

Certification – The Key to Excellence in Correctional Foodservices

A key purpose of the Association of Correctional Food Service Affiliates (ACFSA) is to develop the highest standards in correctional foodservice and promote cooperative programs and activities that will improve professional development of its members. ACFSA has been guiding members in their professional development since 1969.

The ACFSA certification program has recently been renamed to better reflect the specific nature of the certification. It is now the Certified Correctional Foodservice Professional (CCFP) program. It has also been updated to provide a career ladder that you can use to progress in the field whether you are an entry-level assistant cook or manager of a large feeding operation.

Purpose and Meaning of Certification

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

The purpose of certifying correctional foodservice personnel is to:

- Give recognition to correctional foodservice personnel at all organizational levels for having achieved a special level of professional development;
- Provide a program for professional advancement; and
- Establish standards of job performance that provide for professional credibility.

The standards provide for certification of personnel who work in all areas of correctional feeding. The certification criteria include both initial and continuing education requirements. Initial requirements for certification include academic education, specialized training and work experience.

Why Get Certified?

In today's world, people expect the very best possible and that includes the feeding of the incarcerated population. Given the increasing importance of eating healthy, well-balanced meals and the growing public concern about food safety, becoming ACFSA certified adds credibility to your position and your foodservice operation.

Certification offers many benefits to qualified correctional foodservice personnel. Among others, these benefits include:

- Professional recognition from peers and superiors;
- Increased self-esteem and pride in one's accomplishments and work;
- Formal recognition and professional achievement;
- Improvement of skills and knowledge, resulting in higher quality work;
- Demonstration of commitment to one's chosen profession; and
- Preparation for higher job responsibilities

Certification also enhances the profession's overall image with administration. It may also be a factor in attracting people to careers in correctional foodservice.

Who Is Eligible?

ACFSA's certification program is open to all qualified individuals and is voluntary. Each correctional foodservice employee must decide for themselves whether to seek certification, but all personnel are encouraged to consider the benefits and take the necessary steps to meet the standards.

What are the certification requirements?

There are three levels of certification. To become certified at a particular level, you must meet the initial work experience, academic and specialized training requirements defined for that level. Once the requirements are verified

through proper documentation, certification will be granted to you for a four-year period. To renew and maintain certification beyond the initial four years, you must earn continuing education units (CEUs) in approved educational activities and programs.

Certification Requirements Summary

| | Level 3 | Level 2 | Level 1 |
|--|-----------------|---|--|
| Minimum Required Work Experience | 2 years | 3 years | 4 years |
| Minimum Academic Education Requirement | HS Diploma /GED | Associate Degree (2-year degree including 20 hours of credits in food science or other related courses) *10+ years of work experience in <i>correctional</i> food-service may be substituted for the degree. | Post secondary Degree: (4-year Bachelor degree including 45 hours of credits in food science or other related courses) *20+ years of work experience in <i>correctional</i> food service may be substituted for the degree. |
| Minimum Specialized Training | 25 points | 45 points | 80 points * |
| Minimum Continuing Education Requirement | 15 CEUs | 30 CEUs | 45 CEUs |
| Certification Period | 4 years | 4 years | 4 years |

*Or 3 college-level semester hours each in sanitation and safety, nutrition and foodservice management, communication and speech.

Certification is not dependent on job position or title; however, you must have experience working in correctional food services. You can be certified at the highest level for which you qualify according to the certification requirements, regardless of your current job.

The certification plan by design encourages, but does not require you to advance from one level to the next. For example, if you are certified at level 3, you may choose to remain at that level by meeting continuing education requirements of 15 hours every four years.

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

Current CCFPs may upgrade to a higher level of certification by documenting that they meet the additional requirements for the higher level.

Work Experience

Correctional foodservice personnel require on-the-job experience in order to develop their knowledge and skills and improve their job effectiveness and productivity. Accordingly, ACFSA *requires* a minimum level of correctional foodservice experience for each level of certification. Level 3 requires two years of experience, while level 2 requires three years, and level 1 requires four years.

