

Job Duties and Perceived Training Needs of Sponsor Monitors of Family Child Care Programs Participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived job duties and training needs of sponsor monitors of Family Day Care Homes (FDCHs) involved in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federally funded nutrition assistance program designed to provide healthful meals and snacks. Sponsor monitors are employed by sponsoring organizations to work with the FDCH providers to assure compliance with program regulations and program quality.

Researchers performed a content analysis of written job descriptions (n=33) for the sponsor monitor position received from a national sampling (n=94) of sponsoring organizations. Two preliminary survey instruments were developed subsequently to collect data from directors and monitors employed by the sponsoring organization. An expert panel reviewed and validated the content of the three-part survey instruments, identifying the job duties and perceived training needs of sponsor monitors and selected demographic characteristics. The intent was to assess the level of agreement between directors and monitors relating to job duties and training needs of FDCH monitor positions.

Surveys were mailed to all sponsoring organizations (n=1,045) in the United States, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. territories, generating a 33% (n=349) rate of return for directors and a 24% (n=499) rate of return for sponsor monitors. There was a 96% agreement between the directors and monitors regarding the top 50 job duties and an 80% agreement on the top five training needs for sponsor monitors. An expert panel reviewed the survey results. Commonalties and redundancies were reduced to a total of 30 job duties in four functional areas: Training and Technical Assistance, Meal Service, Administrative Duties, and Professional Behavior and Development.

These study results can assist in the development of competencies, knowledge, and skills needed to develop training curricula for the professional effectiveness of monitors employed by approved sponsoring organizations to oversee FDCHs involved in the CACFP. Competencies, knowledge, and skills can provide a basis for the development of professional standards for those who oversee FDCHs operating within the guidelines of the CACFP.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the demand for quality child care has risen with the push to move mothers from welfare to work, and because more children are cared for by non-maternal sources (Scarr, 1998). Family Day Care Homes (FDCHs) function as one avenue in providing quality child care (Carr, 2001). The FDCH functions as a small group child care business operating within a home setting, providing services to six or less children with only one caregiver (Scarr, 1998). Often, the providers' own children make up the total of children requiring child care in the FDCH. Regulations require that the home must be licensed or approved in order to provide child care services.

Any FDCH operating within the guidelines of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is granted reimbursement for meals served (USDA, 2001a). CACFP eligibility requires that the FDCH provider sign an agreement with an approved sponsoring organization to participate in the program. The CACFP plays a vital role in improving the quality of child care by subsidizing FDCH providers for the cost of serving nutritious meals and snacks, thus making child care services more affordable, especially for low-income families.

FDCHs operating within the CACFP guidelines are required to provide meals and snacks according to nutrition standards set forth by USDA (2002). These same standards are reinforced and consistent with recommendations and standards established by the American Dietetic Association (ADA). The position of the ADA (1999) is that all child care programs should achieve recommended standards for meeting the nutritional needs of children in a safe, sanitary, and supportive environment that promotes healthy growth and development.

Researchers found that the CACFP is assisting in meeting the nutritional needs of children while parents are at work (Briley, Roberts-Gray, & Rowe, 1993). According to Scarr (1998), parents feel that child care providers play an important role in influencing the nutritional intake of children. His findings suggest that the parents' perception is that providers have an equal, if not greater, influence than parents in shaping children's food likes and dislikes. Therefore, it is important for providers of FDCHs operating within the CACFP guidelines to serve meals and snacks that fulfill the age-appropriate nutritional needs of the children under their care, and that they are trained to do so. The CACFP also lends support in promoting healthy eating patterns for the beneficiaries of the program. Optimal childhood health and overall development is promoted through healthy eating patterns (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996).

Approximately 738 million meals were served to children in 2000 in FDCHs participating in the CACFP (USDA, 2001b). It is the sponsoring organizations (public or nonprofit private organizations) that are approved by the state agency for the administration of FDCHs operating within CACFP guidelines. Monitors employed by sponsoring organizations serve a vital role as gatekeepers for program quality in the FDCH setting. Monitors are hired by CACFP-approved sponsoring organizations to train and monitor FDCH providers who serve food prepared within CACFP guidelines (Hamilton, Stickney, & Crepinsek, 1999). The monitor, therefore, has an important role and a unique opportunity to promote healthful meals and snacks, while impacting the overall quality of care for children in the FDCH setting.

