the hiring of a candidate with a high school diploma (or GED) and less than the required years of experience, if the best qualified candidate.

\*\*\*Virginia does not currently have a certificate that meets this requirement. The School Nutrition Association’s certificate or credential (School Nutrition Specialist) cannot be used in lieu of this requirement.

If you have questions, please contact the school nutrition program specialist assigned to your school division, or Dr. Sandy Curwood, RDN, Director of School Nutrition Programs, at sandra.curwood@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-2074. Your attention to, and compliance with, these required hiring standards will help maintain high quality school nutrition programs in Virginia.

JFL/SCC/bdb

### Attachment

1. Certification of New School Nutrition Program Director