



United States Department of Agriculture

Food-Safe Schools Action Guide

Creating a Culture of Food Safety

A food safety resource for School Nutrition Directors



Acknowledgements

Food Safety Culture, Creating a Behavior-Based Food Safety Management System, written by Frank Yiannas, was used as a primary resource in developing the culture of food safety components of this guide, including the tips for school nutrition directors. For more information on food safety culture, visit www.foodsafetyculture.com.

Yiannas, F. (2009). *Food Safety Culture, Creating a Behavior-Based Food Safety Management System*. New York, NY: Springer Scientific+Business Media, LLC.

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Quick Start

If you....	Go to....
Want to know how you are doing food safety-wise.....	Part 1
Have a question about a specific food safety area	Part 2
Want to build school community support for food safety	Part 3

Snapshot of the Action Guide

Your best food safety protection comes from creating a culture of food safety.



What is the Action Guide?

The Action Guide is intended to help you coordinate all aspects of food safety to create a culture of food safety. Think of it as an umbrella that covers many important areas of food safety that need to be considered when serving food in schools. The Action Guide identifies Federal food safety requirements that schools are required to meet, as well as other important areas that should be addressed to have a top-notch food safety program. The Action Guide also identifies the roles that others (e.g., teachers, parents, school nurses) in the school community play in the school's food safety efforts.

Who is the Action Guide for?

The Action Guide was written for school nutrition directors who have responsibility over food safety in child nutrition programs. We know, however, that the landscape of child nutrition programs and school nutrition operations varies greatly from State to State, and even district to district. The Action Guide is designed in such a way that it can be used by anyone. For example, a school nutrition manager can apply the messages and tools in the Action Guide within an individual school.

How should the Action Guide be used?

The Action Guide is a Web-based document that has three parts. While it isn't necessary to read the Action Guide cover to cover (i.e., you *can* jump around and take what you need, when you need it), it might be

helpful to read the short introductory sections for each part.

Part 1 includes a checklist to help you assess your current food safety efforts.

Part 2 consists of Action Sheets. Each sheet covers one area of food safety and provides basic background information, specific steps to take to address the area, and resources to help you take the steps. The purpose of the Action Guide is not to recreate all of the great food safety resources that already exist, so you won't find complete resources published in the document. The resources are provided through links – this allows the Action Guide to stay current when the various resources are updated.

Part 3 gives you tips to effectively communicate your food safety messages and efforts to other school community members. Additionally, strategy sheets are provided for various community members to help them understand why they are an important part of the school's food safety efforts and what they can do to help create a culture of food safety. This section also houses a list of Web-based food safety resources specific to others in the school community.

Although you can print out a hard copy of the Action Guide, it is best used in an electronic format so you have immediate access to current links to Web-based information and resources.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FDA	United States Food and Drug Administration
FNS	USDA Food and Nutrition Service
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
FSIS	USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
NFSMI	National Food Service Management Institute
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SFA	School Food Authority
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

Introduction

As a school nutrition director, you work very hard to serve healthy, nutritious meals to children through child nutrition programs. Millions of students participate in these programs in school cafeterias every day. Schools across the Nation are also finding creative ways to serve meals to meet the needs of their students and community, such as breakfast in the classroom, mid-morning nutrition breaks, after school snacks, breakfast on the bus, and supper at school. The safety of the food you serve is a top priority. You want foods served through child nutrition programs to contribute to students' learning and well-being; you don't want them to cause harm.

Millions of meals are served to students in schools across the country every year, which means that the potential for food safety incidents, such as a foodborne illness outbreak, may occur from time to time. When these incidents happen, there can be serious consequences. Children and staff who get sick may have to be out of school. Severe cases can result in death. And the negative publicity undermines the confidence of parents and students in child nutrition programs.

To promote food safety, the National School Lunch Act requires that schools have a food safety program. The food safety program must be based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 clarified that the food safety program requirements based on HACCP principles must be applied to *any* location where food is stored, prepared, or served as part of school nutrition programs; not just the cafeteria.

The requirements in the National School Lunch Act provide you with an excellent foundation for food safety; however, assuring the safety of the food for the children you serve goes beyond requirements. By going beyond the requirements and addressing other important areas of food safety, you will build food-safe schools throughout your district. Food-safe schools have two main ingredients – first, they are built on comprehensive procedures, policies, and plans that address the science of food safety. Second, they address people's behavior to encourage the use of food safety procedures, policies, and plans. Food-safe schools take a school-wide approach to food safety, and, with the help of partners in the school community, create a culture of food safety.

The Action Guide specifically targets school nutrition directors. It has three parts. The checklist in Part 1 is for school nutrition directors to gauge the food safety efforts in every school throughout their district. The Action Sheets in Part 2 speak directly to school nutrition directors about steps they can take. Part 3 provides tips and tools for district directors to use when communicating with partners in the school community about creating a culture of food safety.

In the Action Guide you will find slightly different guidance for the temperature danger zone between the recommendations for consumers compared with guidance for school nutrition operators. For example, consumers would be advised the temperature danger zone is 40°F - 140°F while for retail foodservice operators the temperature danger zone is 41°F - 135°F. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have developed educational materials for consumers, such

as parents or students, which incorporate a margin of safety. Food safety guidance for the National School Lunch Program follows the FDA *Food Code*, a model that provides a scientifically sound technical basis for food safety guidance for retail and foodservice institutions such as schools. Remember, however, you should follow your State and local public health department code requirements if they are different.

While the intended audience of the Action Guide may be school nutrition directors, it can be used by anyone. It isn't restricted to the district level. The

tools can be applied within an individual school, or an entire State. Simply look at the Action Guide's tools from your perspective and apply them to your role within the school community.

The Action Guide will assist you in:

1. Reviewing your current food safety efforts.
2. Taking action to build food-safe schools by addressing important areas of food safety.
3. Communicating with the school community to create a culture of food safety.



Creating a Culture of Food Safety

“It has been said, what we know and what we believe is of little consequence. It is what we do that is important. When it comes to food safety, this point is certainly true.” - Frank Yiannas, author of the book, *Food Safety Culture, Creating a Behavior-Based Food Safety Management System*.

A Culture of Food Safety

What does a culture of food safety mean? Think of it as your school community’s behaviors and beliefs about food safety. You will have a culture of food safety when food-safe behaviors are *second nature* to the members of your school community – your school nutrition team, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students – and these behaviors are *consistently* practiced to help keep students healthy and safe.

Creating Your Culture

Basing your food safety efforts on sound science lays the foundation for a culture of food safety. You must know not only which practices are important to keep food safe (e.g., temperature control of food), but also why these practices are critical (e.g., food held out of temperature can grow microbes that can make your students sick). Developing plans, policies, and procedures will be an important part of building food-safe schools. They will establish expectations

and standards and create a food safety blueprint for the entire school community. The action steps and resources in the Action Sheets in Part 2 will lead you in developing these plans, policies, and procedures. Some resources will also provide insight into the roles other members of the school community play in these efforts.

So, you have developed plans, policies, and procedures to address food safety issues – now what? Have these measures made a significant impact on the safety of food within your school community? Remember, it is often *what we do* that is important. How are you helping *all* members of your school community change their behaviors and make food safety second nature to their daily activities? As the school district’s expert in food safety, you should consider these questions and take on a leadership role.

Leading a culture of food safety means more than managing food safety practices. It calls for you to use established and innovative approaches to communicate and partner with various groups to weave those food safety practices into day-to-day school activities. The communication strategies in Part 3 offer guidance on approaching and engaging these groups.

Using the Action Guide

Creating food-safe schools takes time and hard work. The Action Guide will help you recognize where you're starting and what you can build over time. Once you have a complete blueprint, with all the necessary pieces in one place, you will have a valuable and lasting tool. The biggest reward, of course, is getting closer to the goal—creating a culture of food safety that will safeguard the health of the children in your school community. Now, let's get started!

