



ONLINE EXAM

School Nutrition Specialist Credentialing Exam Handbook & Application



2900 South Quincy Street, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22206

Phone: (703) 824-3000

Fax: (703) 824-3015

Website: www.schoolnutrition.org

Email: certsns@schoolnutrition.org

Updated August 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME	1
Definition of a School Nutrition Specialist	1
Certificate & Credentialing Governing Council	1
Development of the School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) Program	2
Benefits of Becoming SNS Credentialed.....	2
EXAM ELIGIBILITY REQUIRMENTS	3
Applicable College Courses by Key Area	3
SNS Exam Application Fee.....	4
Refunds	4
APPLYING FOR AND SCHEDULING THE SNS EXAM	4
Incomplete Applications.....	4
Ineligible Applications	4
Reasonable Exam Accommodations.....	5
Eligibility Denial Appeal Process	5
Confidentiality	5
Scheduling the SNS Exam Appointment	5
Rescheduling or Cancelling an Exam Appointment	6
SNS EXAM CONTENT	7
EXAM RESOURCE LIST	15
TAKING THE SNS EXAM	16
On Exam Day (Check in, Permitted and Prohibited Items, Workstations and Breaks).....	16
Technical Difficulties or Test Center Closures	16
AFTER THE SNS EXAM.....	17
Exam Scoring	17
Exam Results.....	17
Retaking the SNS Exam	17
Appealing Exam Results	17
Use of the SNS Credential Designation and Logo.....	18
SNS Exam Recognized by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR)	18
MAINTAINING THE SNS CREDENTIAL	18
Renewal	19
SNS CREDENTIALING EXAM APPLICATION FORM.....	20

WELCOME

Congratulations on taking this important career step to earn the School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) Credential! The School Nutrition Association (SNA) established the SNS Credentialing Program in 1997 to:

- Enhance the professional image of school nutrition professionals;
- Establish a foundation for professional standards;
- Enhance individual performance; and
- Recognize achievement among school nutrition professionals.

The SNS Credential is a mark of excellence and achievement that reflects what it takes to manage school nutrition programs in today's challenging climate. The SNS credentialing exam evaluates candidates' knowledge and skills required to perform specific job activities related to managing or directing school nutrition programs. It is important to note that the test is set from a national perspective, both in terms of running a program and federal regulations (rather than state specific regulations).

The SNS exam is based on four (4) key areas, aligned with USDA professional standards that encompass nine (9) knowledge/content areas and competencies. **SNA released a new School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) exam in July 2019 which had some minor content area modifications. With the increased focus on procurement in school nutrition, *Content Area IV: Procurement and Inventory Management* has been split and renamed *Content Area IV: Procurement Management*. This content area is now entirely dedicated to procurement-related competencies and accounts for 5.5% of the overall exam. The inventory-related competencies have been redistributed to other content areas, mainly *Content Area III*. To reflect this change, *Content Area III* is now named *Food Production, Inventory, and Operation Management*.**

Please note that overall, the test competencies have not changed; they have been redistributed to better reflect the current responsibilities of school nutrition professionals. The content area weightings have also not changed.

The SNS exam includes one hundred and seventy (170) multiple choice questions of which only one hundred and sixty (160) questions will be scored. The remaining ten (10) questions will not be scored and are being pre-tested for future examinations. The pre-test items will be randomly dispersed throughout the exam, so candidates should plan on answering all questions. This is a standard industry process and best practice approved by the Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council. Candidates have three (3) hours to complete the exam. An independent testing company oversees the electronic grading of the SNS exam.

Definition of a School Nutrition Specialist

A School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) is a professional who has successfully passed the School Nutrition Specialist exam, demonstrated the knowledge and competencies necessary to manage school nutrition programs in today's challenging climate. Individuals who have earned the SNS credential are dedicated to the achievement of high professional standards and professional development.

Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council

The Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council, an autonomous arm of the School Nutrition Association, is responsible for the governance of the SNS Credentialing Program and all policies and standards related to the SNS credential. The Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council does not discriminate against any person on the

basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, medical condition, physical disability, or marital status. The Governing Council appoints an Exam Working Group composed of SNS credential holders and subject matter experts to ensure that the exam reflects current best practices in school nutrition.

Development of the SNS Program

The first step in developing an exam based on a professional development program is to complete a job analysis and identify the skills and knowledge required to complete the job. The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) developed a job analysis survey of school directors and supervisors in 1996. The job analysis survey was revised in 2009 and published by NFSMI under the title, *“Competencies, Knowledge and Skills for District-Level School Nutrition Specialist in the 21st Century”*.

The purpose of the job analysis survey was to identify the job skills, knowledge, and competencies required by district-level school nutrition professionals to manage a school nutrition operation on a day-to-day basis. An expert panel of school nutrition professionals reviewed the results of the job analysis survey and identified the knowledge content areas for the SNS exam.

The SNS exam questions are written and reviewed by SNS credential holders and subject matter experts to reflect the current practices in the school nutrition profession. Each year the questions are analyzed statistically to identify any flaws. Questions that appear to be flawed are reviewed by the Exam Working Group to determine if they should be deleted from scoring entirely or if credit should be given for more than one answer. These judgments are analyzed statistically to determine the passing score.

