

# Nutrition Educator Competencies for Promoting Healthy Individuals, Communities, and Food Systems

Use this checklist to assess your current knowledge and skills, identify areas for professional growth and create a plan for developing as a nutrition education professional. This can also be used to create position descriptions and staff evaluation tools, plan training and education opportunities in addition to designing, refining and evaluating course content. Address questions about the SNEB Nutrition Educator Competencies to [info@sneb.org](mailto:info@sneb.org), 800-235-6690 or 317-328-4627.



## Basic Food and Nutrition Knowledge

- Describe the basic structures and functions of the essential nutrients and identify examples of significant foods and food group sources for each.
- Explain the background, purpose, and components of the appropriate national or international nutrient references (e.g., US Dietary Reference Intakes).
- Explain the background, purpose, and components of the appropriate national or international dietary guidelines, including the associated food guidance systems (e.g., the US Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate).
- Explain how to use food labeling to evaluate the appropriateness of a food.
- Explain the dietary prevention of, and management approaches associated with, the major diet-related public health issues.
- Describe the basic types of approaches used by researchers to study diet-health relationships and describe their advantages and limitations.
- Critically evaluate the claims associated with a research study finding, food product, dietary supplement or eating style based on the nutrition educator's knowledge of nutrition and the approaches used to study diet-health relationships.
- Critically evaluate the source of materials that provide nutrition information.



## Food Science

- Describe the functions of food ingredients and food processing techniques and their effects on the nutrient content of foods.
- Describe the basic types of culinary practices, including the scientific basis for how flavor, texture, and appearance of foods are created or maintained during food preparation.
- Describe the potential sources of food contamination and the best practices associated with the safe handling of food.
- Explain how to plan, select, prepare, and manage foods to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, communities, and the food system.



## Nutrition across the Life Cycle

- Identify the primary dietary issues for each phase of the life cycle.
- Use information from the appropriate national or international nutrient references and dietary guidelines to make dietary recommendations for each phase of the life cycle.



## Physical Activity

- Describe the background, purpose, and appropriate national or international physical activity guidelines (e.g., the US Physical Activity Guidelines).
- Describe the benefits of regular physical activity as a means of prevention and management of public health issues including chronic diseases.
- Identify physical activity opportunities in daily living.



## Food and Nutrition Policy

- Describe the roles of government agencies in regulating the manufacturing, labeling and advertising of individual foods and dietary supplements.
- Describe the roles of government agencies in regulating food systems and the food supply.
- Describe the history, purpose and funding of key pieces of legislation that authorize programs supporting nutrition education, research, and food assistance to address malnutrition and food security and to promote health.
- Describe the history and current roles of governmental and nongovernmental organizations that develop and implement nutrition education programs and related health promotion or food security activities.
- Describe ways to collaborate with community members and other professionals to create communities and settings in which healthy food options are easy, affordable, and desired and unhealthy foods are less prominent and less desired.

# Nutrition Educator Competencies for Promoting Healthy Individuals, Communities, and Food Systems *continued...*



## Agricultural Production and Food Systems

- Describe differences in agricultural practices and their potential effects on food choices and food availability.
- Explain the effects of various food processing, packaging, distribution, and marketing practices on food availability, food choices, and nutritional value as well as the amount and types of additives, contaminants, and pathogens in foods.
- Explain the relationships between natural resources (e.g. soil, water, biodiversity) and the quantity and quality of the food and water supply.
- Describe ways to collaborate with other stakeholders to promote policies supporting systems that produce healthy food.



## Written, Oral, and Social Media Communication

- Communicate effectively in written, visual, and oral form, with individuals, the media, and other groups, in ways that are appropriate for diverse audiences.
- Facilitate communication from and between clients so they can express their beliefs and attitudes, define needs, and share experiences.
- Engage and educate through simple, clear, and motivational language appropriate for diverse audiences.
- Advocate effectively for action-oriented nutrition education and healthy diets in various sectors and settings.



## Behavior and Education Theory

- Describe the biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic determinants of eating behavior, and the associated opportunities and barriers to achieving optimal health and quality of life.
- Describe the major psychosocial theories of behavior and behavior change and apply them to eating behavior, and behavior change.
- Describe the major theories of teaching and learning and apply them to nutrition education.



## Nutrition Education Program Design, Implementation, and Evaluation

- Assess the nutritional and behavioral needs of the population (to establish behavior change goals).
- Determine the behavior change goals of the program.
- Identify the theory-based mediators and facilitators of behavior change, using a participatory approach, including social and environmental influences.
- Select the appropriate theoretical models or frameworks.
- Develop educational objectives based on the identified theory-based mediators of change from a theoretical model or framework.
- Design or select theory-based behavior change strategies or techniques that would be effective in achieving the objectives and are appropriate for diverse audiences.
- Design or select strategies, activities, and materials that match the objectives and are appropriate for diverse audiences.
- Apply inclusive participatory approaches that enable the target population to effectively communicate, share experiences, identify personal needs, and manage personal food behaviors.
- Develop a timeline and budget for program development, implementation, and evaluation, including personnel, supplies, and overhead costs.
- Design process and outcome evaluation plans, based on behavior change mediators and program objectives, using appropriate data collection methods.
- Revise the program based on process and outcome evaluation findings, as appropriate.



## Nutrition Education Research Methods

- Analyze, evaluate, and interpret nutrition education research and apply it to practice.