

### Estimating Staffing Needs

Updated: January 2011

Overview: How often have you seen today's increasing healthcare costs result in a reduction of dietary staff? As Certified Dietary Manager, Certified Food Protection Professional (CDM®, CFPP®) how do you justify your staffing needs?

The efficiency of a department can be evaluated and justified by knowing accurate costs related to meals per labor hour (or the minutes per meal). To accurately estimate labor costs, one must begin by determining the cost per meal. A simple method of doing that is dividing total food cost by the number of patient meals. Please see ANFP Practice Standard: Calculating Food Costs for more information on this subject. The standards that follow will help you accurately determine your cost for staffing, and meals per labor hour or minutes per meal. Once this is calculated, you can compare your department's efficiency against an industry standard.

#### Standard 1

The Certified Dietary Manager, Certified Food Protection Professional (CDM, CFPP) assures that staffing requirements are based on the department's output (meals/meal equivalents).

#### CRITERIA

**1.1** Total meals/meal equivalents are data necessary prior to the determination of productivity standards.

**1.2** Productivity standards are established for the facility; productivity standards can be either meals per labor hour or minutes per meal. (Directions for calculating are provided.)

**1.3** The CDM, CFPP calculates full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the department. (Directions for calculating are provided.)

**1.4** The CDM, CFPP determines staffing requirements based on the number of staff needed to produce the number of meals provided (Productivity Standards), FTEs, and the overtime needs. They take into consideration the type of meal service (tray vs. plate), the kitchen layout, the quality of the menu items (pre-prepared vs. "homemade"), and feedback from the dietary staff. The CDM, CFPP uses industry standard productivity levels as a benchmark for evaluating staffing needs.

**1.5** The CDM, CFPP estimates overtime needs based on the number of staff projected.

ASSESSMENT
<b>1.1</b> The CDM, CFPP prepares a monthly summary of productivity (meals per labor hour or minutes per meal).
<b>1.2</b> The CDM, CFPP shares the monthly report with the dietary staff and administration for analysis and planning for future staffing needs.
<b>1.3</b> The CDM, CFPP uses feedback from the dietary staff and administration in future staffing requirements in conjunction with data calculated using productivity standards.

**SUMMING IT UP**

This Practice Standard for Calculating Staffing needs is a comprehensive tool to use frequently in the management of your department. We hope this information will lead you on the path to more efficient and effective operation of your dietary department.

**SAMPLE FORM FOR CALCULATING FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTES)**

Definition: A federal standard for a full-time equivalent is the equivalent of an employee who works full time. It means counting all of the hours and determining how many full-time equivalents there are; it does not mean counting only those who work full time. Include all hours for foodservice employees, the certified dietary manager, and the consultant dietitian.

**An FTE =**

- 8 hours/day, or
- 40 hours/week or
- 173.33 hours/month or
- 2,080 hours/year

**Monthly:**  
 Total labor hours for the month:  
 Divided by total FTE hours per month: \_\_\_\_\_173.33 =  
 Equals total FTEs for the month: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Total monthly hours divided by 173.3)

**Your Department's Labor Hours:**  
**Meals Per Labor Hour:**  
 Total meals/meal equivalents ÷ total labor hours =  
 \_\_\_\_\_ meals per labor hour  
 Example: 13,800 meals/meal equivalents ÷ 1975 labor hours =  
 7 meals per labor hour

**Minutes Per Meal:**  
 Total number of labor minutes x 60 minutes ÷ total meals/ meal equivalents = \_\_\_\_\_  
 minutes per meal  
 Example: (1975 labor hours x 60) = 118,500 ÷ 13,800 = 9 minutes per meal

**Labor Hours Per Meal:**  
 Total number of labor hours ÷ total meals/meal equivalents = \_\_\_\_\_labor hours per meal  
 Example: 1,975 labor hours ÷ 13,800 meals/meal equivalents = .14 labor hours per meal

**Estimating Staffing Needs Using an Industry Productivity Level**

Much research has gone into summarizing productivity levels. This reference<sup>1</sup> has determined the meals per labor hour for the following foodservice operations:

- Quick-service restaurant 9.5
- Fine dining restaurant 1.4
- Family restaurant 4.8
- Cafeteria 5.5
- Acute Care Facility (hospital) 3.5
- Extended Care Facility 5.0
- School Foodservice 13-15.0

Check your calculations for determining your department's labor hours and meals per labor hour against this industry standard. If there is a significant difference, it is the responsibility of the CDM, CFPP to evaluate this difference and justify the current staffing level, or make necessary adjustments.

**References**

1. Gregoire, M. Foodservice Organizations, A Managerial and Systems Approach. Seventh Edition. Prentice Hall, 2010. pp. 450-451.

Susan Davis Allen, MS, RD, CHE is the original author of this standard. It was updated by Becky Rude, MS, RD, CDM, CFPP. Allen is an advisor to the Certifying Board for Dietary Managers. Rude serves as the chair of that board. Both have authored many publications for ANFP and other professional groups.

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Legvold, Dee, and Salisbury, Kristi. *Foodservice Management by Design*. Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2018.