Child care professionals involved in FDCHs often view the monitor's role as a necessary component of the program's success. According to Dombro and Midigliani (1995), FDCH providers value the monitor's role as a mentor for enhancing their knowledge of the CACFP. Providers also indicate that FDCH monitors understand the training needs of the providers, as well as what strategies constitute effective training. Sponsor monitors play an invaluable role in the overall success of FDCHs because of their direct contact with the FDCH provider and the regulatory knowledge they possess.

Work has been done in identifying the job functions for school food and nutrition directors and managers who operate within the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (Sneed & While, 1993; Gregoire & Sneed, 1994). To date, researchers have not studied the specific job duties associated with the performance of the sponsor monitor overseeing FDCHs operating within the guidelines of the CACFP.

The purpose of this study was to address that void by determining crucial job duties and training needs of monitors, and comparing any differences in opinions between sponsoring organization directors and sponsor monitors about these job duties and training needs. In addition, the study set out to identify characteristics of organizations sponsoring FDCHs participating in the CACFP, their directors, and their monitors. This information can assist in the development of competencies, knowledge, and skills needed to form the basis of training curricula for monitors employed by approved sponsoring organizations to oversee FDCHs involved in the CACFP. The researchers followed research protocol and survey instruments approval procedures established by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee (HSPRC) at The University of Southern Mississippi, in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulation (21 CFR 26,111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46).

METHODOLOGY

Instruments

The development of two survey instruments began with the analysis of sponsor monitor job descriptions used by sponsoring organizations participating in the CACFP. To collect a national sampling of job descriptions, researchers contacted state agency child nutrition directors representing 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. territories to provide a listing of child care organizations sponsoring the CACFP. Thirty-two state agency child nutrition directors responded to the initial request; these represented seven USDA regions and 521 sponsoring organizations.

A proportional random sample with a minimum of two and maximum of four sponsoring organizations per state (n=94) was conducted. In states with 3 to 10 sponsoring organizations, two sponsoring organizations were randomly selected. In states with 11 to 20 sponsoring organizations, three sponsoring organizations were randomly selected. And in states with more than 20 sponsoring organizations, four sponsoring organizations were randomly selected. The directors of the 94 sponsoring organizations were contacted by U.S. mail to provide researchers with a job description used by the organization for the monitor position. The sampling procedure generated a 35% rate of return (n=33). Researchers made a thorough review of the 33 job

descriptions, developing a listing of job duties and identifying potential training needs. The information provided the foundation for two preliminary survey instruments, one for the sponsoring organization director and one for the sponsor monitor.

Researchers convened a panel of CACFP experts to perform a content validation procedure on the overall job duties and training needs of monitors, and demographic questions identified on the preliminary survey instruments. The panel of experts represented sponsoring organization directors, monitors, and a state agency FDCH administrator. The panel members were selected based on their job role and geographic representation (Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Washington,). Through group consensus, the overall objective of the expert panel was to validate the survey instruments for content. The panel also evaluated readability, clarity, and ease of completing the survey instruments.

Agreement on two survey instruments was finalized through a group consensus process, one for sponsoring organizations by directors and another for sponsor monitors. Part I of each instrument addressed the frequency and importance of the 94 job duties performed by monitors in relation to the CACFP. Each job duty received two ratings: "How Often" and "How Important." Both directors and monitors were asked to rate how often monitors currently performed job duties. This rating was performed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (never, occasionally, monthly, weekly, and daily). To ensure clarity in the scale, "occasionally" was defined as "less than monthly." Both groups surveyed also were asked to rate each job duty on how important to current job. Importance was rated using a 4-point Likert-type scale (not important, somewhat important, important, and very important). In Part II of both surveys, respondents were asked to identify the top five training needs for sponsor monitors from a list of 50 predetermined job functions. Part III was designed to capture the demographics specific to each group surveyed.

Data Collection

State agency child nutrition directors in 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories were contacted a second time for an updated mailing list of sponsoring organizations operating within the CACFP. All 54 agencies responded to the request, providing researchers with the entire population of sponsoring organizations (n=1,045). The researchers sent a mail survey, cover letter, and postage-paid envelope to each sponsoring organization director (n=1,045). In addition, each director was sent two monitor surveys, with cover letters and postage-paid envelopes (n=2,090). The cover letters informed all respondents of the purpose of the study, asked for their voluntary participation, and assured them of anonymity of responses.

The sponsoring organization directors were asked to give the monitor surveys to two sponsor monitors in their employment who they considered effective in their job. Sponsoring organization directors employing only one monitor were instructed to have one monitor survey completed and disregard the second monitor survey. Directors employed by small sponsoring organizations, who functioned in both the director and monitor role, were instructed to complete the director's survey and disregard the two monitor surveys.