Benefits of Becoming SNS Credentialed

1. Providing formal recognition of professional achievement in the four (4) learning areas of USDA Professional Standards for school nutrition personnel;
2. Promoting professional recognition from subordinates, peers and superiors;
3. Increasing the ability to direct a complex food and nutrition service operation;
4. Demonstrating continued commitment to the school nutrition profession;
5. Expanding career opportunities;
6. Elevating self-esteem and pride in your work;
7. Improving credibility with school and district officials, local boards of education, governing boards and the general public; and
8. Offering self-fulfillment.

Additionally, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 and subsequent legislation require school nutrition personnel to meet professional standards. The four (4) USDA professional standards learning areas are aligned with SNA’s four (4) Key Areas of learning for the SNS Exam. It has never been more important to invest in continuous improvement and continuing education for yourself and your staff.

EXAM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Candidates interested in taking the SNS Credentialing Exam must meet the academic and work experience criteria for one of the following options listed in order to be eligible to sit the exam.

OPTION 1	ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
	60 College Credits OR Associate's Degree AND
	KEY AREA REQUIREMENTS
	Additional 30 College Credits in any of the four Key Areas: <i>Nutrition, Operations, Administration, Communications/Marketing (see table on page 4)</i> OR Work experience in coordinating, managing or supervising various aspects of child nutrition programs may be substituted for 30 college credits (1 year of work experience equals 10 college credits) AND
OPTION 2	WORK EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS
	One year of work experience related to school nutrition within the past 5 years in any of the following settings:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nutrition Program (District/State/Federal) • Community Nutrition Program (Child Care/Head Start) • College/University/Technical/Culinary Program (Staff/Faculty/Research) • SNA State/National Association Staff • State/Community Agency • Trainer/Consultant/Industry Staff
OPTION 2	ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
	Bachelor's Degree or Higher AND
	WORK EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS
	One year of work experience related to school nutrition within the past 5 years in any of the following settings:
OPTION 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nutrition Program (District/State/Federal) • Community Nutrition Program (Child Care/Head Start) • College/University/Technical/Culinary Program (Staff/Faculty/Research) • SNA State/National Association Staff • State/Community Agency • Trainer/Consultant/Industry Staff

Applicable College Courses by Key Area

For applicable college course topics by key area please refer to USDA's Professional Standards Learning Objectives and Learning Topics which are available at www.schoolnutrition.org/professionalstandards.

SNS Exam Application Fee

The SNS exam application fee is:

- \$ 325.00 for SNA Members
- \$ 425.00 for Non-Members

SNA accepts payments made by Check, Money Order, Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express.

SNA reserves the right to modify fees.

Refunds

If the exam candidate is deemed ineligible to sit for the SNS Exam or cancels the exam registration more than 24 hours before the exam, SNA will refund the exam fee minus a processing fee of \$75.00.

If a scheduled appointment at a Pearson VUE test center is cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, the candidate is expected to attend the exam as planned. Failure to attend without proper cancellation will result in the forfeiture of the exam fee, and the candidate will need to re-register and repurchase the exam.

APPLYING FOR AND SCHEDULING THE SNS EXAM

Please submit the following:

1. Completed SNS Exam Application Form (page 18 of this handbook)
2. Copy of your college transcript (**unofficial transcript is acceptable**)
3. Appropriate payment to the email, address or fax number located on the exam application form

Once the application has been reviewed and accepted, SNA will send an authorization to test (ATT) letter via email. If you do not receive an email within 7-10 business days of submitting your application, please contact (703) 824-3000 or certsns@schoolnutrition.org. The ATT will include your authorization code and information on how to schedule your exam appointment with Pearson Vue. Candidates have one year from the date their application is approved to schedule and take the SNS exam.

Incomplete Applications

SNA will send an email notification to the candidate listing the missing documentation. If SNA does not receive the missing documentation within 3 weeks, the application will be returned, and the applicant must submit (in writing) a request for a refund minus the exam processing fee.

The application will be deemed incomplete if:

- Information was incomplete, or the application is not signed
- The appropriate exam fee or proper documentation was not included

Ineligible Applications

If the candidate fails to provide SNA with missing/additional documentation as requested, SNA will send an email stating the reason for ineligibility. Candidates will receive their application and exam refund minus the processing fee. The application will be deemed ineligible if:

- Eligibility requirements are not documented
- Application is not signed
- Information on the application is falsified

Reasonable Exam Accommodations

SNA complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act in accommodating candidates who require reasonable accommodations. SNA must be informed of exam needs or modifications in writing with supporting medical documentation at the time of application submission. Pearson VUE has [an accommodations team](#) to help coordinate scheduling and resources for requests that are not on the [comfort aid list](#). The candidate would work directly with that team to arrange their exam appointment after receiving their authorization to test and approval of requested accommodation(s).

Eligibility Denial Appeal Process

Candidates who are denied eligibility to sit for the exam may appeal the decision to the SNA Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council.

- The applicant making an appeal must submit the appeal in writing to the Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council within 30 days of receipt of the non-eligibility correspondence from SNA.
- The Governing Council will meet via web-conference within 30 days of receipt of the appeals letter.
- Notice of the Governing Council's final decision will be mailed or emailed to the applicant within 10 days of the decision.