Let's take a closer look at the three parts of the Action Guide.

Part 1

Reviewing Your Current Food Safety Efforts: A Checklist for Food-Safe Schools

Completing the checklist is your first step. Use it to determine the current status of your food safety efforts. The results will help you identify both strengths and areas that need improvement. You will be able to see which activities are already in place, which need updating, and what new steps are necessary.

The principal questions in the checklist correspond directly to the action steps identified in the Action Sheets in Part 2. The secondary questions correspond to content that can be found in the resources listed in the Action Sheets.

Part 2

Taking Action To Build Food-Safe Schools

Each Action Sheet addresses a specific area of food safety by providing you with background information, action steps that will help you build your framework, and resources for the in-depth information you will need to develop or strengthen that area. The first

Action Sheet describes the food safety requirements of the National School Lunch Act. Understanding these requirements will give you a firm foundation for building food-safe schools. The remaining Action Sheets provide information that will help you meet and go above and beyond the requirements and improve on your foundation. These Action Sheets include information on a school food safety program based on HACCP principles, training and education, employee health and personal hygiene, produce safety, managing food allergies, food defense, responding to food recalls, and responding to a foodborne illness outbreak.

Note that each Action Sheet corresponds to a section in the Action Guide checklist. When you've completed your checklist, you will be able to see which areas need your attention. You can then turn to the matching Action Sheet for guidance in improving your food safety efforts. The resources found on each Action Sheet are also collected together in the resources pages at the end of Part 2.

Part 3

Communicating With the School Community To Create a Culture of Food Safety

As you build food-safe schools, you will need to communicate with your school community and other groups. You can ask for their input and encourage them to become long-term partners in working toward shared goals. Part 3 includes tips for communicating with key groups—school administrators, teachers, parents, students, school nutrition managers, school nurses, your local health department, emergency management planners, and cooperative extension educators. This part also offers communication strategies specific for each group, and resources to support these strategies.

Part 1

Reviewing Your Current Food Safety Efforts: A Checklist for Food-Safe Schools

This checklist will help you assess your current food safety efforts and provide you with an outline of actions you can take to enhance your efforts. Upon completion of the checklist, you will have an understanding of the food safety strengths within your child nutrition program(s), as well as areas that may need improvement. Remember, the checklist can be applied to your district as a whole or to an individual school. Use it in a way that best suits *your* needs.

The principal questions in the checklist correspond directly to the steps identified in the Action Sheets in Part 2 of this Guide. The secondary questions correspond to content that can be found in the resources listed in the Action Sheets in Part 2.

Completing the checklist is your first step toward building food-safe schools; it will acknowledge important food safety efforts that have already been accomplished, as well as actions you can take to strengthen and expand on those efforts. As you work through this process, remember that building food-safe schools isn't simply about "checking all the boxes." It's about creating a culture of food safety throughout your school community to safeguard students' health while providing them with the nutritious food they need to succeed!

Action Guide Checklist ✓

The National School Lunch Act: Food Safety Requirements

	Yes	No
Have you implemented a school food safety program based on HACCP principles throughout your district?		
Does your school food safety plan apply to every <i>location</i> where food is stored, prepared, or served for child nutrition programs?		
Does each school in your district obtain at least two food safety inspections each school year from the State or local agency responsible for conducting food safety inspections?		
Does each school in your district post the most recent food safety inspection report in a publicly visible location and provide a copy of the report to the public upon request?		

A School Food Safety Program Based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Principles

	Yes	No
Have you developed and implemented a written food safety plan based on HACCP principles at each school within your district that:		
Classifies food preparation into three broad categories according to the process approach to HACCP?		
Identifies hazards associated with the three broad categories of food preparation (Process 1, Process 2, and Process 3)?		
Determines the critical control points (CCPs) in food preparation processes (Process 1, Process 2, and Process 3)?		
Establishes critical limits for each CCP?		
Establishes monitoring procedures for each critical limit?		
Establishes procedures to take corrective action when critical limits are not met?		
Establishes a system to maintain written records that document important food safety activities?		
Establishes procedures to verify that school nutrition employees are monitoring CCPs and critical limits, taking corrective actions when necessary, and keeping records?		
As part of a food safety plan based on HACCP principles, have you developed and implemented written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at each school within your district that address:		
General Safety Considerations		
Personnel		
Product Procurement		
Receiving Deliveries		
Storing Food		
Transporting Food		
Holding Hot and Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods formerly Potentially Hazardous Foods		
Preparing Food		
Cleaning and Sanitizing (Food Contact Surfaces)		
Cooking Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods formerly Potentially Hazardous Foods		
Cooling Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods formerly Potentially Hazardous Foods		
Reheating Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods formerly Potentially Hazardous Foods		
Do you use HACCP-based recipes in your school nutrition operation?		

Training and Education

	Yes	No
Do you hold a certification as a food protection manager through an accredited program?*		
Have you developed and implemented a food safety training program for all nutrition employees within your school district?		
Have you encouraged each school nutrition manager within your school district to earn a certification as a food protection manager or a certificate in food safety and sanitation?		
Do you provide continuing education opportunities to help foodservice managers and employees learn existing and new food safety practices at least once per school year?		

* Certification as a food protection manager through an accredited program means earning a certification through a program recognized by the Conference for Food Protection through the American National Standards Institute. A program meeting these requirements would be deemed an accredited program as defined by the model Food and Drug Administration (FDA) *Food Code*. More information on the Conference for Food Protection Standards for Accreditation of Food Protection Manager Certification Programs can be found at www.foodprotect.org/manager-certification. Accredited programs can be found at <https://www.ansica.org/wwwversion2/outside/ALLdirectoryListing.asp?menuID=8&prgID=8&status=4>

Employee Health and Personal Hygiene

	Yes	No
Have you developed and implemented a written policy or SOP that requires school nutrition employees to report certain diagnosed illnesses and symptoms of illness?		
Have you developed and implemented a written policy or SOP that restricts or excludes ill school nutrition employees from preparing or serving food and handling food contact surfaces?		
Have you developed and implemented a written policy or SOP that requires employees to properly wash their hands before handling ready-to-eat food?		
Have you developed and implemented a written policy or SOP that requires employees to use gloves or other suitable utensils when handling ready-to-eat food?		

Produce Safety

	Yes	No
Are you knowledgeable about the State and local public health requirements that apply to fresh produce?		
Have you developed food safety criteria for selecting produce suppliers that allow you to:		
Verify that your suppliers are getting their products from licensed, reputable sources?		
Inspect a supplier's warehouse or plant from time to time and verify that it is clean and well run?		
Determine if your suppliers have implemented a HACCP program or a Good Agricultural Practices plan to ensure product safety?		
Determine if a supplier's employees are trained in food safety?		
Check shipments for consistent product quality, inspect deliveries for unsafe packaging, and inspect the condition of delivery trucks?		
Have you established district-wide food safety specifications for fresh produce that require your suppliers to:		
Use high-quality raw products?		
Use containers that are clean and sturdy enough to protect produce during shipping?		
Ship produce, specifically cut fresh produce, in refrigerated trucks at temperatures between 32 °F and 40 °F?		
Follow good processing methods and procedures?		
Follow a good, ongoing food safety program with documentation?		
Follow good distribution policies?		
Have you established an SOP for handling produce for each school within your district that addresses:		
Purchasing and receiving produce?		
Washing and preparing produce?		
Hand hygiene?		
Serving produce?		
Storing produce?		
Have you started or expanded Farm-to-School activities?		
Have you developed procedures to purchase fruits and vegetables locally?		
Is there a garden at your school in which produce is being grown?		
Are you knowledgeable about the State and local public health requirements that apply to the use in school meals of school garden produce?		