Data Analysis

All data analyses used programs and routines of SPSS version 10.0. Researchers compiled means

and product rankings for Part I of the surveys. The product ranking for Part I was determined by multiplying the "How Often" raw scores times the "How Important" raw scores for each survey item. Therefore, the product was a function of frequency of performance and importance. Duties with the highest product ranking would be those that are both *very important* to sponsor monitors and are performed *daily*. Conversely, the lowest-ranked job duties are those rated as *not important*, and those that were never performed. Most ratings fell somewhere in the middle of these two extremes, but by using the product of the two rankings, the researchers were able to weight importance ratings by the frequency of performance, giving emphasis to the job duties most important for curriculum development and training. Frequencies and percentages were performed for Part II (training needs) and Part III (demographics).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Table 1 presents the program and personal demographics for sponsor monitors. A majority of sponsor monitors (58%) responded that they were earning an hourly wage of \$10 or greater. Fifty percent of those responding were employed 40 hours or more per week. A larger majority (73%) had been employed in the child care business for six years or more and 40% had worked in the CACFP one to five years. Sixty-five percent (n=306) of sponsor monitors responded that they had oversight of 100 or fewer FDCH providers. The age range for sponsor monitors (47%) was 41 to 55 years. The majority of monitors (51%) reported they had an associate's degree or greater. Of those reporting to have a college degree, 15% indicated it was in the area of early childhood education, while 8% responded to having a degree in food and nutrition. The number one benefit provided to monitors was health insurance. Eighty-four percent indicated that they regularly attended CACFP state-offered training.

Table 1. Program and personal demographic characteristics of monitors (n=499)		
Questions	Frequency	%
Years worked in CACFP		
< 1 year	77	16.6
1 to 5 years	188	40.4
6 to 10 years	91	19.6
> 10 years	109	23.4
Years worked in child care profession		
< 1 year	23	5.0
1 to 5 years	104	22.4
6 to 10 years	106	22.8
> 10 years	231	49.8
Age		
25 years or under	26	5.6
26 to 40 years	163	35.2
41 to 55 years	219	47.3
Older than 55	5	11.9
Education		
Less than high school diploma or GED	2	0.4
High school diploma or GED	115	24.6
Undergraduate-level courses	113	24.2
Associate's degree	90	19.3
Bachelor's degree	103	22.1
Graduate-level courses	22	4.7
Master's degree	22	4.7
Doctoral degree	0	0
Area of Study		
I do not have a college degree	124	33.6
Early childhood education	56	15.2
Family child studies	14	3.8
Child development	24	6.5
Food and nutrition/dietetics	31	8.4
Other	120	32.5
Hourly Wage		
\$7 or less	15	3.3
\$7.01-\$8.00	36	7.9
\$8.01 - \$9.00	42	9.2
\$9.01 - \$10.00	73	15.9
\$10.01 - \$11.00	87	19.0
Greater than \$11	180	39.3
Other	25	5.5
Number of Hours Employed Per Week		
20 hours or less	65	14.1
21 to 30 hours	54	11.7
31 to 39 hours	109	23.7
40 hours	204	44.3
Greater than 40 hours	28	6.1
Benefits		
Yes	355	80.3

No	87	19.7
Benefits Received		
Health insurance	265	69.4
Dental insurance	198	51.8
Life insurance	206	53.9
Disability insurance	131	34.3
Cafeteria insurance plan	47	12.3
Sick leave	312	81.7
Personal leave	234	61.3
Paid vacation	330	86.4
Retirement	204	53.4
Child care	16	4.2
Other	33	8.6
Number of FDCH providers monitored		
50 or less	148	32.5
51 to 100	158	32.5
101 to 150	75	16.4
151 to 200	36	7.9
201 or greater	39	8.6
Attend CACFP state-offered training		
Yes	382	84.0
No	73	16.0

The majority of the directors surveyed (80%) indicated they were employed in private, non-profit sponsoring organizations. Fifty-one percent of the sponsoring organization directors reported that they employed one to two monitors. For this group of directors, 31% indicated that materials in multiple languages were provided for multilingual staff. The number of FDCH providers associated with the sponsoring organization ranged from 1 to 3,847, with 50.2% of sponsoring organizations associated with up to 142 providers.

Responding directors were well-educated professionals, with 60% holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Twenty-nine percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher identified their area of study as early childhood education, family-child studies, or child development. These child care professionals (71%) have worked in the child care business for more than 10 years, and 51% have worked with the CACFP for 10 years or more. They ranged in age from 41 to 55 (61%).

