



News Release

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Applications Now Open for Fall 2024 California Healthy School Food Pathway Pre-Apprenticeship

*Paid seven-week program offers entry point to a career
in healthy, scratch-cooked school food*

Sacramento, CA – California residents who are interested in exploring a career in scratch-cooked K-12 school food can now apply to become a Pre-Apprentice through the [California Healthy School Food Pathway](#) program. The program is administered by the [Chef Ann Foundation](#), a national nonprofit dedicated to promoting scratch cooking in schools.

Pre-Apprentices are hosted by participating school districts across California. Over seven weeks, Pre-Apprentices receive paid on-the-job training, complete online courses, and network with other school food professionals. Almost 200 Californians and approximately 50 school districts are currently participating in the program, which is the largest cohort since it launched in 2022.

“School food can be an incredibly fulfilling culinary career path, particularly when it’s rooted in scratch cooking,” said Chef Ann Foundation Senior Director of California Workforce Programs Emily Gallivan. “As in other culinary careers, scratch cooking in schools involves a lot of skill and creativity. Cooking for kids is special because you’re not only supporting their health and learning, you’re influencing their relationship with food and cultivating their eating habits for life.”

Healthy School Food Pathway was designed to support districts’ school food staffing needs as well as student health. Since the start of the pandemic, schools across the country [have reported](#) school food staff shortages to be a persistent challenge.

A [2024 study](#) conducted by the [California School Nutrition Association](#) and the Chef Ann Foundation revealed that the rate of school food job vacancies in California is three times higher than the national job vacancy rate for public school teachers – a sector that [lost 9% of its workforce](#) since the pandemic. Further, California’s [universal free school meals program](#) has also increased demand for school food workers.

“California was the first state in the nation to enact universal free school meals, which was a monumental victory for children’s health,” said Chef Ann Foundation Chief Executive Officer Mara Fleishman. “We know that universal free meals significantly increases the number of students participating in school food programs. Without enough employees to keep up with higher demand, schools are often forced to rely on serving kids pre-packaged and processed foods instead of fresh, healthier meals prepared from scratch.”

The Healthy School Food Pathway program offers one solution to pervasive underemployment in the sector. Pre-Apprenticeship graduates can participate in a more comprehensive Apprenticeship, which is nine months long and also paid. The Pre-Apprenticeship is registered with the California Department of Apprenticeship Standards, while the Apprenticeship is registered with both California and the U.S. Department of Labor.

Teresa Vigil, a Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship graduate, offers this advice to anyone considering participating: “Do it! You will never regret learning ... and helping serve others. You will learn about things that make you more confident in your current position, and even think of going into higher positions to reach [your] dreams.”

[Apply here](#) by August 26, 2024.

About Chef Ann Foundation

[Chef Ann Foundation](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working to ensure that school food professionals have the resources, funding, and support they need to provide fresh, healthy, delicious, scratch cooked meals that support the health of children and our planet. To date, the organization has reached more than 14,000 schools and 3.4 million kids with healthy school programming. Learn more on our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).