Confidentiality

All exam applications and results shall remain confidential. SNA only releases exam results to exam candidates. Candidates will receive their provisional results immediately upon completion of the exam at the test center and can then access their candidate feedback report after the exam on their Pearson VUE dashboard. Candidates who pass the exam will be mailed the SNS certificate and card within 4-6 weeks of the initial exam date. Note that a publicized list of SNS professionals is posted on the SNA website. A recognition letter can also be sent to a supervisor at the request of the SNS credential holder.

Scheduling the SNS Exam Appointment

Following approval of the SNS exam application, SNA will issue an Authorization to Test (ATT) email containing instructions to schedule their exam appointment at a Pearson VUE testing center. The email will include a unique identification number which is required to book an appointment. Scheduling can be completed either online through the Pearson VUE website or by calling Pearson VUE customer service. The SNS program page contains details about testing requirements and test center locations: www.pearsonvue.com/SNA. All scheduling is managed directly by Pearson VUE. SNA staff are unable to assist with booking or rescheduling exam appointments.

Once an appointment is scheduled, Pearson VUE will send an automatic confirmation email with the appointment details. It is important to retain the confirmation number and appointment information for future reference.

Candidates have one year from the date their application is approved to schedule and take the SNS exam. While appointments can be arranged at any time within this period, it is recommended to schedule early to secure preferred dates and locations. Pearson VUE administers exams for numerous certification and licensure programs, and available slots may fill up quickly. Scheduling an exam near the end of the authorization period may result in limited availability and the possibility of not finding an open slot before the expiration date. Note that the one-year eligibility period will not be extended. If the exam is not taken within this timeframe, the testing fee will be forfeited, and a new application will be required.

Rescheduling or Cancelling an Exam Appointment

To reschedule or cancel your SNS exam appointment, candidates must login to the Pearson VUE website (pearsonvue.com/SNA) or call Pearson VUE at 888-536-1460 **at least 24 hours before the originally scheduled appointment time**. If an appointment is not cancelled or rescheduled before this 24-hour window, the candidate is expected to attend the exam as planned. Failure to attend without proper cancellation will result in the forfeiture of the exam fee, and the candidate will need to re-register and repurchase the exam. Please also refer to the refund policy on page 4.

All changes to exam appointments must be made directly through Pearson VUE, as SNA does not have the ability to schedule or cancel appointments on behalf of candidates. Attempts to reschedule or cancel by sending an email or leaving a message on an answering machine will not be accepted.

SNS EXAM CONTENT

The content and knowledge of the SNS Exam is based on four (4) key areas aligned with USDA professional standards, along with the Institute of Child Nutrition's *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for District-Level School Nutrition Professionals in the 21st Century*.

The following outline is a detailed guide to the four Key Areas that a professional must have in order to successfully pass the School Nutrition Specialist (SNS) Credentialing Exam. For each area, the percentage weight of questions on the exam is provided.

Key Area 1 – Nutrition

I: Menu and Nutrition Management

17% of exam

A. *Develops guidelines for planning menus that comply with nutrition objectives and support operational goals of the school nutrition program.*

1. Plans nutritionally sound menus that comply with federal, state, and local regulations.
2. Develops and implements a menu system to maximize use of USDA foods.
3. Develops an effective system for menu planning that includes, but is not limited to, costing, forecasting, nutrient analysis, variety, and customer preferences.
4. Collaborates with school staff, parents, physicians, and other health professionals to meet the special food and/or nutrition needs of children, as mandated.
5. Ensures all menu items served are consistent with nutrition objectives and contribute to the development of healthy eating habits.
6. Develops procedures for collecting customer feedback that may include, but is not limited to, surveys, taste panels, and menu committees.
7. Plans menus to incorporate cultural preferences and introduce students to a variety of foods.

B. *Provides leadership to support the nutrition and wellness initiatives within the school district.*

1. Promotes healthy eating habits and provides guidelines for selecting healthy meals and snacks through nutrition education and appropriate marketing in the school cafeteria.
2. Utilizes appropriate nutrition education and promotional materials to encourage healthy eating behaviors.
3. Supports nutrition education programs for students, school nutrition staff, administrators, teachers, and other school district staff.
4. Promotes activities to increase wellness and nutrition awareness among students, administrators, teachers, and other school district staff.
5. Forms partnerships with parents, students, and the education community to support an integrated approach to nutrition education.
6. Evaluates the effectiveness of nutrition education programs initiated by the school nutrition program.

Key Area 2 – Operations

II: Facilities, Technology and Equipment Management

5% of exam

A. Provides leadership in designing and planning facilities that support the operational goals of the school nutrition program.

1. Utilizes a team approach to develop a needs assessment and for planning new construction and/or renovation projects.
2. Seeks input from school nutrition staff for design enhancements to improve workflow and service systems.
3. Creates a profile describing the school nutrition program to guide the planning team in designing an effective and efficient operation.

B. Develops guidelines for selecting and maintaining equipment to accomplish the operational goals of the school nutrition program.

1. Ensures that equipment selected is appropriate for facility and operational needs to meet short and long-term goals of the school nutrition program.
2. Creates procedures for the proper care, preventive maintenance, and repair of equipment.
3. Seeks information from manufacturers' representatives and/or input from foodservice consultant (if applicable) to identify equipment best suited for facility and operational needs.
4. Evaluates school nutrition managers' requests and recommendations for new equipment.
5. Creates a strategic plan describing the short and long-term equipment needs at each school nutrition site.