Sponsor Monitors' Job Duties

A total of 349 of sponsoring organization directors responded for a 33% rate of return. At least 21% of sponsor monitors responded to the survey questionnaire, or 1.4 per participating organization. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation of all factors with eigenvalues greater than one generated 11 factors for the director and monitor data, explaining 72% of the variance for the director data and 70% of the variance for the monitor data, as related to job duties of sponsor monitors. An expert panel reviewed the survey findings that validated that the 11 factors logically grouped into four functional categories: Training and Technical Assistance, Meal Service, Administrative Duties, and Professional Behavior and Development.

The researchers selected the top 50 job functions based on statistical frequencies. The top 50 job functions as perceived by role incumbents were determined by the product rank score of "How Often" sponsor monitors currently perform the job and "How Important" the function or duty is to their current job. There was 96% agreement between the directors and monitors on the top 50 job duties and 100% agreement on the top five job duties for sponsor monitors between the two groups surveyed; however, the order varied slightly. Directors ranked compliance with policies and procedures and following federal, state, and local regulations as second and third, respectively. The monitors reversed this order in their ratings. Means and standard deviations of the top 50 job duties/functions for the sponsor monitor are presented in descending order based on product score in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Top 50 job duties/functions identified by sponsor monitors overseeing family day care homes involved in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) (n= 499)

Survey Items	How Often (1-5)		How Important (1-4)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Communicate with providers in an ethical, respectful, and caring manner.	4.7	0.8	3.9	0.3
Follow federal and local regulations.	4.6	0.9	3.9	0.4
Comply with sponsoring organization's policy and procedures.	4.5	1.0	3.8	0.6
Maintain standards of ethics and promote agency's interests.	4.3	1.0	3.7	0.6
Maintain current knowledge of CACFP regulations.	4.2	1.6	3.8	0.4
Maintain files of required records for each provider.	3.9	1.3	3.6	0.7
Provide technical assistance to providers.	3.9	1.2	3.7	0.7
Perform other job functions as assigned/negotiated.	3.9	1.3	3.5	0.8
Communicate CACFP procedures to providers.	3.7	1.2	3.7	0.5
Communicate CACFP regulations to providers.	3.7	1.2	3.7	0.6
Communicate provider issues with sponsor.	3.7	1.3	3.6	0.7
Perform mandatory onsite visits to providers.	3.6	1.1	3.8	1.8
Review meal pattern requirements with providers.	3.7	1.1	3.7	0.6

Review requirements for serving food with providers.	3.6	1.1	3.7	0.6
Review the menu with providers.	3.6	2.2	3.7	0.6
Observe meal services at each FDCH.	3.5	1.1	3.8	0.6
Report monitoring activities to sponsoring agency.	3.6	1.2	3.5	0.8
Verify license/certification/registration capacity of FDCH.	3.6	1.3	3.5	0.8
Train providers on creditable and non-creditable foods.	3.5	1.2	3.7	0.6
Observe all FDCH meal types (breakfast, lunch & snacks).	3.5	1.2	3.7	1.9
Oversee record-keeping of providers.	3.5	1.3	3.6	0.8
Perform field office duties.	3.5	1.5	3.4	1.0
Distribute appropriate provider reporting forms.	3.6	1.2	3.5	0.8
Discuss programmatic errors with providers.	3.5	1.2	3.6	0.7
Train providers on CACFP program policies and procedures.	3.4	1.2	3.7	0.6
Monitor meal schedules.	3.5	1.1	3.5	0.8
Maintain monthly monitor activity records.	3.5	1.3	3.4	2.1
Assure menu corrections have been made as required.	3.4	1.1	3.6	0.6
Perform central office duties.	3.4	1.6	3.2	1.1
Plan monthly monitoring activity schedule.	3.3	1.1	3.4	0.8

Train on nutritional program practices.	3.2	1.2	3.6	0.7
Assist in tracking child enrollment and withdrawals.	3.3	1.2	3.4	0.9
Maintain appropriate documentation of corrective action with a problem provider.	3.2	1.3	3.6	0.8
Review infant feeding program with providers.	3.2	1.2	3.5	0.7
Conduct initial four-week new home reviews.	3.1	0.8	3.6	1.2
Coordinate corrective action and follow up with providers.	3.1	1.2	3.5	0.7
Support the mission of child care associations.	3.3	1.4	3.3	0.9
Evaluate and monitor progress of providers in improving menus.	3.0	1.1	3.4	0.7
Report allegations of CACFP non-compliance.	3.0	2.0	3.6	0.7
Provide preliminary enrollment and training of providers.	3.1	1.1	3.6	2.0
Provide individual training to providers.	3.1	1.2	3.5	0.7
Enroll new providers.	3.0	1.1	3.6	0.8
Recruit new providers.	3.0	1.3	3.4	0.9
Complete required reports for sponsoring organization.	3.0	1.3	3.3	0.9
Maintain monthly monitor expense records.	3.1	1.4	3.1	1.1
Approve eligibility of the children to participate.	2.9	2.4	3.2	1.1
Report all suspected child abuse and neglect.	2.8	1.5	3.8	0.7

