
PHASE II

**DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF
KNOWLEDGE STATEMENTS**

**DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND
SKILL STATEMENTS FOR DISTRICT SCHOOL NUTRITION
DIRECTORS/SUPERVISORS**

Jerry Cater, MS
Deborah H. Carr, MS, RD

A comprehensive list of 192 competency statements related to duties of the CNP district-level school nutrition director/supervisor was developed and validated by the National Food Service Management Institute research staff. Data were collected from two nationwide random samples of 600 directors/supervisors who were asked to rate the importance and frequency of performance of the competency statements. Results suggested that most competencies were important, but the rank in importance and frequency of performance differed based on characteristics of the district and district director/supervisor (Gregoire & Sneed, 1994). In Phase II, knowledge and skill statements were developed and validated.

METHOD

Content Analysis

In order to identify knowledge and skill statements, it was first necessary to conduct a content analysis on the comprehensive list of competencies validated through research (Gregoire & Sneed, 1994). Each statement was evaluated as to how it would fit into the general development of a framework for the education and training of CNP professionals. Because some competencies were written at the skill level, a new format was designed which allowed the original 192 competency statements to be collapsed into forty-six broader categories. Changing circumstances in the CNP due to the time lapse between actual research and the development of knowledge and skills statements produced gaps in the research information. A review to identify these gaps resulted in the addition of a competency statement concerning disaster feeding. This addition provided a total of forty-seven competency statements grouped under the original sixteen functional areas and formed the design for writing knowledge and skill statements.

Development of Knowledge and Skill Statements

Knowledge statements were written to encompass the knowledge necessary to develop competency in each functional area. Most of the knowledge statements referred to facts that must be learned before a district school nutrition director/supervisor can perform on the job, however some statements referred to learning that may be acquired on the job. Skill statements were written to describe skills necessary to master each of the competency statements. Skill statements referred to



both skills that must be developed before a district school nutrition director/supervisor can perform in the job and skills that may be acquired on the job.

Knowledge and skill statements were written from the standpoint that the original research was conducted to provide a format for developing education standards that could be used in curriculum development and training programs. Statements were written to cover all aspects of the director/supervisor activities, including activities directed and actual duties specified in the position of director/supervisor.

Several sources were used by NFSMI researchers to develop the knowledge and skill statements. Literature included studies conducted by the National Food Service Management Institute (Gregoire & Sneed, 1993, Gregoire & Sneed, 1994, Sneed & Conklin, 1993). Additional references included NFSMI publications, *Competencies, Knowledge and Skills of Effective School Nutrition Managers*, (Conklin, 1995), and *Keys to Excellence: Standards of Practice for Nutrition Integrity*, (ASFSA, 1995).

Panel of Experts

A panel of CNP experts was convened to validate the knowledge and skill statements by consensus. The 16-member panel consisted of six district-level directors, four representatives from state Child Nutrition Programs, a representative from ASFSA's Education Committee, and members of the NFSMI staff from Applied Research and Education and Training. There was representation on the panel based on district size and region of the country.

The panel was divided into four groups and given criteria for evaluating the knowledge and skill statements. Each functional area was analyzed for missing knowledge/skill statements, if knowledge/skill statements given were essential, and if the language used was clear and easily understood. Knowledge and skill statements were to serve as a guide in the development of a suggested curriculum for district school nutrition directors/supervisors and to assist educators in the development of courses and materials; therefore, panelists were directed to guard against the tendency to approach the document as a job description. Each working group made changes and suggestions on their assigned areas, then presented their findings to the entire panel for further analysis and validation.

RESULTS

Substantive changes were made to the knowledge and skills document. Many changes suggested were associated with clarity and redundancy. Some knowledge/skill statements were further collapsed to give more flexibility of application to those professionals developing education standards, curriculum, and training programs. The panel suggested the Program Accountability competencies be reduced from four to two. The first three competency statements were combined into two



statements and the fourth competency which addressed skills in communicating program information, was moved to the General Management functional area. Panel experts agreed as a group that the final document with forty-six competency statements detailed the requisite knowledge and skills required of competent district school nutrition directors/supervisors. Several panelists suggested the need for creating a glossary and upon consensus a list of terms and definitions was compiled by the panel and NFSMI staff. (Appendix C).

In addition to reviewing and completing the competency document, the panel of experts identified the knowledge and skills required of entry-level district school nutrition directors/supervisors as distinct from other knowledge and skills acquired on the job. The conceptual framework from which this deliberation was approached was that professional competence is acquired on a continuum, and even after a person becomes competent, there is continued development to gain proficiency and eventual mastery of professional performance. For purposes of this deliberation, the panel conceived entry-level as the point at which a person could be hired to do the job of district school nutrition director/supervisor, but continue to gain other knowledge and skills through technical assistance from the state agency, assistance from their immediate supervisor, and other appropriate support services. Entry-level knowledge and skills should be gained before hiring, and therefore, this subject matter should be included in basic education and training programs.

This phase of the validation was completed by mail. A 75% consensus criterion was used to decide the division of entry-level and beyond entry-level knowledge and skills. All panel members returned questionnaires indicating knowledge and skill statements required at entry-level. The remaining statements were considered to be beyond entry-level.

SUMMARY

Competency statements required of district school nutrition directors/supervisors were reduced and refined through a consensus building process involving CNP experts. Knowledge and skill statements were identified and similarly refined by the same panel. The panel identified the knowledge and skills required of competent school nutrition directors/supervisors as to either entry-level or beyond entry-level. This information will be used by NFSMI in curriculum development and training programs for CNP professionals.



REFERENCES

American School Food Service Association (1995). *Keys to excellence: Standards of practice for nutrition integrity*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Conklin, M. (ed.). (1995). *Competencies, knowledge and skills of effective school nutrition managers*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.

Gregoire, M.B., & Sneed, J. (1994). Competencies for district school nutrition directors/supervisors. *School Food Service Research Review*, 18, 89-100.

Gregoire, M.B., & Sneed, J. (1993). *Report on nutrition integrity standards*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.

Gunn, M. (1995). *First Choice: A purchasing systems manual for school food service*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.

Sneed, J., & Conklin, M. (eds.) (1993). *Preparing Child Nutrition Program Professionals for the 21st Century*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.