C. Establishes an environmentally responsible school nutrition program.

1. Develops procedures and monitors implementation of initiatives that promote an environmentally responsible school nutrition program.
2. Provides leadership for developing school nutrition environmental management policies that are responsible and enforceable.
3. Utilizes technology and information systems to effectively manage the program.
4. Analyzes cost-effectiveness of initiatives that promote an environmentally responsible school nutrition program (e.g., energy conservation, recycling, waste disposal).

III: Food Production, Inventory and Operation Management

15% of exam

A. Develops a management system to ensure high standards for quality food production.

1. Establishes procedures to maintain required daily food production records at each school nutrition site.
2. Develops food production planning procedures including, but not limited to, forecasting, production schedules, standardized recipes, and portion control.
3. Develops guidelines for recipe modification to meet nutrition objectives and increase customer acceptability.
4. Trains managers in food production and forecasting procedures.
5. Selects the most effective food production system for school nutrition sites
6. Develops food quality standards to assist school nutrition staff in evaluating menu items prior to service.

7. Maintains current training materials for use by school nutrition managers to train staff on food production techniques.
8. Coordinates training for school nutrition staff to enhance their culinary and/or catering skills.
9. Develops delivery and inventory requirements that address product quality indicators (e.g., temperature upon delivery and receipt, packaging), time, and quantity.
10. Develops and updates systems for tracking product inventory.

B. Establishes operational systems for managing food production and service.

1. Develops contingency plans for use in the event of hardware and/or software failure, such as performing backup of information periodically.
2. Encourages school nutrition managers and staff to produce and serve meals in a customer-friendly environment.
3. Establishes and communicates quality customer service standards to the school nutrition staff.
4. Ensures a dining environment that promotes good nutrition and healthy eating behaviors.
5. Demonstrates ability to utilize customer feedback in improving production and service.
6. Establishes an effective food distribution system for all school nutrition sites.
7. Develops safe and efficient work methods to maximize staff productivity.
8. Develops guidelines for work schedules that effectively and efficiently meet operational goals.
9. Develops procedures for measuring and evaluating delivery systems, appearance and efficiency of serving area, and serving techniques.

IV: Procurement Management

5.5% of exam

A. Develops procurement guidelines that comply with established regulations and support operational goals of the school nutrition program.

1. Develops and monitors procurement procedures for school nutrition sites to order, receive, and store products.
2. Evaluates current purchasing practices to determine effectiveness and compliance.
3. Develops appropriate bid documents that include product specifications, usages, and special instructions/conditions following federal, state, and local regulations.
4. Evaluates bids/quotes and makes purchase recommendations following federal, state, and local regulations.
5. Analyzes technical support, training availability, maintenance service availability, and cost of upgrades when considering new purchases.
6. Utilizes appropriate resources to gather information on potential purchases.
7. Evaluates purchasing methods (e.g., bid buying, prime vendors, group purchasing) and selects the most appropriate method for the school's nutrition program.
8. Develops product specifications that ensure broad customer acceptability and nutrition integrity utilizing pre-bid conferences, product testing/screening, and product comparison.
9. Monitors current market conditions that influence procurement decisions (e.g., price, supply, demand).
10. Updates product knowledge by communicating with industry and other foodservice professionals.

A. Establishes policies and procedures to ensure food is prepared and served in a sanitary and safe environment.

1. Develops and monitors a HACCP-based food safety and sanitation program that meets federal, state, and local regulations.
2. Ensures that all food safety inspection deficiencies are addressed competently and in a timely manner.
3. Develops a sanitation training program for school nutrition staff.
4. Develops emergency procedures and practices for food recalls and foodborne illnesses.
5. Establishes communication procedures within the school district regarding food safety issues.
6. Conducts routine food safety and sanitation inspections at each school nutrition site and develops corrective action plans, as needed.
7. Develops procedures and trains school nutrition staff on proper use, cleaning, and sanitizing of foodservice equipment.
8. Develops safe, effective methods for prevention and control of insects, rodents, and other pest infestations.
9. Develops and communicates receiving procedures to ensure that products received match delivery requirements.
10. Develops procedures for inventory control that address the delivery date, storage, and turnover rate of food products and supplies.

B. Provides leadership in creating a safe work environment for school nutrition operations.

1. Encourages school nutrition staff participation in creating a safe work environment.
2. Ensures that the Material Safety Data Sheets for chemical products are up-to-date and accessible to school nutrition staff.
3. Establishes policies for posting workplace safety information.
4. Ensures school nutrition staff training on the proper use of fire extinguishers.
5. Ensures compliance with health and safety regulations established by federal (OSHA), state, and local agencies.
6. Documents safety training following district guidelines.
7. Develops safety requirements and standards for selection and use of chemicals, hazardous materials, and equipment.
8. Develops training procedures and safety guidelines for workplace injury prevention and injury response reporting.
9. Initiates and/or maintains a needs-based safety training program.

C. Develops a systematic approach to address emergency and disaster situations.

1. Establishes and communicates a basic plan for dealing with an emergency/disaster situation to school nutrition staff and appropriate school/district staff.
2. Establishes a school nutrition crisis management team to develop a plan outlining the functions of school nutrition staff in the event of a crisis.
3. Determines the food and supply items to be available for use at each school nutrition site in case of an emergency.
4. Ensures first aid training programs are provided to school nutrition staff.