Managing Food Allergies

	Yes	No
Have you educated yourself and your staff about food allergies?		
Have you, in collaboration with other stakeholders, developed and implemented a written food-allergy management plan for each school in your district that:		
Ensures the daily management of individual children with food allergies?		
Prepares staff for a food-allergy emergency?		
Provides professional development for staff?		
Educates students and family members about food allergies?		
Establishes and maintains a healthy and safe educational environment?		

Food Defense

	Yes	No
Have you developed and implemented a written food defense plan for each school in your district that includes the following components:		
An assessment of current food defense measures?		
Identification of food defense risks?		
Mitigation of food defense risks?		
An emergency contact list?		
Implementation and maintenance of the food defense plan?		
Have you trained all school nutrition staff in your district on food defense?		
Have you tested your district's readiness to respond to a food defense incident by holding a drill or exercise?		

Responding to Food Recalls

	Yes	No
Are you aware of how your State agency, processors, suppliers, and distributors will alert your school district to food recalls?		
Have you developed and implemented a recall alert system within your school district to ensure that each school learns about food recalls rapidly and understands how to respond to a food recall alert?		
Have you established an inventory management system that tracks what food is in inventory, when it was received, where it is stored, and when and where it was distributed?		

Responding to a Foodborne Illness Outbreak

	Yes	No
Have you worked with your State or local health department to determine what records, documents, and information the school nutrition team will need to provide during an outbreak investigation?		
Have you developed procedures for school nutrition employees to maintain complete records, documents, and information—and be able to retrieve them quickly?		

Part 2

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Now that you have completed the Action Guide checklist, you know which areas of food safety need your attention. You can turn to the Action Sheets in Part 2 for guidance in addressing these areas. Each Action Sheet addresses a specific area of food safety by providing you with background information, action steps that will help you build your framework, and resources for the in-depth information you will need to develop or strengthen that area.

The first Action Sheet focuses on information that will help you understand the food safety requirements of the National School Lunch Act. Understanding these requirements will give you a firm foundation for building food-safe schools. The remaining Action Sheets include information you will need to improve on your foundation and move to the next level of food safety.

Action Sheets:

- The National School Lunch Act: Food Safety Requirements

- A School Food Safety Program Based on HACCP Principles
- Training and Education
- Employee Health and Personal Hygiene
- Produce Safety
- Managing Food Allergies
- Food Defense
- Responding to Food Recalls
- Responding to a Foodborne Illness Outbreak

The resources provided in the Action Sheets are also compiled in the Action Guide resources on the last page of Part 2.

As you advance, work with your local health department to be sure your food safety efforts meet State and local food safety requirements as well. You may want to get input from your school administrators, teachers, and others in the school community who have experience or expertise to share. See Part 3 for tips on communicating with various members of the school community.



Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

The National School Lunch Act: Food Safety Requirements

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act is a Federal law that provides assistance to States in establishing, maintaining, operating, and expanding child nutrition programs offered through schools. It requires these programs to meet minimum food safety requirements. Child nutrition programs include the:

- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- National School Lunch Program Afterschool Snack Program
- Special Milk Program operated in schools
- Summer Food Service Program operated in schools
- Child and Adult Care Food Program operated in schools

The National School Lunch Act was most recently amended in 2010. It includes the food safety requirements established in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 and the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.

Currently, the National School Lunch Act requires:

- School Food Authorities (SFAs) to implement a school food safety program that is based on HACCP principles. The food safety program must apply to every location where food is stored, prepared, or served for child nutrition programs offered through schools.
- Each school participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs to:
 - Obtain at least two food safety inspections each school year, conducted by a State or local governmental agency responsible for food safety inspections;
 - Post, in a publicly visible location, a report on the most recent food safety inspection; and
 - Provide a copy of the food safety inspection report to the public upon request.



Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Implement a school food safety program based on HACCP principles throughout your district.
2. Apply your school food safety plan to every location where food is stored, prepared, or served for child nutrition programs.
 - The USDA FNS created *Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP* to assist SFAs in developing a school food safety program based on the process approach to HACCP. You may have used this guidance to develop your existing food safety program or to modify your existing plan, if necessary.
www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food_Safety_HACCPGuidance.pdf
 - A frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) document was developed by the USDA FNS to guide you through the food safety requirements of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.
www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP37-2013os.pdf
3. Work with your school district's State or local agency responsible for conducting food safety inspections to ensure that each school in your district obtains the two required food safety inspections each school year.
4. Verify that each school in your district posts its most recent food safety inspection report in a publicly visible location and provides copies of reports to the public upon request. ■

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

A School Food Safety Program Based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Principles

Serving safe food is a critical responsibility for you and your school nutrition team and is also a recommendation of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Through a school food safety program, you can control the risks associated with storing, preparing, and serving food. The program should include a written plan based on HACCP principles and documented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). HACCP is a systematic approach to identifying, evaluating, and controlling food safety risks. USDA offers the process approach to HACCP principles as a foundation for your school food safety program.

SOPs are very important to an effective food safety program. They serve as a basic food safety platform, and they control for nonspecific risks that may not be addressed in the HACCP-based plan. For example, surfaces of equipment and utensils that are soiled and have not been sanitized should not come into contact with raw or cooked (ready-to-eat) food. Procedures to prevent this should be covered by an SOP.

Active managerial control (AMC) is another important concept that is critical to the success of a food safety program based on HACCP principles. AMC means that you and your school nutrition managers take a preventive, rather than reactive, approach to food safety by understanding and consistently applying the school food safety plan to prevent, eliminate, or reduce the occurrence of risks that may result in foodborne illness.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Develop and implement a written food safety plan based on the process approach to HACCP for every location where food is stored, prepared, or served.
 - The USDA FNS *Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP* identifies the need to develop food safety SOPs and the minimum elements you must include in using HACCP principles and a process approach to HACCP.
www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food_Safety_HACCPGuidance.pdf
 - The NFSMI developed a *Template for Developing a School Food Safety Program*, which also reflects the required elements and provides a practical planning approach.
www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080207024226.pdf
2. Develop SOPs for each school within your district.
 - The NFSMI also offers a variety of HACCP-based SOP templates that can be used directly or modified to meet the circumstances of any school nutrition operation.
<http://sop.nfsmi.org/HACCPBasedSOPs.php>
 - Additional guidance and tools on HACCP-based SOPs are available through the NFSMI
www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080207024226.pdf
One tool allows you to build customized SOPs,
<http://sop.nfsmi.org/login4.php#register>

continued on next page

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

- The International Association for Food Protection (IAFP) has developed simple, wordless food safety icons to reinforce key food safety tasks. The icons are available free of charge for educational and non-commercial uses.
www.foodprotection.org/resources/food-safety-icons/icons.php
3. Use HACCP-based recipes in your school nutrition operations.
- USDA Recipes for Schools. These updated recipes from the 1988 *Quantity Recipes for School Food Service* and the 1995 *Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals* reflect the changes made in the newest edition of the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. Revised recipes have been standardized, edited for consistency, and updated with Critical Control Point (CCP) information from the 2003 *Food Code* supplement.
- <http://www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?q=cEIEPTEwMiZpc01ncj10cnVl>
 - The recipes are also available on CD-ROM by request from USDA, FNS.
www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition ■



HACCP began in the 1960s when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration asked Pillsbury to design and manufacture the first foods for space flights, which of course had to be free of foodborne hazards.

The process approach to HACCP separates food preparation into three broad categories based on how many times each menu item moves through the temperature danger zone.

The temperature danger zone is between 41°F and 135°F. Food that is held in the temperature danger zone is at risk for growing bacteria that can make people sick when they eat the food.

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

Training and Education

You may be responsible for food prepared and served in many schools by many people. As a school nutrition director, you can do your part by ensuring that everyone with nutrition responsibilities is knowledgeable in food safety and safe food-handling practices.

