

Food Protection Manager Certification – Requirements for Schools Q&A

In July of 2015, [Wisconsin Act 46](#) was enacted and required certain persons to hold certificates of food protection practices in order to operate certain school lunchrooms participating in the National School Lunch Program. This requirement has since been added to the [Wisconsin Food Code](#) in section 12-201.11 (A)(2) and reads:

“[A] food protection manager certification is required for...an individual who conducts, maintains, manages, or operates a school lunchroom that is in a school that is participating in the national school lunch program under 42 USC 1751 to 1769j for which food service is directly provided by the school unless the operator or manager of the lunchroom, or his or her designee, is a certificate holder. For purposes of this subsection, the “operator or manager of the lunchroom” is the individual responsible for the administration of food services for a private school, charter school established under s. 118.40 (2r), or school district. A private school, charter school established under s. 118.40 (2r), or school district complies with the requirements of this subsection if the school or school district has one certificate holder. The individual designated to be the CERTIFIED FOOD MANAGER will become certified within the time specified in this subparagraph.”

What is a food protection manager certification?

A food protection manager certification is earned by taking and passing an approved certification exam. There are specific food protection manager certification exams approved by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) that may be obtained to meet the certification requirement. To meet regulatory requirements, post the exam certificate, obtained within the past five years, in public view on the premises of the food service establishment and have it available for review by inspection staff.

Which food protection manager certification examinations are accepted in Wisconsin?

For a list of currently accepted certifications in Wisconsin, please refer to the [DATCP Food Safety Course Directory](#). This list is updated frequently as more companies develop accredited certification programs. As a reminder, the ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certification is just one available option. There are several other options available to fulfill this requirement that vary in cost and course/examination format.

Where can I find courses and examinations in Wisconsin?

DATCP provides a [course directory](#) on its webpage that can assist food service professionals with finding an approved course and examination. Additionally, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team (SNT) typically offers ServSafe Manager courses and exams throughout the year. The [SNT Training webpage](#) provides more information on ServSafe Manager courses and exams offered by DPI SNT.

Who is responsible for enforcing this requirement?

Local regulatory authorities enforce this requirement on behalf of DATCP. Required personnel must post the exam certificate, obtained within the past five years, for review by inspection staff.

Who is required to have the food protection manager certification?

The person responsible for the administration of the school nutrition program(s) within the school food authority (public school or district, private school, or charter school), or their designee, is required to have this certificate.

If a school food authority (SFA) purchases meals through a joint agreement or vended meals agreement, does somebody in the SFA still need a certificate?

Yes. Even when meals are prepared off-site by another SFA or a vendor, someone within the SFA must hold a food protection manager certificate or proof of Food Safety for Small Operators course completion (if applicable).

Some SFAs utilize a food service management company (FSMC). How does this certification requirement impact the other requirements for FSMCs?

FSMCs must hold a restaurant license and have a certificate holder at each site. Wisconsin Food Code section 12-201.11 (A)(2) does not change the requirements for FSMCs.

Is it mandatory to have somebody with a certificate at every site during all hours of operation?

No. SFAs are not required to have a certificate holder at each site while food is being handled. However, the person overseeing the school nutrition program(s) is responsible for ensuring that food safety practices are followed and that food handlers at each site are thoroughly trained on food safety regulations.

My certificate is about to expire – can I take a recertification course?

Recertification courses are no longer accepted by DATCP if there are more than five food handlers. Operations with less than five food handlers may qualify for renewal without exam under Wisconsin Licensure of Food Safety Training for Small Operators.

Who can use the Food Safety Training for Small Operators course?

A small operator has five or fewer food handlers. When a certificate holder has already taken a full certification exam and is renewing within six months of expiration of their initial food protection manager certification, then the [Food Safety for Small Operators \(Recertification\) course](#) may be used to meet the requirement. Any certificate holder whose certificate is not renewed within six months of expiration is required to take and pass an approved exam.

My local regulatory authority already requires that each site has a person with a certificate. Is this still required?

Local ordinances that are stricter than state law must be followed. Jurisdictions must have the stricter requirement in an ordinance, or state law will prevail.