5. Develops an emergency feeding plan and trains school nutrition staff on appropriate implementation.
6. Develops a plan for communicating with appropriate federal, state, and/or local officials concerning the use of USDA foods for disaster relief.
7. Develops a plan to secure food, equipment, and supplies from outside organizations in case of emergencies.
8. Verifies with district administration that the school nutrition program emergency/disaster plan is aligned with the district plan.
9. Communicates with appropriate state and/or federal officials concerning the use of USDA foods for disaster relief.

Key Area 3 – Administration

VI: Program Management and Accountability

10% of exam

A. Establishes a system to ensure nutritional, financial, and regulatory accountability of the school nutrition program.

1. Ensures all applications for meal benefits are correctly approved and verified according to USDA regulations.
2. Ensures the counting and claiming system used in the school nutrition program is reliable and provides accurate data in a timely manner.
3. Develops and implements procedures to maintain accurate and appropriate records that comply with federal, state, and local regulations (e.g., CRE, SMI).
4. Establishes an effective system for preparing and submitting reports according to federal, state, and local regulations.
5. Performs internal reviews/audits on all aspects of the program to identify and control problem areas, including site monitoring and civil rights compliance.
6. Complies with federal, state, and local regulations concerning the sale of competitive food items.
7. Develops policies and procedures to accommodate children with special food and/or nutrition needs.
8. Develops guidelines for implementing the components of the local wellness policy that are pertinent to the school nutrition program.

B. Provides leadership to position the school nutrition program as an integral component of the school district.

1. Conducts regular meetings with school nutrition managers to evaluate program performance, facilitate problem solving, and encourage information sharing.
2. Follows the district reporting structure when creating and/or implementing policies and procedures.
3. Interprets district policies and procedures for school nutrition staff.
4. Seeks district administration input on continuous quality improvement activities for the school nutrition program, as appropriate.

A. Establishes a human resource infrastructure for the school nutrition program that complies with school district policies as well as federal, state, and local regulations.

1. Interprets and communicates human resource management policies and procedures to school nutrition managers and provides guidance, as needed.
2. Interprets and disseminates the school district's human resource policies and procedures to school nutrition staff.
3. Maintains accurate school nutrition staff records and other pertinent human resource documentation.
4. Reviews and recommends wages, salaries, and fringe benefits that are equitable and competitive.
5. Verifies that human resource decisions follow due process established by the school district.
6. Monitors and tracks incidence of on-the-job injuries and related liabilities.
7. Develops and maintains a school nutrition staff handbook with current organizational chart and information on school nutrition programs and district regulations, policies, and procedures.

B. Develops and implements a process for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting qualified school nutrition staff in compliance with the school district's written procedures and labor laws.

1. Develops a staffing plan based on school nutrition delivery systems, student participation, facilities, and services provided.
2. Develops job descriptions and job specifications.
3. Determines minimum skills and characteristics required for an effective school nutrition staff member.
4. Utilizes interviewing techniques and hiring procedures that comply with federal, state, and local guidelines.
5. Designs an effective orientation program that introduces new school nutrition staff to the school nutrition program mission, requirements, and goals.
6. Establishes a process for conducting performance appraisals that follow district timetables and guidelines.
7. Utilizes competency-based performance appraisals to identify school nutrition managers' areas of strength and develop plans for improvement to address weaknesses.
8. Trains school nutrition managers to effectively conduct competency-based performance appraisals of school nutrition staff.
9. Applies conflict resolution, negotiation, and problem-solving techniques when dealing with school nutrition staff issues.
10. Develops and implements a procedure for school nutrition staff to provide feedback for improving productivity and morale.
11. Develops contingency staffing plans to operate effectively when positions are vacant.
12. Develops and implements a school nutrition staff recognition program, as appropriate.
13. Provides school nutrition staff information regarding professional organizations and opportunities for personal and professional development.

C. Designs a comprehensive needs-based training infrastructure that enhances learning and improves job skills.

1. Ensures that school nutrition staff have access to training opportunities for acquiring certification, as appropriate.
2. Seeks resources for technical information and educational materials appropriate for school nutrition staff training.

A. *Develops financial management guidelines that support school nutrition program operational goals and comply with regulations.*

1. Establishes pricing structure for meals and food items that follows federal, state, and local guidelines.
2. Prepares budgets that appropriately reflect financial goals.
3. Collaborates with appropriate district administrators to identify the desired school nutrition program financial outcomes.
4. Establishes and/or implements written procedures for collecting, reconciling, depositing, and disbursing funds.
5. Analyzes financial statements regularly to make informed financial decisions.
6. Reconciles projected annual budget with revenue and expenditure performance routinely and provides documentation to justify variances.
7. Evaluates financial performance of individual school nutrition sites and makes adjustments, as necessary.
8. Provides budget status to other district administrators, following local guidelines.
9. Establishes a system for archiving financial records following federal, state, and local regulations.
10. Uses financial management information system software to enhance financial reporting and accountability.
11. Shares financial information with school nutrition managers and develops strategies for addressing issues.
12. Monitors the appropriate use of external funding, when applicable.
13. Develops and communicates procedures for returning and crediting unacceptable merchandise and ensuring that only authorized substitutions are accepted.