Some of the most important responsibilities are to know and implement the State and local public health regulations, maintain up-to-date knowledge about food safety, and teach school nutrition employees about good food safety practices. Employees need training on basic food safety principles and on their role in applying these principles. They also need ongoing education to practice behaviors, reinforce concepts, and learn about new developments.

In addition, it is important that school nutrition directors and managers educate and train others in the school about food safety. For example, teachers may assist with serving breakfast to students in their classrooms; school bus drivers may oversee breakfast service on the bus; or students may help serve fruit and vegetable snacks in the school.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Consider earning a certification as a food protection manager. This training already may be required in your State or local food safety regulations.
 - The Conference for Food Protection through the American National Standards Institute lists accredited programs, as defined by the FDA *Food Code*, that offer a food protection manager certification program.
www.foodprotect.org/manager-certification

<https://www.ansica.org/wwwversion2/outside/ALLdirectoryListing.asp?menuID=8&prgID=8&status=4>
2. Develop and implement a food safety training program for school nutrition managers and employees. Consider encouraging each manager to earn a certification as a food protection manager or a certificate in food safety and sanitation.
 - *Serving it Safe* is a training program offered through NFSMI that provides school nutrition personnel at all levels with information for managing a safe and sanitary nutrition operation.
www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=327
3. Continuing education should be offered to employees at least once each school year.
 - The NFSMI offers a variety of [training resources](#) for child nutrition professionals.
www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?q=cEIEPTU3

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

Employee Health and Personal Hygiene

Foodborne illness (also known as food poisoning or foodborne disease) is any illness that results from eating contaminated food. The CDC estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick from eating contaminated food.

Bacteria and viruses are the most common causes of foodborne illness. School nutrition employees can transfer bacteria and viruses from their hands to the food that they prepare. To prevent this, school nutrition employees should not work when they are sick, always wash their hands before preparing food, and use gloves or utensils when handling ready-to-eat food. It is your responsibility to educate and train school nutrition employees in these practices and to take action to prevent employees from contaminating food.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Develop and implement a written policy or SOP that:
 - a. Requires employees to report certain diagnosed illnesses and symptoms of illness, and
 - b. Restricts or excludes ill employees from preparing or serving food, and handling food contact surfaces.
2. Develop and implement a written policy or SOP that requires employees to properly wash their hands at all appropriate times, such as before handling ready-to-eat food.
3. Develop and implement a written policy or SOP that requires employees to use gloves or other suitable utensils when handling ready-to-eat food.
 - The USDA FNS and NFSMI have developed Employee Health and Personal Hygiene

resources that highlight best practices for child nutrition employees to use to prevent spreading pathogens that can cause foodborne illnesses.

www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=430

- *The Stomach Bug Book: What School Employees Need to Know* is a booklet that explains what school employees need to know about stomach illnesses at school. Available in both English and Spanish, it speaks to school nutrition workers, nurses, custodians, teachers, para-educators, education assistants, bus drivers, and school secretaries.
www.neahin.org/educator-resources/stomach-bug-book-english.html
- For more information on the CDC estimates of foodborne illness, see *CDC Vital Signs*.
www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/foodsafety. ■

A school nutrition employee spent the weekend suffering with vomiting and diarrhea, but, feeling a little better, came to work the following Monday. Working with bare hands, she chopped lettuce to be served for lunch. Dozens of students and teachers became ill the next day. The local health department investigation traced the illnesses to the food handled by the ill employee.

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

Produce Safety

Eating fruits and vegetables is important to a healthy diet and lifestyle. The federally funded National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provide financial assistance to States and local school communities to offer a variety of fruits and vegetables in school meals and snacks. The new meal patterns for the NSLP and SBP require schools to serve more fruits and vegetables. Fresh produce may require little or no cooking or processing, which is one reason why school nutrition employees must take care to ensure the safety of the produce they handle and serve.

Schools may receive fresh produce from a variety of sources including wholesalers, conventional and organic growers, and large and small local producers. Farm-to-school programs and school gardens also serve as sources of fresh produce for school meal programs. Farm-to-school programs support local farmers and provide opportunities to teach students about the origins of their food. Schools across the Nation also are using gardens to help children discover where food comes from and develop healthy eating habits. Gardens provide a way for children to grow, harvest, prepare, and taste a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Schools can encourage students to choose fresh produce when they have the opportunity, such as from salad bars or self-service lines in the cafeteria. As long as appropriate precautions are taken, schools can safely serve students fresh fruits and vegetables from a variety of sources and through various methods.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Know and follow State and local public health requirements that apply to fresh produce. Check with your local health department regarding serving produce that was grown in school gardens.
2. Develop food safety criteria for selecting your school district's produce suppliers, and establish food safety specifications for fresh produce purchased from suppliers.
 - The USDA FNS developed a wealth of produce safety information – including fact sheets, videos, presentations, and talking points – that can be found on the NFSMI Web site. The *Verifying On-Farm Food Safety* fact sheet provides information on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), and insight into GAP certification and the USDA third-party audit program.
www.nfsmi.org/producesafety
www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20110822025822.pdf
 - *Quality Food for Quality Meals*, offered through the USDA FNS, provides information you need to select and purchase good quality and safe produce. It includes guidance on selecting suppliers and establishing food safety specifications.
www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/quality_intro.pdf
3. Establish SOPs for handling produce in each school within your district.
 - *Handling Fresh Produce in Schools* outlines best practices for handling all types of fresh produce, with attention to melons, tomatoes, and leafy greens.
<http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=351>

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- *Fruits and Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More* provides tips on planning, purchasing, protecting, preparing, presenting, and promoting fruits and vegetables. Tips for teaching students “salad bar etiquette” to address food safety concerns are included. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/fv_galore.html
- The *Inventory Management and Tracking Reference Guide*, developed by the USDA FNS and NFSMI, presents information that may be new to school nutrition operators and updates information about traditional inventory management in light of new traceability expectations. This resource includes SOP templates for transporting food within your district to remote serving sites and receiving foods (at a serving site) from a central/production kitchen. www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=431 ■

Foodborne illness can be caused by bacteria, viruses, molds, and parasites found on raw produce. These microorganisms are a natural part of the environment and can be a problem for both organic and conventionally grown produce.



The Farm to School initiative is an effort to connect schools with regional or local farms in order to serve healthy meals using locally produced foods. Check out the USDA’s Farm to School Web site, www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school. It can assist schools in starting or expanding their Farm to School activities and provides food safety guidance for them as well.

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

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Managing Food Allergies

A food allergy is an exaggerated immune response to a specific food, referred to as a food allergen. Although the immune system normally protects us from germs, in individuals with food allergies this system mistakenly responds to a food as if it is harmful. When exposed to a food allergen, the immune system of an allergic person makes a protein called IgE antibody. This protein alerts cells to release powerful chemicals, such as histamine, that cause symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin, or cardiovascular system, and can lead to a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. Although more than 170 foods are known to cause a food allergy, in the United States, eight foods – milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, soy, peanuts, and tree nuts – account for 90 percent of these allergies.

Food allergies are a growing food safety and public health concern in schools that affect an estimated 4-6% of children in the United States. Studies indicate that 16-18 % of children with food allergies have had a reaction from accidentally eating food allergens while at school. In addition, 25% of the severe and potentially life-threatening reactions (anaphylaxis) reported at schools happened in children with no previous diagnosis of food allergy.¹ Currently, there are no treatments available for preventing food allergies; the key to managing food allergies is to avoid exposure to food allergens. However, avoidance is not always easy or possible, and accidental reactions to foods, including anaphylaxis, can occur in school.