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

- Foodservice professionals involved in any branch of corrections or other approved industries such as contract correctional food management companies.
- Registered Dietitians employed within corrections.
- Trainers/consultants/industry staff providing services to the correctional foodservice market

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----------|---|--|
| Security Issues (tool control, etc) Food Preparation/Culinary | Portion Control Facility Design/Management | | | |
| Total Operations Points | 10 | 15 | 20 | |
| Key Area #2: Nutrition | | | | |
| Nutrition: Registered Dietitian or licensed by home state or common- Wealth – (15 points) Recommended Courses (8 points each) -Dietary Managers Association course -American Academy of Independent Studies (AAIS) nutrition course -Other certified nutrition course, or college nutrition course Electives <i>Suggested</i> training topics: (2 points max each) Renal and other medical diets Religious diets Dietary Recommendations Making meals more healthy | 5 | 10 | 20 | |
| Total Nutrition Points | 5 | 10 | 20 | |
| Key Area #3 Management | | | | |
| Electives <i>Suggested</i> Experience: Completion of CFSM course - (8 points) Completion of a military course in foodservice management within the past ten years - (8 points) <i>Suggested</i> Training: (2 points max for each) Personnel Management Financial Management Budget Management Organizational Management Record keeping Accounting Computer Skills | 5 | 10 | 20 | |
| Total Management Points | 5 | 10 | 20 | |
| Key Area #4 Communications | | | | |
| Electives <i>Suggested</i> Experience: (2 points max for each) Published an article on correctional foodservice in a paper or trade journal Gave a presentation on correctional foodservice at a workshop or conference Had a working role in ACFSA or other professional foodservice association (Board member or committee chairperson). Recognized for outstanding accomplishments and / or work record in correctional foodservice Taught a foodservice-related class at another agency <i>Suggested</i> Training: (2 points each) Dealing with Difficult People Effective Oral Communications Working as a Team Negotiating “Win/Win” Improving Your Writing Skills Taking a Speech class | 5 | 10 | 20 | |
| Total Communications Points | 5 | 10 | 20 | |
| Elective Points (taken from the suggested topics in the key areas) | 20 | 40 | 75 | |
| Total points required, including required food safety course | 25 | 45 | 80 or 12 semester hours* | |
| *College Courses (semester hours) | | | | |
| Sanitation & Safety / Microbiology | | | 3 | |
| Nutrition | | | 3 | |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|-----------|
| Foodservice Management | | | 3 |
| Effective Communication, Speech, etc. | | | 3 |
| Total Semester Hours | | | 12 |

What Are CEUs?

CEU refers to courses or activities such as workshops, seminars, in service training or further academic study that contributes to lifelong development of an individual's knowledge and/or skills. CEUs are accumulated during the four year certification period and apply toward recertification. Continuing education helps the individual maintain a certain level of professional competency and to keep up with changes in the profession.

The diversity among educational programs makes it difficult to set rigid standards for determining which continuing education courses or programs offer acceptable units to CCFPs. Therefore, all CEUs should be developed or sponsored by a national food-service association or an accredited university, college or technical college

- CEUs may be obtained by participating in ACFSA approved activities and conferences, other associations' national conferences, home study programs and distance education programs, and college courses.
- You must keep your food safety certification current by re-certifying. A copy of the dated certificate will be verification of your current standing.
- One CEU will be granted for each **full continuous** hour of instruction in workshops and seminars. Registration, break periods, and mealtime are excluded from the continuous hour of educational activity.
- Conversion for college credit hours is as follows:
 - **Each quarter credit = 11 continuing education units**
 - **Each semester credit = 16 continuing education units**
- It is each individual's responsibility to verify his or her attendance at an educational activity and to keep adequate records. All certified members will receive a CEU tracking form with their certification packet. Use the form to list activities for your records. You must submit documentation of attendance at the time of re-certification.
- Continuing education *must* be job-related.
- Continuing education units may not be carried over from one certification period to the next.

In addition to traditional academic or training courses, CCFPs may earn CEUs from a variety of other activities. Such activities include but may not be limited to:

1. Teaching a foodservice related class (first time for each course) = 2 CEUs per hour taught
2. CEUs allowed for attending trade show exhibits may not exceed eight in a four-year period. 1 hour = 1 CEU.
3. Home study/correspondence courses = Education Provider determines
4. Study group meetings whose purpose is to review and discuss at least two foodservice or management-related articles may not exceed 8 units in 4 years. 1 hour = 1 CEU
5. Publishing an article for a foodservice journal/magazine = 2 CEUs, (not to exceed 8 units in 4 years)
6. Professional leadership –holding an elected office in a foodservice or dietetics-related national, state/province, or district organization that contributes to the acquisition of leadership skills and professional development can be awarded CEUs. You must complete the term in your current recertification cycle. A maximum of 2 CEUs per year or a maximum of 8 CEUs per four-year reporting period may be awarded.
7. Assisting another foodservice agency or program by providing foodservice training management reviews and / or technical assistance. 1 hour = 1 CEU. Maximum of 2 CEUs per year and 8 CEUs per four-year reporting period.