B. *Establishes cost control goals to effectively manage the school nutrition program.*

1. Controls food cost by implementing standard procedures (e.g., appropriate product ingredients, standardized recipes, accurate portion sizes).
2. Controls labor cost by assessing meals served, labor hours, and school nutrition staff benefits.
3. Maximizes the use of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) foods to assist in controlling food cost.
4. Establishes benchmarks for food and labor cost percentages.
5. Identifies costs associated with maintaining a comprehensive technology infrastructure.
6. Develops inventory procedures to keep operating costs within operational percentages to revenue benchmarks.

Key Area 4 – Communications & Marketing

IX: Communications & Marketing

7% of exam

A. Develops a systematic approach for marketing the school nutrition program.

1. Leads the development of a marketing plan that integrates marketing objectives, strategies, implementation, and evaluation.
2. Aligns the school nutrition marketing plan with district marketing initiatives.
3. Designs and implements an effective public relations program to maintain a positive image for the school nutrition program.
4. Responds appropriately to school nutrition program publicity generated by the media.
5. Networks with school nutrition professionals to share best practices in marketing.
6. Evaluates the school nutrition marketing plan and promotional campaigns periodically and modifies ineffective initiatives.
7. Evaluates the feasibility of providing additional services to increase participation and meet nutrient needs of children (e.g., breakfast options, grab and go meals, vended reimbursable meals).

B. Develops customer service infrastructure to promote the school nutrition program.

1. Trains school nutrition managers and staff to enhance customer service systems.
2. Develops procedures to maintain the aesthetic qualities of menu items and service area throughout the meal period.
3. Empowers school nutrition managers to address and resolve customer service issues.
4. Develops procedures for collecting, analyzing, and addressing customer feedback.

C. Establishes communication infrastructure with stakeholders to promote the school nutrition program.

1. Communicates the relationship between nutrition adequacy and educational performance of children, using research findings when applicable.
2. Coordinates the use of multiple approaches for informing stakeholders of menu, nutrition information, policy changes, and other services available (e.g., web site, social media, newsletter, printed menus).
3. Encourages school nutrition staff to support and participate in school district nutrition/wellness initiatives.
4. Represents the school nutrition program publicly and gives presentations on school nutrition initiatives, program best practices, challenges, and innovations, as requested.
5. Coordinates with the school district public relations liaison or spokesperson to prepare program information and press releases for stakeholders and media.
6. Encourages school nutrition managers to integrate themselves into the school community.

EXAM RESOURCE LIST

The following resource list is intended to be a guide for exam candidates. The list was compiled to reflect the resources used in developing the Knowledge/Content Areas and is useful in preparing to take the SNS exam.

Resource	Link (if applicable)
Pannell-Martin, D., & Boettger, J. (2014). <i>School Food & Nutrition Service Management for the 21st Century, 6th Edition</i>	Textbook
ICN Resources for SNA's SNS Exam	https://theicn.org/school-nutrition-programs/
School Nutrition Association. (2023). Procurement	https://www.schoolnutrition.org/procurement
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Federal Registry 7 CFR 210, 220, 226, 245 & 235	https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=313c9b61e3e90e08552845402283a3f0&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title07/7cfrv4_02.tpl#0 or https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act (2010)	https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act
U.S. Department of Agriculture. School Meals Policy Updates	http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/policy
U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020	https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Reference Intakes: The Essential Guide to Nutrient Requirements	https://www.nap.edu/catalog/11537/dietary-reference-intakes-the-essential-guide-to-nutrient-requirements
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food Buying Guide	http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-school-meal-programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. (2011). Indirect Costs - Guidance for State Agencies & School Food Authorities	https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP60-2016a.pdf
U.S. Department of Labor	http://www.dol.gov/

Note: all references and web links are subject to change.

TAKING THE SNS EXAM

The SNS exam is administered as a computer-based test at Pearson VUE testing centers. Candidates are recommended to arrive at their exam appointment 15-30 minutes early to allow time for check-in procedures. It is recommended that candidates view this video before their test appointment: [What to expect at a Pearson VUE test center](#).

Check in Procedure

All candidates must present a current government-issued photo ID to verify their identity. Photocopies are not permissible. The first and last name on the ID must *exactly match* the name used to register for the appointment. ***In the event that the name on the ID does not match the name used to register, or if the ID is expired, the candidate will be denied entrance to the test center and will forfeit their examination fee.*** Candidates will also have their photo taken and be asked to provide a digital signature. Finally, candidates must review and accept the terms of the Candidate Agreement prior to starting their exam session.

Permitted and Prohibited Items

Candidates will be directed to store their personal belongings in a secure locker. Unless previously specified through an approved testing accommodation, the only items permitted in the test administration room are the candidate's ID, a clear water bottle, and any of the comfort aids specified on [pearsonvue.com](#), such as medical devices and mobility devices. All other items must be stored.

Candidates are encouraged to wear layered indoor clothing, because outerwear (overcoats, windbreakers, down jackets, etc.) is not permitted in the test administration room. Scarves and head coverings of any kind are not permitted in the room, unless for religious or medical reasons. Jewelry wider than ¼ inch (½ centimeter) and watches are also prohibited. No paper is permitted in the test administration room, although you may be issued an erasable board with a dry-erase marker should you need to write something down.

Pearson VUE implements these measures to maintain a secure, fair, and distraction-free testing environment for all candidates.

Workstation and Exam Platform

After completing the check-in procedure, candidates are led to their workstation by the test administrator. The test center administrator will provide a brief overview of the workstation.