It is important for your school district to develop and carry out policies and procedures to manage food allergies which may include educating staff, parents, and teachers about food allergies; preventing exposure to food allergens; and responding quickly and effectively to a child experiencing a reaction.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Educate yourself and your staff about food allergies.
 - The USDA FNS and NFSMI have developed a variety of food allergy resources for child nutrition professionals including food allergen fact sheets, videos, and a comprehensive training curriculum.
www.nfsmi.org/foodallergy
2. Collaborate with other school community members to develop and implement a written food allergy management plan for each school in your district. A variety of resources are available to help you craft a plan, including:
 - *The Food Allergy Book: What School Employees Need to Know*, developed by the USDA FNS and the National Education Association Health Information Network (NEA HIN), provides information in English and Spanish about food allergies and allergic reactions at school. It helps school employees identify the most common foods that might trigger an allergic reaction; the signs and symptoms of a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction, anaphylaxis; and their role in helping to manage food allergies in schools.
www.neahin.org/educator-resources/foodallergybook.html
 - The CDC *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs* provide a framework to build strong partnerships among families, medical providers, and staff in schools to help children overcome the challenges that come from having a food allergy. The guidelines also call for strong leadership in schools, comprehensive plans for protecting students with food allergies, and effective responses to food allergy emergencies.

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www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/pdf/13_243135_A_Food_Allergy_Web_508.pdf

- As part of your action plan, give employees specific guidance on how to respond to a child's allergic reaction and provide immediate emergency care. Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) offers an emergency care plan template that can be used as a starting point.

www.foodallergy.org/faap ■

Food intolerances, such as lactose intolerance, are often confused with food allergies because both can result in cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or other gastrointestinal symptoms. Food intolerance involves the digestive system, while a food allergy involves the immune system. Food intolerances are generally not life-threatening, unlike food allergies, which can cause severe, life-threatening reactions.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2013.



Accommodations and substitutions to school meals for children must be made, at no additional cost, when a licensed physician considers a food allergy or intolerance a disability. Disabilities are defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA) of 2008 broadened the definition of disabilities to encompass more impairments that limit Major Life Activities. The USDA issued Guidance Related to the ADA Amendments Act (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP36-2013os.pdf>). The USDA also issued guidance for school nutrition staff to address how accommodations should be handled: Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs in the School Nutrition Programs. Each state's administering agency for USDA's Child Nutrition Programs (known commonly as the State Agency) provides support tools for accommodating special dietary needs. www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/special_dietary_needs.pdf

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

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Food Defense

Food defense means protecting food from *intentional contamination* by biological, chemical, physical, or radiological agents that can cause harm or death. Schools may be a target for an attack on their food supply for specific reasons: Children are a vulnerable population; harming children who are assumed to be safe at school would have a major emotional impact on the community and beyond; schools provide very large numbers of servings per day; schools dispense very large batches of a single food on any given day; and activities such as transporting prepared foods from a central kitchen to a school site increase the risk of intentional contamination.

Also, food can be at risk of intentional contamination during handling at a school – from receiving through storing, preparing, and serving. Intentional acts are hard to predict and require an immediate and thorough response.

Food defense involves having measures in place to reduce the chances of someone intentionally contaminating the food in your school nutrition operation and to prepare for a quick response if an emergency does occur.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Develop and implement a written food defense plan for each school within your district.
 - The USDA FNS offers a practical workbook tool, *Creating Your School Food Defense Plan*, that walks you through the process of developing a food defense plan.
www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/food-safety-resources#Defense
2. Train all school nutrition staff in your district on food defense.
 - The FDA created a number of resources to raise awareness about food defense in the foodservice industry and assist foodservice managers in their food defense training and exercise programs. These resources can be accessed online at www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/ToolsEducationalMaterials/default.htm and include the:
 - ALERT initiative
 - Employees FIRST initiative
 - Food Related Emergency Exercise Bundle (FREE-B)
3. Test your district's readiness to respond to a food defense incident by holding drills or exercises.
 - *Defending Food in Schools – a Tabletop Exercise Action Management Toolkit* (DFNS TEAM Toolkit), is a turnkey resource created by the USDA FNS that provides all the background and materials needed to help a school district conduct a food defense tabletop exercise involving contamination of food in the National School Lunch Program. To learn more about this exercise, contact the NFSMI Training Team at training@nfsmi.org ■

Food defense and food safety are similar—both focus on preventing the contamination of food. But you may need some different or additional actions to prevent the **intentional** contamination of food.

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

Responding to Food Recalls

A food recall occurs when there is reason to believe that a food may cause illness or injury. A food manufacturer or distributor initiates the recall to take foods off the market. In some situations, government agencies request a recall based on information they receive following a complaint or an investigation of illness.

Some reasons for recalling food include:

- Discovery of a pathogen in a product, which may result in illness.
- Discovery of a physical hazard in a food, such as plastic, metal, or glass.
- Mislabeling or misbranding food. For example, a food may contain an allergen, such as nuts or eggs, but those ingredients do not appear on the label.

When a recall occurs, school nutrition operations must respond rapidly to make sure the recalled food is not served and to identify recalled food that may have been served already. Having procedures in place to respond to a food recall will assure a quick response and will protect children.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Contact your State agency, processors, suppliers, and distributors to learn how your school district will be alerted to food recalls. Recall procedures may differ for USDA Foods and commercial foods. USDA Foods are foods purchased by the USDA for child nutrition programs. Commercial foods are foods purchased directly from a commercial source such as a processor, supplier, distributor, or other vendor.

2. Develop and implement a recall alert system within your school district to ensure that each school learns about food recalls rapidly and understands how to respond to a food recall alert.
 - *Responding to a Food Recall* is a manual offered through the USDA FNS and NFSMI that provides an overview of the recall process for USDA Foods with a focus on school meals programs. Particular attention is given to the roles of various entities in communicating information to ensure that recalls are handled in a timely and effective manner.
<http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=444>
 - Template standard operating procedures to address preparing for and responding to food recalls are offered through the USDA FNS and NFSMI.
http://sop.nfsmi.org/sop_list.php
3. Establish an inventory management system that tracks what food is in inventory, when it was received, where it is stored, and when and where it was distributed.
 - The *Inventory Management and Tracking Reference Guide*, developed by the USDA FNS and NFSMI, presents information that may be new to school nutrition operators and updates information about traditional inventory management in light of new traceability expectations. This resource includes language for bids and processing agreements that requires suppliers and distributors to address recalls and product traceability.
www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=431 ■

To find the latest information about commercial food recalls and to sign up for free email notification of all USDA FSIS and FDA food recalls, visit www.foodsafety.gov/recalls.

Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

Action Sheet

Responding to a Foodborne Illness Outbreak

A foodborne illness outbreak occurs when two or more people get the same illness from eating contaminated food from a common source. While foodborne illness outbreaks are relatively uncommon in schools, they do occur. Even one case of foodborne illness can be devastating. Outbreaks can threaten children's lives. Parents can panic. Districts can be held financially liable.

Protecting the safety and welfare of students and school staff are priorities when a foodborne illness outbreak occurs at a school. An investigation of an outbreak goes through many steps. Each outbreak will have unique characteristics that present a variety of issues for investigators; therefore, it is important to be prepared to respond to different types of investigations. Due to the challenges associated with an investigation, it may take investigators days, weeks, or months to identify the source of contamination that caused illness. You can help decrease this investigation time, and possibly prevent new illnesses from occurring, by preparing your school nutrition team for an outbreak investigation, and helping them understand response expectations.

Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Work with your State or local health department to determine what records, documents, and information the school nutrition team will need to provide during an outbreak investigation.
2. Develop procedures for employees to maintain complete records, documents, and information—and be able to retrieve them quickly.
 - *Serving it Safe*, offered through NFSMI, provides school nutrition personnel at all levels with information for managing a safe and sanitary school foodservice operation. *Serving it Safe* includes guidance on preventing and responding to foodborne illness.
www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=327 ■

Norovirus is a very contagious virus that causes sudden stomach illness. Most people, however, get better without treatment. Norovirus outbreaks have a dramatic impact on school attendance and the health of students and school staff. From 2000 to 2004, data showed that 67 percent of illnesses associated with confirmed foodborne illness outbreaks in school settings were attributed to norovirus. Contamination of foods with norovirus generally occurs when infected persons handle food. More information on the occurrence of norovirus in schools can be found in the *Journal of Environmental Health* publication *Analyses of eFORS (Electronic Foodborne Outbreak Reporting System) Surveillance Data (2000-2004) in School Settings*.

www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food_Safety_EFORS_JEH_2010.pdf

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The National School Lunch Act: Food Safety Requirements

- The *Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act* is a Federal law that provides assistance to States in establishing, maintaining, operating, and expanding child nutrition programs offered through schools. It requires these programs to meet minimum food safety requirements. www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/legislation
- The USDA FNS created *Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP* to assist SFAs in developing a school food safety program based on the process approach to HACCP. You may have used this guidance to develop your existing food safety program or to modify your existing plan, if necessary. www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food_Safety_HACCPGuidance.pdf
- A frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) document was developed by the USDA FNS to guide you through the food safety requirements of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP37-2013os.pdf

A School Food Safety Program Based on HACCP Principles

- The USDA FNS *Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP* identifies the need to develop food safety SOPs and the minimum elements you must include in using HACCP principles and a process approach to HACCP. www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food_Safety_HACCPGuidance.pdf

- The NFSMI developed a *Template for Developing a School Food Safety Program*, which also reflects the required elements and provides a practical planning approach. www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=57
- The NFSMI also offers a variety of HACCP-based SOP templates that can be used directly or modified to meet the circumstances of any school nutrition operation. <http://sop.nfsmi.org/HACCPBasedSOPs.php>
- Additional guidance and tools on HACCP-based SOPs are available through the NFSMI. <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080207024226.pdf> One tool allows you to build customized SOPs, <http://sop.nfsmi.org/login4.php#register>
- *USDA Recipes for Schools*. These updated recipes from the 1988 *Quantity Recipes for School Food Service* and the 1995 *Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals* reflect the changes made in the newest edition of the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. Revised recipes have been standardized, edited for consistency, and updated with Critical Control Point (CCP) information from the 2003 Food Code supplement. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/usda-recipes-schools>
- The recipes are also available alphabetically or numerically on the NFSMI website. <http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=487>

Training and Education

- The Conference for Food Protection through the American National Standards Institute lists accredited programs, as defined by the FDA *Food Code*, that offer a food protection manager certification program. <https://www.ansica.org/wwwversion2/outside/ALLdirectoryListing.asp?menuID=8&prgID=8&status=4>

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- *Serving it Safe* is a training program offered through NFSMI that provides school nutrition personnel at all levels with information for managing a safe and sanitary nutrition operation. www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=327
- The NFSMI offers a variety of training resources for child nutrition professionals. www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?q=cEIEPTU3

Employee Health and Personal Hygiene

- The USDA FNS and NFSMI have developed Employee Health and Personal Hygiene resources that highlight best practices for child nutrition employees to use to prevent spreading pathogens that can cause foodborne illnesses. www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=430
- *The Stomach Bug Book: What School Employees Need to Know* is a booklet that explains what school employees need to know about stomach illnesses at school. Available in both English and Spanish, it speaks to school nutrition workers, nurses, custodians, teachers, para-educators, education assistants, bus drivers, and school secretaries. www.neahin.org/educator-resources/stomach-bug-book-english.html
- For more information on the CDC estimates of foodborne illness, see *CDC Vital Signs*. www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/foodsafety
- *Quality Food for Quality Meals*, offered through the USDA FNS, provides information you need to select and purchase good quality and safe produce. It includes guidance on selecting suppliers and establishing food safety specifications. http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/quality_intro.pdf
- *Handling Fresh Produce in Schools* outlines best practices for handling all types of fresh produce, with attention to melons, tomatoes, and leafy greens. www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=351
- *Fruits and Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More* provides tips on planning, purchasing, protecting, preparing, presenting, and promoting fruits and vegetables. Tips for teaching students “salad bar etiquette” to address food safety concerns are included. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/fruits-vegetables-galore-helping-kids-eat-more
- The *Inventory Management and Tracking Reference Guide*, developed by the USDA FNS and NFSMI, presents information that may be new to school nutrition operators and updates information about traditional inventory management in light of new traceability expectations. This resource includes SOP templates for transporting food within your district to remote serving sites, and receiving foods (at a serving site) from a central/production kitchen. www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=431

Produce Safety

- The USDA FNS developed a wealth of produce safety information – including information food safety fact sheets, videos, presentations, and talking points – that can be found on the NFSMI Web site. www.nfsmi.org/producesafety

Managing Food Allergies

- The USDA FNS developed *Guidance for Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs in the School Nutrition Programs*. This guidance describes some of the factors which must be considered in the early phases of planning

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and suggests ways in which school nutrition staff can interact with other responsible parties in the school and the community at large to serve children with disabilities, including those with life-threatening food allergies.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/accommodating-children-special-dietary-needs-school-nutrition-programs>

- *The Food Allergy Book: What School Employees Need to Know*, developed by the USDA FNS and the National Education Association Health Information Network (NEA HIN), provides information in English and Spanish about food allergies and allergic reactions at school. It helps school employees identify the most common foods that might trigger an allergic reaction; the signs and symptoms of a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction, anaphylaxis; and their role in helping to manage food allergies in schools.
<http://www.neahin.org/educator-resources/foodallergybook.html>
- The USDA FNS and NFSMI have developed a series of food allergy fact sheets for child nutrition professionals and a food allergy standard operating procedure.
<http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=452>
<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20130227020642.pdf>
(food allergy standard operating procedure)
- Include emergency care plans for children with food allergies as part of your food allergy action plan to provide school employees with specific guidance on how to respond to a child's allergic reaction. Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) offers an emergency care plan template that can be used as a starting point.
www.foodallergy.org/faap

Food Defense

- The USDA FNS offers a practical workbook tool, *Creating Your School Food Defense Plan*, that walks you through the process of developing a food defense plan.
www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/food-safety-resources#Defense
- The FDA created a number of resources to raise awareness about food defense in the retail foodservice industry and assist foodservice managers in their food defense training and exercise programs. These resources can be accessed online at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/> and include the:
 - ALERT initiative
 - Employees FIRST initiative
 - Food Related Emergency Exercise Bundle (FREE-B)
- *Defending Food in Schools – a Tabletop Exercise Action Management Toolkit* (DFNS TEAM Toolkit), is a turnkey resource created by the USDA FNS that provides all the background and materials needed to help a school district conduct a food defense tabletop exercise involving contamination of food in the National School Lunch Program.
www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/food-safety-resources#Defense

Responding to Food Recalls

- To find the latest information about commercial food recalls and to sign up for free email notification of all USDA FSIS and FDA food recalls, visit www.foodsafety.gov/recalls
- *Responding to a Food Recall* is a manual offered through the USDA FNS and NFSMI that provides

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an overview of the recall process for USDA Foods with a focus on school meals programs. Particular attention is given to the roles of various entities in communicating information to ensure that recalls are handled in a timely and effective manner.

