

Conference for Food Protection

Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What was the primary purpose for the Conference for Food Protection’s (CFP) development of the *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs* (Standards)?

R. The Standards are intended for all legal entities that provide certification for Food Protection Managers. All certifying organizations attesting to the competency of Food Protection Managers, including regulatory authorities that administer and/or provide certification programs, have a responsibility to the individuals desiring certification, to the employers of those individuals and to the public. The Standards establish criteria that ensures that certification providers maintain policies and procedures that meet the specific credentialing needs of Food Protection Managers while ensuring a valid, reliable and legally defensible evaluation of certification programs.

Q. Why did the Conference for Food Protection determine there was a need to develop these Standards?

R. One of the major issues that the CFP has dealt with in recent years is a trend among jurisdictions at all levels of government to impose mandatory requirements for education and certification for food protection managers. The certification component of this issue raises particular concerns due to the diversity of certification organizations that vary in the mission of their sponsors, as well as their structure, revenue sources, and certification policies. A fair evaluation of these diverse and complex programs has been a challenge for regulators.

At the same time, the providers of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs are faced with an array of regulatory program requirements. They are being held to different standards of performance and accountability depending on the jurisdiction in which they operate.

Most certification programs share a common desire to have the food protection manager certificate they issue universally recognized and accepted by others – especially by the increasing number of regulatory authorities that require Food Protection Manager Certification. If there is not a uniform set of national standards to assess these certification programs, an unfair resource burden is placed on institutional foodservice, restaurant, and retail food operations. Lack of a national standard for universal acceptance of certified Food Protection

Managers results in duplication of training/testing and additional cost for the industry. At the same time regulatory officials are left without reliable criteria for evaluating whether a certification provider administers a valid, reliable and legally defensible program.

A mechanism for regulatory authorities is needed to determine which certificates should be considered credible based on which certification programs meet sound organizational and certification procedures and use defensible processes in their test development and administration.

Q. Who is the Conference for Food Protection and why are they the appropriate organization for developing these Standards?

- R. The CFP is an independent, national, voluntary, nonprofit organization. Its objectives include identifying and addressing food safety problems; adopting fair and workable procedures; maintaining a working liaison among government, industry, academic, professional and consumer groups; and promoting uniformity of regulation in food protection. The CFP mechanisms involving active participation by representatives of diverse stakeholder groups produce consensus standards of the highest quality.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in a Memorandum of Understanding, recognized the Conference for Food Protection as a voluntary national organization qualified to develop standards to promote food protection. Conference recommendations contribute to improvements in the FDA Food Code and help jurisdictions justify, adopt, and implement its provisions.

Q. What was the process CFP used to develop the *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs*?

- R. Consistent with all the Conference's objectives, the CFP Food Protection Manager Certification Committee members include representatives from all of the stakeholder constituencies. Participatory to this process are Federal, State, and local regulatory agencies, several universities, foodservice and retail food store trade associations, operators, consumer groups, certifying organizations, and test providers. This Committee approach provides for balanced and deliberative consensus decisions that are then recommended to the Conference and voted upon through a one-state-one-vote process. At the 2000 meeting, the Committee's recommendations were unanimously approved by the 44 States and 1 Territory in attendance.

The Standards have been developed after years of CFP research into, and discussion about, Food Protection Manager Certification Programs. The CFP Standards are based on nationally recognized principles used by a variety of organizations providing certification programs for diverse professionals and occupations. Accreditation, through the process recognized by the Conference for

Food Protection, indicates that the certification organization has been evaluated by a third party accrediting organization and found to meet all of the CFP established standards.

Q. How can I obtain a copy of the CFP *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs*?

R. The Standards can be obtain from the CFP web site www.foodprotect.org

Q. What does it mean to say someone is a Certified Food Protection Manager?

R. A Certified Food Protection Manager is an individual who has demonstrated by means of passing a food safety certification examination from an accredited certifying organization that he/she has the knowledge, skills and abilities required to protect the public from foodborne illness. Duties of such persons could include but are not necessarily limited to:

- responsibility for identifying hazards in the day-to-day operation of a food establishment that provides food for human consumption;
- development or implementation of specific policies, procedures or standards aimed at preventing foodborne illness;
- coordination of training, supervision or direction of food preparation activities, and responsibility for taking corrective action as needed to protect the health of the consumer; and
- responsibility for completion of in-house self-inspection of daily operations on a periodic basis to see that policies and procedures concerning food safety are being followed.

Q. What is the difference between certification and accreditation?

R. The terms “certification” and “accreditation” are not interchangeable. They denote separate and distinct processes.

Certification is the process that a certification organization administers to verify that an individual has complied with the requirements of their certification program. The certification organization issues a certificate to the individual indicating they have met all the program requirements and passed the food safety certification examination. The certification process is focused on the individual seeking to demonstrate that he/she had the knowledge, skills and abilities to protect the public from foodborne illness.

Accreditation means that a third party (independent) accrediting organization has reviewed a Food Protection Manager certification program and verified that it

meets the standards set by the Conference for Food Protection. Accreditation focuses on a review of the certification program, not individuals, using specific criteria, to verify compliance with the CFP *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs*.

Q. The Conference for Food Protection developed the Standards. Does CFP also accredit the Food Protection Manager Certification organizations or is this done by another third party organization?

- R. The CFP has developed the *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs*. The CFP owns and maintains the Standards. The Conference, however, does not accredit certification organizations.