A computer-based tutorial is provided to explain the process of selecting answers and moving from question to question. The tutorial teaches how to skip forward or backward through the exam to review questions, and how to use the calculator. Candidates may flag questions to mark them for later review. Any question can be flagged, regardless of whether it has been left blank or answered.

After completing the exam, the candidate will fill out a brief post-exam survey before their pass/fail result is displayed on the screen. Within 24 hours of completing the exam, a score report will be made available to the candidate on their Pearson VUE account.

Breaks

Candidates have 3 hours (180 minutes) to complete the 170-question exam. There are no scheduled breaks, though candidates may take unscheduled breaks as needed by raising their hand and informing the test administrator. The exam clock will continue to run during the unscheduled break. Candidates may not access personal belongings in their locker or leave the building during breaks.

Technical Difficulties or Test Center Closures

In the rare event of technical difficulties (e.g., a malfunctioning computer) while taking the SNS exam, the candidate should

alert the test administrator immediately.

In the case of severe technical difficulties or power loss, the candidate may be unable to continue their testing session. In such instances, Pearson VUE will work with the candidate to reschedule the appointment.

In the event that severe weather or other emergency forces the closure of a Pearson VUE testing center, the examination will be rescheduled at no additional charge. Pearson VUE personnel will attempt to contact candidates directly in the event of a site closure. However, candidates may also check the status of their examination appointment by calling Pearson VUE customer service at 888-536-1460. Every effort will be made to reschedule the examination at a convenient time.

AFTER THE SNS EXAM

Exam Scoring

Your performance on the SNS exam will be measured against a predetermined standard of knowledge. This standard is determined by the fundamental knowledge that can be reasonably expected of individuals who manage school nutrition programs. Once the passing point is determined, a candidate's pass/fail performance is established independently of the group who sat for the exam. This means that if everyone who takes the exam meets the knowledge standard, everyone will pass.

The passing score for the SNS exam is calculated using the modified Angoff method. This universally accepted psychometric procedure uses content experts to estimate the passing probability of each item on the examination. These content experts have reviewed each exam question, evaluated the difficulty of the question, and made a judgment as to how a professional with fundamental competence would perform on the question. This technique is currently considered by testing professionals to be one of the most defensible criterion-referenced methods available for setting passing points.

Questions that appear to be flawed are reviewed by the Exam Working Group to determine if they should be deleted from scoring entirely or if credit should be given for more than one answer. These judgments are analyzed statistically to determine the passing score.

Exam Results

Provisional exam results (pass or fail) will be available immediately after completing the exam at the Pearson VUE test center. A candidate feedback report will be available within 24 hours on your candidate dashboard on the Pearson VUE website. Those who fail the exam are encouraged to review the diagnostic information on the candidate feedback report and develop a study plan to improve knowledge in the areas of weakness identified. Candidates who fail the exam should understand that further study and preparation is necessary before retaking and ultimately passing the exam. Candidates who pass the exam will be mailed the SNS certificate and card, but not the actual exam score within 4-6 weeks of the initial exam date.

Retaking the SNS Exam

There is no limit on the number of times candidates may re-take the SNS exam. Exam candidates may re-take the exam after a 30-day waiting period. Candidates who plan to re-take the exam should carefully review the diagnostic information on the candidate feedback report to identify the areas for improvement.

To be eligible to re-take the SNS exam, candidates will be required to submit a new exam application, payment, and resubmit a copy of their college transcripts to SNA. Candidates who do not have copies of their college transcripts may submit a copy of their candidate feedback report.

Appealing Exam Results

All challenges to the SNS Credentialing Program are governed by the SNA Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council. The SNA Certificate and Credentialing Governing Council will conduct a review of all credential-related appeals.

submitted by a candidate and/or existing credential holder and will render the final decision.

All appeal requests must be made in writing via email to certsns@schoolnutrition.org within 30 days of receiving the initial results. SNA will maintain a record of each appeal and the subsequent action(s) taken, along with the final decision. SNA will be responsible for all communications with the candidate who submitted the appeal.

Use of the SNS Credential Logo and Designation

Candidates who successfully pass the exam may use the title “School Nutrition Specialist” and the abbreviated designation “SNS” in official correspondence and in all forms of address. The title, designation and logo of “SNS” may be printed on letterhead and business cards. The use of the title “School Nutrition Specialist”, designation “SNS” and logo of “SNS” by a person who has not passed the SNS exam or has not renewed their credential is prohibited.

SNS Exam Recognized by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR)

The SNS Exam is listed in the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) Guide under Certification for Alternate Recertification Periods, Activity Type 545: SNA, School Nutrition Specialist. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and Nutrition and Dietetic Technicians (RDNs/NDTRs), who successfully pass the SNS exam after June 1, 2017, can earn CPEUs. The SNS exam has been approved for 40 CPEUs. Instructions on how RDNs/NDTRs can receive a CPEU certificate for passing the SNS exam are included in the pass notification letter.



MAINTAINING THE SNS CREDENTIAL

The SNS credential is valid for three years and is renewable for additional three-year periods.