<http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=444>

- Template standard operating procedures to address preparing for and responding to food recalls are offered through the USDA FNS and NFSMI.

http://sop.nfsmi.org/sop_list.php

- The *Inventory Management and Tracking Reference Guide*, developed by the USDA FNS and NFSMI, presents information that may be new to school nutrition operators and updates information about traditional inventory management in light of new traceability expectations. This resource includes language for bids and processing agreements that requires suppliers and distributors to address recalls and product traceability.

www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=431

Responding to Foodborne Illness Outbreaks

- *Serving it Safe*, offered through NFSMI, provides school nutrition personnel at all levels with information for managing a safe and sanitary school foodservice operation. *Serving it Safe* includes guidance on preventing and responding to foodborne illness.

www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=327



Part 3

Communicating with the School Community to Create a Culture of Food Safety

The previous part of the Action Guide, Part 2 “Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools,” identified various areas of food safety that need to be addressed, actions to take to address these areas, and resources that will help you develop specific plans, policies, and procedures. What will be the impact of these efforts within your school community? Is there an area that has yet to be addressed to build your food-safe schools? Part 3 of the Action Guide will look at communicating with partners in the school community to create a culture of food safety.

One of the most common contributing factors to foodborne illness is unsafe human behavior. Simply put, food safety and behavior go hand in hand. Historically, food safety efforts have focused on regulatory inspections and training, but there is evidence that these efforts alone are only partially effective. You also must strive to change the way people do things – their behavior. Your goal should be to create a culture of food safety by focusing not only on processes, but also on people.

A culture of food safety within your school community will be evident when food safety behaviors are routinely practiced and demonstrated. In creating this culture, food safety needs to be viewed as a value rather than a priority. Priorities can change; values should not.

So, how do you achieve a culture of food safety? Where do you begin? Communication and culture are two sides of the same coin. Your commitment to food safety needs to be visibly demonstrated to the school community. Leaders tend to *talk* about what is important to them. If you never communicate with your partners in the school community about food safety, chances are food safety probably isn't part of your culture.

Part 3 has three sections:

Section One, *Communication Tips for School Nutrition Directors*, focuses on you, the nutrition director. This section offers tips for communicating with your partners about food safety and food safety behavior.

Section Two, *Building Food-Safe Schools: Strategies for School Community Members*, focuses on your school community partners and offers strategies for *them* to use to contribute to the creation of a culture of food safety. These strategies are presented in the form of handouts that you can use to communicate with, or provide to, your partners. Handouts are available for the following school community partners:

- School Nutrition Managers
- School Administrators
- Teachers
- Parents
- Students
- School Nurses
- Local Health Department
- Emergency Planners
- Cooperative Extension Educators

Keep in mind that this list of school community partners is not exhaustive. You might not interact with some of the partners listed, or there may be additional partners that you want to consider and include in your food safety efforts.

Communicating with the School Community to Create a Culture of Food Safety

Section Three, *Food Safety Resources for the School Community*, provides a list of resources that you can use to communicate about food safety with your partners, or share with your partners to help them communicate food safety to others. In the resources you will find slightly different guidance for the temperature danger zone between the recommendations for consumers, such as parents or students, compared with guidance for school nutrition operators. For example, consumers would be advised the temperature

danger zone is 40°F - 140°F while for school nutrition operators the temperature danger zone is 41°F - 135°F. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have developed educational materials for consumers that incorporate a margin of safety beyond the scientifically sound guidance for retail and foodservice institutions, such as schools, found in the FDA *Food Code*. Remember, however, your State and local public health department code requirements should be followed if they are different.



Communication Tips for School Nutrition Directors

The current culture of your school community may not value food safety, perhaps because community members don't have the necessary knowledge or skills, or current systems don't support desirable behaviors, or, maybe community members simply lack motivation to practice safe behaviors. You may encounter community groups who want to use your kitchen to prepare large quantities of food for community events, or you may have school staff that wants to use your kitchen to store and prepare their own food. Existing cultures aren't easy to change but, with an effective leader, they *can* be changed.

Are you a food safety leader in your school community? You can be! As a school nutrition director, you can be confident that you have valuable food safety expertise to share. You probably have a good handle on maintaining food systems and processes, but do you work on continual improvement? Leadership requires more than just food safety expertise. As a leader, you must create a vision, set expectations, and inspire others. By reaching out to partners, you will improve food safety in your school community and you will succeed in creating a culture of food safety.

Communication Tips

The following tips are intended to get you thinking about ways to engage partners in creating a culture of food safety. You aren't expected to use every idea right away – take the ideas you like and leave the ones you don't like! You already may use some of these tips to communicate about food safety, or you may use a variety of other communication methods to get your message out.

Tip #1: Set the Stage

- Clearly define food safety as a value in your school community.
- Put this commitment in writing.
- Ask other leaders in the school community to contribute to crafting a set of food safety beliefs or principles.
- Walk your talk! Remember, if you never talk about food safety, it's probably not part of your culture.

Tip #2: Walk a Mile in Your Partners' Shoes

- Understand why your partners are uniquely essential to building food-safe schools and creating a culture of food safety.
- Think about the partner group with whom you are communicating. What are their challenges and priorities? What are their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about food safety? How will you influence these attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions?

Tip #3: Have a Conversation

- Start conversations with your partners. Talking to people is different from having a conversation with them. Conversations can increase the likelihood that messages are understood. They are participatory and can break down barriers.
- Ask your partners questions. This step may uncover potential problems and will give you insight into how they perceive their role in a culture of food safety.

Communication Tips for School Nutrition Directors

Tip #4: Establish Food Safety Expectations

- Establish goals *with* your partners. Through conversations, you can learn about what your partners' food safety priorities are and perhaps help them consider other priorities. It is more effective to establish goals and priorities *before* providing education and training.
- Discuss with your partners specific actions they can take to meet their goals.
- Keep goals and actions manageable. They should be simple, clear, relevant, and address critical areas of food safety (i.e., those areas most important to preventing foodborne illness and injury). Don't overwhelm your partners with too many goals and tasks.

Tip #5: Be Creative and Innovative

- Use a variety of methods to communicate with your partners. You are very busy and likely need to communicate with many people in the school community. In-person conversations are ideal, but may not always be realistic. How can you use standing meetings (e.g., teacher in-service or PTA), established print materials (e.g., newsletters, school menus), email distribution lists, and social media to communicate with your partners?
- Value and respect your school community's diversity. Some groups may not respond to commonly used methods of communication. Why not? Is there a language, literacy, or time barrier? Perhaps communicating in multiple languages, or through pictures and icons, could be more effective. Sometimes, less can be more (i.e., a short, but clear, message).
- Make education and training participatory and hands-on! Try to engage your partners by appealing to all of the senses.

Tip #6: Use Consequences

- Use consequences to help shape or reinforce proper food safety behaviors. Consequences can be positive and negative, but research indicates that positive consequences (i.e., positive reinforcements) are more effective. Remember, people need to be reassured that their efforts are worthwhile!

Tip #7: Make It Personal

- Personalize your messages. A very effective way to communicate the importance of food safety is to add personal examples of their impact to your messages.
- Ask individuals within your school community who have personal experience with foodborne illness or injury to share their stories. For example, is there a student who has experienced an anaphylactic reaction to a food allergen? If so, ask that student or his/her parents to help others understand why food allergy management is important.
- Share personal stories about foodborne illness and injury with your school community to communicate the importance of food safety. Even if you can't find members within your own school community to share personal experiences, you can use stories from children and families in other parts of the country.

Building Food-Safe Schools: Strategies For School Community Partners

Using the Strategy Sheets

Use the strategy sheets that follow as a conversation starter to initiate your food safety discussions with your school community. Electronic or hard copies of the strategy sheets can be provided to your partners so that they have a tangible message to take away with them.

First, each strategy sheet offers a brief background about how that group, for example school administrators, teachers, or school nurses, can benefit from including food safety as a priority and why food-safe schools and a culture of food safety are important. You can add to this background by verbally communicating your own experiences and examples.

Second, two to three reasons are offered to explain why that group is essential to creating a food safety culture. You may think of plenty more that should be included. Communicate those additional reasons. Third, you want to get that group to think about food safety. Questions are posed to help you understand how those school community members may perceive their role in food-safe schools and how they may contribute.