Provide technical assistance for feeding infants.	3.0	1.2	3.4	0.8
Participate in staff meetings.	3.0	0.8	3.4	0.7
Report noncompliance with state child care regulations.	2.8	1.4	3.5	0.8

Training Needs of Sponsor Monitors

Nearly 44% of the sponsoring organization directors and 38.7% of the sponsor monitors responded that program regulations/requirements were the number one training need for those employed as a sponsor monitor for FDCHs. The top 20 training needs for sponsor monitors as perceived by both groups surveyed are presented in **Table 3** in descending order by directors' ratings.

Table 3. Top 20 training needs of sponsor monitors overseeing family day care homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) as perceived by sponsoring organization directors and monitors

Training Need	Director (n=349)		Monitor (n=499)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Program regulation/requirements	150	43.5	191	38.7
Dealing with problem providers	122	35.7	179	36.2
Record keeping/documentation	109	31.9	132	26.7
Techniques for recruiting new providers	98	28.7	105	21.3
Meal pattern requirements	87	25.4	107	21.7
Creditable and non-creditable foods	85	24.9	115	23.3
Nutrition education materials for children	81	23.7	98	19.8
Audit/review procedures	62	18.1	70	14.2
Cost effective program management	53	15.5	47	9.5
Marketing the CACFP	51	14.9	62	12.6
Menu planning for meals and snacks	50	14.6	97	19.6
Introducing new foods to children	50	14.6	85	17.2
Training adults	42	12.3	42	8.5
Food safety procedures	40	11.7	66	13.4
How to deal with job stress	38	11.1	53	10.7
Planning affordable meals	36	10.5	76	15.4
Time management techniques	36	10.5	45	9.1
Infant and toddler menu planning	32	9.4	53	10.7
Developing computer skills	28	8.2	50	10.1
Cooking with children	19	5.6	53	10.7

Results indicate that monitors have a desire to receive training regarding CACFP regulations and program accountability issues. Because monitors function as the direct link with the child care provider, they indicated more strongly than directors the need for training in the areas that have direct influence with the child care provider in improving program quality (dealing with problem providers, menu planning for meals and snacks, introducing new food to children, food safety procedures, planning affordable meals, infant and toddler menu planning, developing computer skills, and cooking with children).

CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Sponsor monitors play a vital role in assuring a successful and quality FDCH, operating within the guidelines of the CACFP. The monitor often walks a delicate tightrope, balancing the demands of the job to represent the sponsoring organization while training, mentoring, and providing general oversight for the FDCH provider managing an in-home child care business. It is the monitor's leadership and technical support that assist the provider in assuring quality nutritional care for the children served in the program.

Results of this study suggest that sponsor monitors perform job duties beyond what is expected through CACFP regulations, and that sponsoring organization directors and monitors are in high agreement with the job duties and training needs of sponsor monitors. These findings are reassuring to those providing and receiving monitor training. Training and development professionals are advised to partner with CACFP agencies who oversee FDCH providers at the state and regional levels to develop and provide training materials based on the findings of this study. The opportunity to partner in this effort would lead to maximum program benefits and a more efficient use of federal, state, and local monies.

We recommend that the first consideration for training should focus on the top five training needs identified (program regulation/requirements, dealing with problem providers, record keeping/documentation, techniques for recruiting new providers, and meal pattern requirements). Although training may be a vital resource for an organization, the chosen approach may not meet monitors' learning needs. Therefore, training professionals are advised to incorporate adult learning techniques, since 60% of the monitors reported their age as 41 years or older.

Findings of this study suggest that the role of a sponsor monitor for FDCHs includes performance in multiple functional areas. Meeting these diverse needs raises questions as to how to best plan educational and training programs. By involving monitors and directors of sponsoring organizations in identifying the job duties performed by monitors on FDCH, the results of this research can serve as the basis for the development of competencies, knowledge, and skills for FDCH sponsor monitors. This can lead to the establishment nutrition integrity standards of practice for sponsoring organizations participating in the CACFP.

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