- There is an annual maintenance fee to maintain the SNS credential. SNA will bill you annually for the maintenance fee, and on the third year a renewal form will be mailed out. Renewal and maintenance notices are mailed 3 months prior to the expiration date. To renew, the SNS professionals must complete the renewal form and pay the renewal fee. If audited, it will be necessary to submit documentation of 45 CEUs or training hours during the 3-year credentialing period.
- SNS professionals are responsible for maintaining their own CEU records.
 - CEUs are earned for participating in job related activities such as state and national conferences, workshops, online courses, webinars or in-service trainings that provide ongoing professional development. Note that exhibits, tours, food shows and tradeshow qualify for up to a maximum of 2 CEU's, dependent on your state guidance.
 - The following is a list of acceptable forms of documentation:
 - Certificates of Completion
 - Copies of Rosters
 - College/University Transcripts
 - Training Tracking Grids
 - Registration Confirmation Letters
 - Program Agendas
 - *MyAccount* Record on the SNA website

Renewal

You must submit your renewal fee and any required documentation by your due date. Failure to renew by your expiration date will result in cancellation of your credential, including revocation of the right to use the title “School Nutrition Specialist” or the designation “SNS”. If you miss the renewal date, you may renew your credential up to one year past the expiration date, by paying a reinstatement fee in addition to the renewal fee. After the one-year period, you will have to reapply for the SNS which includes completing the application, submitting the exam fee and required documentation, and sitting and passing the credentialing examination.



SCHOOL NUTRITION SPECIALIST (SNS) CREDENTIALING EXAM APPLICATION



(Print or type all information)

Part I - APPLICANT INFORMATION - Preferred Mailing Address:

☐ Home

☐ Work

Check here ☐ if membership application has been submitted, but no membership number has been provided

SNA Membership Number: _____

Sex: ☐ Male

☐ Female

First Name _____ Initial _____ Last Name _____

(Name must match government issued ID)

Company (If Work Address is Preferred) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Cell Phone _____ Email _____

List Special Exam Accommodations Needed (if any – attach documentation supporting indicated accommodations needed) _____

Note: Accommodations must be requested at the time of application. Please refer to Reasonable Exam Accommodation policy on Page 5 of the SNS Handbook

Part II - ACADEMIC REQUIREMENT - *Submit college transcript (unofficial transcript acceptable)

Check all that apply:

☐ 60 College Credits

☐ Associate's Degree

☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Doctorate Degree

Major/Area: _____

***NOTE: If your college transcript lists less than 90 earned college credits,
please review the table on page 3 "Option I"**

Part III - EXAM FEE PAYMENT -

☐ \$ 325.00 SNA Member

☐ \$ 425.00 Non-Member

If paying by check: mail the application, documentation and payment to:

SNA c/o SNS Credential
2900 S Quincy St, Ste 700
Arlington, VA 22206

☐ Check

☐ Money Order

☐ Credit Card (A secure link will be sent separately via email to pay online.)

If paying by credit card: fax or email your application, documentation, and payment to: **(703) 824-3015 or
certsns@schoolnutrition.org.**

Part IV - WORK EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT - Minimum of 1 year work experience within the past 5 years.

Total Years of Experience in the field: ☐ 1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ 16+ years

1. Current Employer _____

Title _____ From: ____/____/____ To: ____/____/____

Setting:

- ☐ School Nutrition Program (District/State/Federal)
☐ Community Nutrition Program (Child Care/Head Start)
☐ College/University/Technical/Culinary Program
(Staff/Faculty/Research)

- ☐ SNA State/National Association Staff
☐ State/Community Agency
☐ Trainer/Consultant/Industry Staff
☐ Other _____

2. Previous Employer _____

Title _____ From: ____/____/____ To: ____/____/____

Setting:

- ☐ School Nutrition Program (District/State/Federal)
☐ Community Nutrition Program (Child Care/Head Start)
☐ College/University/Technical/Culinary Program
(Staff/Faculty/Research)

- ☐ SNA State/National Association Staff
☐ State/Community Agency
☐ Trainer/Consultant/Industry Staff
☐ Other _____

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING: I have read and understand the information provided in the SNS Exam Handbook. I understand the content of the examination is confidential and agree not to disclose any contents. I authorize SNA to publish my name and state in a list of SNS professionals on the SNA website. I declare that all the information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that SNA reserves the right to verify any or all information on this application or in connection with my credential. Therefore, I understand and agree that my failure to provide information that is true, respond to authorized SNA requests for additional information or abide by SNA policies and procedures shall constitute grounds for rejection of my application or denial or revocation of my credential.

(APPLICATION MUST BE SIGNED AND DATED)

Signature _____

Date _____

Note: You will receive a confirmation email within 1-5 working days of submitting your application. If you do not receive an email, please contact at 703 824-3000 or certsns@schoolnutrition.org to confirm SNA has received your application and you are eligible to sit the exam. Registrations and application approvals cannot be completed at the examination site.

SNS EXAM APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Part I** Completed Applicant Information
- ☐ **Part II** Completed Academic Requirement and Submit College Transcript
- ☐ **Part III** Exam Fee Payment
- ☐ **Part IV** Completed Work Experience Requirement
- ☐ ADA Special Accommodations Documentation (if any) - SNA must be informed of exam needs or modifications in writing with supporting medical documentation at the time of application submission

MAKE A PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR APPLICATION FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Please call the SNA Service Center at 703 824 3000 or email certsns@schoolnutrition.org with any questions.

SAVE MONEY! Become a member of SNA when you apply to sit for the SNS Exam. For a membership application, call SNA's Service Center.