The American National Standard Institute (ANSI) is under contract with the CFP to accredit Food Protection Manager Certification Programs against the Standard. It is a collaborative process. CFP has two representations on the ANSI-CFP accreditation committee.

Q. Who is the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)?

- R. ANSI is a 501 C 3 non-profit organization that exists to enhance both the global competitiveness of the U.S. business and the U.S. quality of life by promoting and facilitating voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment systems (accreditation) and safeguarding their integrity. It has been in existence for over 85 years. It represents the U.S. in the International Organization for Standardization in Geneva, Switzerland.

Q. Who is eligible to enter the ANSI-CFP accreditation process?

- R. Any organization that meets the three basic requirements of: (1) legal entity or part of legal entity; (2) independent third party certification program, and (3) published scope that includes as one of its primary purposes the certification of Food Protection Managers.

Q. What does the certification organization have to do to achieve ANSI-CFP accreditation?

- R. The certification organization has to provide documented evidence through the ANSI-CFP accreditation process that it meets the CFP *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs*. The policy, procedures and application can be downloaded from the ANSI web site under Personnel Certification Accreditation – “How to Apply”.

The web site for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is www.ansi.org

Q. What Food Protection Manager Certification Programs are currently accredited?

- R. ANSI maintains a current listing of accredited Food Protection Manager Certification Programs on their web site www.ansi.org

Q. One of the outcomes the Conference hopes to achieve by establishing the Standards and implementing an accreditation process through ANSI is an equitable, uniform approach that enhances consumer protection. Attaining universal acceptance of certificates obtained through an ANSI accredited certification organization will require State and local jurisdictions with mandatory Food Protection Manager Certification Programs to recognize this process. Why should a regulatory agency, with an existing mandatory Food Protection Manager Certification Program or that is considering one, adopt the CFP Standards and recognize the ANSI accreditation process?

- R. The CFP Standards provide regulatory authorities with a valid, reliable, and legally defensible criterion for evaluating certification programs. A credible, non-biased process is pivotal to all food safety stakeholders involved in certification and ultimately to consumer protection. Regulatory authority universal acceptance of Food Protection Managers in accordance with the CFP Standards benefits all stakeholders.

Regulatory jurisdictions benefit by:

- saving on human and financial resources required to administer the certification program;
- minimizing their legal liability that may result from not having the required expertise on staff to develop and administer the program (such as an individual with a solid foundation in the psychometric development of written examinations);
- having assurance from a third party accreditor that all certification programs meet CFP Standards;
- allowing the regulatory agency to devote limited resources to their retail food protection program rather than the credentialing of Food Protection Managers.

Industry benefits because there is:

- mechanisms in place for reciprocal acceptance of certification across jurisdictional lines;
- enhanced value for their credential;
- quality assurance conducted on the certification programs that are offered;
- consistent meaning for certification within the profession; and
- enhanced confidence that the certification process is valid, reliable, and legally defensible

Benefits for Certification providers include:

- a level playing field among all certification organizations;
- a recognized uniform set of standards against which all certification programs are assessed;
- a consistent and fair review process by an independent 3rd party;
- an environment that promotes and encourages continual certification program quality improvements; and
- more effective allocation of resources due to eliminating the need to gain acceptance of their certification program in thousands of jurisdictions

Most importantly, Food Protection Managers, the target audience benefit because:

- reciprocity exists across regulatory jurisdictions resulting in significant resource savings both in cost and time;
- there is no need to guess about the quality of certification program – it is assured by an independent third party with no vested financial or intrinsic interests;
- candidates due process and legal rights are ensured; and
- an accredited certification program means the certification process is valid, reliable, and legally defensible

Q. My State is getting ready to implement a mandatory Food Protection Manager Certification Program. Where can I get information on how the legislation should be worded to be consistent with the intent and scope of the CFP Standards and ANSI accreditation process?

R. The CFP website (www.foodprotect.org) has model legislative language to assist you in drafting rules consistent with the direction that has been unanimously supported by the Conference's Voting Assembly of State Delegates.

Q. Reading through the CFP *Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs* there were no provisions that specifically referenced training programs. Are training programs accredited by ANSI-CFP?

R. **ANSI-CFP does not have standards for training programs for the Food Protection Manager** The Accreditation Program sole focus is the certification (testing) process and, as such, does not accredit training programs.

The Conference for Food Protection supports the position that training is critical to performance and the operational application of food safety principles and practices. Training criteria, however, is not incorporated into the accreditation standards. This decision is based on the:

- recognition that effective training incorporates a variety of instructional techniques, approaches and delivery systems;
 - emergence of new delivery technologies, such as distance learning and computer based training (CBT), increasing the accessibility and availability of training;
 - difficulty in developing an “equivalency standard” to assess content, scope, and effectiveness of diverse training methods; and
- recognition that an assessment tool (food safety examination) is the common component in certification programs. Developed according to sound psychometric standards, these examinations provide the appropriate amount of rigor to ensure that a candidate received the necessary training to demonstrate the knowledge level required of Food Protection Managers.
- As such, the ANSI-CFP accreditation program focuses on the entire certification organization’s program. Certification organizations have a responsibility to ensure that the certification process is fair to all candidates and protects their inherent rights. The organizations certification policies and procedures must meet the specific credentialing needs of Food Protection Managers and use defensible processes in their test development and administration.

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