Core Competency Areas and Specific Competencies for Paraprofessional Nutrition Educators within the Cooperative Extension/Land-Grant University System

(adapted from Baker et al, Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, Volume 41, Number 2, 2009)

> **Note: These core competencies should be used within the context of federal and state program guidelines.**

Understand the Organization

- Understand the mission of Cooperative Extension within the University System.

- Understand and adopt the mission and goals of EFNEP/UC CalFresh.

- Understand the relationship of EFNEP/UC CalFresh to Cooperative Extension; the University; the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and/or National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- Understand the eligibility requirements for participation in EFNEP/UC CalFresh.

- Understand the importance of the paraprofessional role in achieving program goals.

- Understand and follow state program policies and guidelines.

Understand and Respect Diversity

- Respect and value people's differences.

- Remain objective and avoid imposing one's own values on others.

- Meet the nutrition education needs of eligible participants of diverse race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, education level, sexual orientation, and disabilities.

- Meet civil rights requirements.

Achieve Excellence in Teaching

- Recruit adults and youth who are eligible according to program policies and guidelines.

- Schedule programs (with input from supervisor) to be convenient for participants.

- Assess the needs, interests, and abilities of participants.

- Understand the factors that influence an individual's food behavior.

- Limit program content to topics as defined in State program guidelines.

- Use research-based, State-approved educational materials.

- Stay current in program-related topics.

- Plan and prepare lesson plans, activities, and materials based on participants' needs,

interests, age, and abilities.

- Engage participants in hands-on learning to achieve program outcomes.

- Use creative teaching techniques that build on participants' learning styles (ways of learning), strengths, prior knowledge, and skills.

- Create respectful learning environments in which learners feel comfortable to participate.

- Help participants set goals using new information and skills.

- Encourage participants to increase food and nutrition-related skills and become more independent.

- Acknowledge participants' success.

- Use evaluation results to focus programming and improve teaching skills/techniques.

Conduct Program Evaluation

- Use State-approved evaluation forms and methods for collecting participant and program outcome information.

- Meet expected goals for participation/caseload as designated by supervisor.

- Provide constructive feedback to supervisors/State leaders on program effectiveness.

Maintain Accurate Records and Reports

- Submit records and reports neatly, accurately, completely, and on time. Document time and travel regularly on appropriate forms.

- Secure and submit participant signatures indicating consent for photographs, and/or other personal information that may be used to improve programming.

Maintain Effective Internal and External Partnerships

- Know community demographics, resources, needs, and issues.

- Build and maintain effective partnerships with other Extension programs and community agencies.

- Respect the missions of partnering agencies.

- Understand and follow program memoranda of understanding and/or collaborative agreements.

- Communicate regularly with partnering agencies to coordinate services.

- Respond to agency referrals in a timely manner and report follow-up with the person/agency that made the referral.

- Refer participants to food assistance programs, Extension programs, and

other appropriate community resources.

- Strengthen programming by involving volunteers.
- Participate in the research mission of the University as approved by supervisor.

Communicate Program Value

- Serve as a good representative of the University.
- Include required branding information, funding statement, non-discrimination statement, and other required information on all print materials.
- Share program outcomes and successes with stakeholders, media, and the public.

Ensure Productive Interpersonal Relationships

- Maintain positive working relationships with support staff, co-workers, and supervisors.
- Share program materials and ideas with co-workers. Be open to new ideas, concepts, and information.
- Mentor new co-workers as directed by supervisor.
- Use effective verbal, writing, and listening skills.
- Volunteer and/or accept additional responsibilities when appropriate and with supervisor approval.
- Accept constructive criticism and suggestions.

Demonstrate Technology Literacy

- Demonstrate basic computer skills including e-mail and accessing the Internet.
- Use basic office equipment including the telephone system, fax, and copier.
- Use websites approved by supervisor.
- Use audio visual equipment and materials appropriately in teaching.
- Enter data accurately and print reports.

Demonstrate Personal Accountability

- Balance multiple responsibilities including teaching, recruiting, recordkeeping, and reporting.
- Communicate concerns and issues to supervisor in a timely manner (sickness, leave requests, change of schedules, accidents, and conflicts with agencies, participants, co-workers).

- Practice positive work ethics (loyalty, honesty, integrity, perseverance).
- Demonstrate an understanding of job responsibilities and boundaries.
- Use good judgment about health and personal safety at work.
- Dress appropriately (as defined by program guidelines) and practice good hygiene.
- Meet scheduled commitments; arrive prepared and on time; cancel appointments only when absolutely necessary.
- Model positive nutrition, health, and food safety behaviors.
- Maintain reliable transportation.
- Organize and maintain teaching materials, supplies, and equipment.
- Use time and travel resources wisely.
- Participate actively in staff development/training.
- Develop a personal staff development plan including setting goals to improve work performance in conjunction with supervisor.
- Use technology and program equipment/materials appropriately and for work purposes only.
- Work independently with confidence.
- Maintain confidentiality of participant and program information (appropriately file, transport, and store records).
- Comply with State laws and University policies regarding reporting criminal activity (copyright laws, reporting child abuse, and issues related to court cases).