The following is a list of acceptable documentation for CEUs:

1. Certificates of completion
2. College/university transcripts
3. Registration or confirmation notices of attendance at conferences

4. Letter from educational provider
5. Copies of rosters
6. Documentation from allied associations
7. Dated certificate from a certified food safety class
8. Signed letter of verification from supervisor

How Do I Become ACFSA Certified?

1. Complete the application form and Application Worksheet. The application and worksheet are available from ACFSA headquarters, or they may be downloaded from our website at www.acfsa.org.
2. Obtain all required documents to establish that you meet the initial certification criteria. Documents that may be required include training certificates, and/or college transcripts.
3. Have your supervisor sign the application verifying your work experience and current employment.
4. Enclose the certification fee with the application. Fees are listed on the application.
5. Submit the completed application, correct certification fee and verification documents to the address listed on the application.
6. ACFSA reviews and approves the application. You will receive a letter of explanation if your application is incomplete and a list of what you need to submit in order to become certified. If complete, a record for each applicant is established in the international certification database. Processing and mailing of the certification packets may take several weeks.
7. When ACFSA has processed the application, you will receive a certification packet, which includes:
 - a. A plaque indicating the certification period;
 - b. Instructions explaining re-certification procedures;
 - c. A certification lapel pin (issued only once without charge);
 - d. A wallet-sized certification card;
 - e. A CEU tracking form; and
 - f. Recognition at the International ACFSA Conference
8. Initial certification will be in effect for a four-year period. Certification must be renewed every four years.

How Do I Maintain My Certification? (Re-certification)

1. Certification expires January 31, four years after acceptance, and every four years thereafter. Three months before an individual's certification is due to expire, ACFSA notifies the applicant by mail of the need to renew his or her certification. The notification includes an application and a CEU Tracker form
2. For recertification, CCFPs must complete the required number of continuing education hours required during the four year certification period. Continuing education units required are:

| <u>Certification Level</u> | <u>Continuing Education</u> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Level 3 | 15 CEUs |
| Level 2 | 30 CEUs |
| Level 1 | 45 CEUs |

3. CCFPs are responsible for maintaining records of their certification units and will be required to substantiate these units when they apply for recertification.
4. In order to be re-certified, you must hold a current, recognized food safety certificate.

5. The same application form is used for both initial application and re-certification. Complete the application and CEU Tracker. Submit these forms along with payment and documentation of having earned the required number of CEUs to ACFSA headquarters. ACFSA reviews, the application, CEU Tracker, and documentation. CCFPs that do not include the required documentation or who submit an incomplete application will receive a letter or email explaining what is needed to complete their re-certification application
6. When re-certification requirements are met, you will receive a certification packet.
7. The application, CEU Tracker, re-certification fee and all required documents should be received prior to your expiration date. A late fee will be required if you apply for re-certification after your expiration date.
8. In order to pay the member rate at the time of re-certification, you must have been a member during the entire four year certification period. Otherwise, you will be required to pay the non-member rate.

How Can I Move from One Certification Level to the Next?

You may move from one level to another by attaining the additional experience and education, and the additional specialized training points for the new level.

You must provide documentation demonstrating that you have met any additional education, academic and specialized training requirements for the higher level, and pay the certification fee.

If approved for the higher level, you will be given a new expiration date and will be expected to meet the continuing education requirements for the new level by that expiration date.

You may lower your certification level by submitting the appropriate certification application and fee.

CCFP's Responsibilities and Record-Keeping

All CCFPs are expected to exercise the following responsibilities:

1. Maintain a record of all activities qualifying for CEUs using the CEU Tracker. This includes the type of education or activity, when and where it was undertaken and the number of hours for each activity.
2. Complete the required number of CEUs during the four-year period.
3. Submit completed CEU Tracker and required verification of continuing education activities to ACFSA with re-certification application and stated fee.
4. Renew certification by your expiration date.