Finally, two to three specific actions are proposed. These actions should reflect steps that those school community members can take to help build food-safe schools and create a culture of food safety. Feel free to change the actions, or any part of the strategy sheets, to better communicate with your school community. ■



Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for School Nutrition Managers

As a school nutrition manager, you are one of the most important players on your school's foodservice team. Every day, you lead your school's food safety efforts by ensuring that your students are fed safe, nutritious meals. You are the food safety expert for your school. Take a *lead* in making your school a food-safe school! Share your expertise and passion for food safety with your school community.

Food-safe schools adopt a school-wide approach to food safety and, with the help of partners in the school community, can create a culture of food safety. They address a broad range of food safety topics beyond the scope of what may be required by legislation. This starts with building and supporting strong food safety policies and procedures and continues with education and training. Partners can help achieve the ultimate goal of making food safety second nature to everyone in the school community, thus creating a culture of food safety.

School Nutrition Managers Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You are the front line in assuring the safety of the food provided to students through school meal and snack programs.
- You are the expert in food safety within your school.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Does your school nutrition team apply its food safety training, and the school's policies and procedures, *every* time food is handled, prepared, and served?

- Do you have plans in place to address food recalls, food defense, and foodborne illness outbreaks and to manage food allergies?
- Is food for school meals prepared and/or served outside of the cafeteria? If so, how do you make sure this food is handled and served safely?
- Can you recognize and correct breakdowns in food safety practices, in the cafeteria and in other school settings?
- How can you help other members of your school community contribute to a food-safe school?

Take Action!

- Lead your school's food safety efforts. Be the school's food safety expert by knowing your district's and school's food safety policies and procedures inside out – and understanding *why* they are important. Ensure that your school nutrition team understands food safety principles and uses sound practices each time they prepare and serve food. Ask your school nutrition director about new developments in food safety.
- Share your expertise and passion for food safety. Work with your school nutrition director to learn how you can engage others in the school community in your efforts. Be proud of and confident in your role as the school's food safety expert. In this role you have a responsibility to ensure that the food kids eat through school meal and snack programs is safe – whether they eat on the bus, in the classroom, or in another school setting. You also can engage other school community partners in your efforts to ensure that all food served to kids is safe. ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Administrators

What can you do to safeguard students' health, decrease absenteeism, prevent legal liabilities, and maintain positive relationships with parents and the community? Make food safety a priority! School administrators are responsible for the health and safety of students and staff in their schools. By placing food safety high on your list of priorities, others will follow the lead.

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Administrators Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You can launch a school-wide approach to food safety. Your support is critical for developing and putting school food safety policies and procedures into action—in the cafeteria and *throughout* the school community.
- You have the power to make food safety a priority in schools, protecting students, staff, and the school from foodborne illness.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Among the many priorities you juggle as an administrator, where do you place food safety—in the cafeteria as well as throughout the school?
- Could increasing the focus on food safety help you deal with other important concerns—like absenteeism, legal liabilities, and relationships with the community?

- Are you concerned about food served through other school programs (independent of school meals programs)? An example would be food served through fundraising events or celebrations.
- If you could take some steps to enhance food safety, what would they be?
- How can the school nutrition team help you take those steps?

Take Action!

- Enhance your knowledge of food safety. Find out more about your school district's food safety efforts by meeting with members of the school nutrition team. These efforts should address everything from receiving food from safe sources, to safely preparing nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables, to managing food allergies. You have a role in all of these efforts!
- Understand why food safety has a place in schools. Did you know that norovirus, a very contagious stomach illness that can cause people to feel sick suddenly with no warning, was responsible for more than 10,000 illnesses associated with foodborne outbreaks in schools between 1998 and 2009? This is just one example of how foodborne illness can interfere with education.
- Promote good food safety behaviors among students and staff. Take the lead and set the example! By encouraging sound food safety practices, such as proper handwashing and safe food handling inside *and* outside of the cafeteria, you will show the school community that you value food safety. Find ways to promote food safety such as in-service training sessions for teachers, handwashing competitions for students, and educational outreach for parents.

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Teachers

When students regularly eat nutritious meals, they are more alert and focused in the classroom. Ensuring that these meals are safe also is critical to classroom success. Unsafe food can adversely affect students' health and increase absenteeism. As a teacher, you are in a unique position – you can influence your students' attitudes about food safety to keep them healthy every day!

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Teachers Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You are among the most important role models and sources of information for your students.
- You are in an excellent position to help children understand the importance of food safety and to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to handle food safely.
- The knowledge you provide can help decrease the number of students who become sick from foodborne illness.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Do your students know how to properly wash their hands and why handwashing is important?

- Do you encourage your students to wash their hands before they eat?
- Do you encourage your students to wash their hands after using the restroom and after recess?
- Are you responsible for handling or serving food in your classroom?
- If you could take some steps to enhance food safety, what would they be?
- How can the school nutrition team help you take those steps?

Take Action!

- Encourage proper handwashing. Proper handwashing is critical to food safety and illness prevention and should be encouraged, particularly after students use the restroom and before they eat. Teach your students how to properly wash their hands and allow time for handwashing before and after meals. Remember, hand sanitizers have their place, but the best practice is still good, old-fashioned handwashing!
- Be a food safety role model. Demonstrate good food safety practices in the classroom. Always wash your hands before handling or serving food, and never handle food directly with your bare hands (use gloves or utensils). Monitor food temperatures to prevent harmful bacteria from growing in food. Your school nutrition team can help you understand safe holding times and temperatures for food.
- Include food safety in your lessons. Use existing food safety curricula or incorporate aspects of food safety, such as taking food temperatures, into science or math classes. ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Parents

Getting your children properly fed every day is a critical factor in their educational development. Equally important is ensuring that the food they eat is safe and won't cause them harm. Today's fast-paced lifestyle places many demands on parents, and you may rely on schools to provide your children with safe, nutritious meals. It's good to know the school nutrition staff follows stringent food safety standards. As a parent, you have the primary responsibility for your children's care and behavior. You can teach your children about food safety, and you are an important role model for using good food safety practices. You also can urge school administrators to make food-safe schools a priority.

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Parents Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You are the primary source of information for your children.
- You are in the best position to teach them the importance of food safety to prevent illness.
- You can be an advocate for food-safe schools.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Do your children properly wash their hands before eating meals and snacks?
- Are procedures in place to keep the food your children eat at school safe?

- Does your child have a food allergy or intolerance? Have you spoken with school nutrition staff about your child's needs and provided staff with required medical documentation?
- How can you help build food-safe schools?

Take Action!

- Encourage handwashing and model food-safe behaviors.
Let your children see you washing your hands properly before meals, before preparing food, and after using the bathroom—and teach them to do the same!
- Ask the school nutrition staff to share information about food safety.
Ask your child's school to provide safe food handling recommendations so you can use safe methods to prepare and pack food for school. You also can learn more about food safety by becoming a BAC! Fighter. www.fightbac.org/
- Learn the causes and symptoms of foodborne illness.
Watch for symptoms, which range from slight discomfort to more serious problems. Seek medical care when your child has diarrhea, fever, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and dehydration. Always notify the school of your child's stomach illness, particularly if a diagnosis of a foodborne illness has been made.
- Educate your school community about your child's special dietary needs.
If your child has dietary restrictions, perhaps due to a diagnosed food allergy, educate everyone in the school community. It is important that everyone – administrators, teachers, the school nutrition team, bus drivers, students, and other parents – is aware of your child's needs. ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Students

Do you know what a food-safe school is and why it's important? Sometimes, the food you eat can make you very sick if it isn't safely prepared and handled. The good news is that there are things you, your parents, your teachers, and others can do to keep your food safe!

A food-safe school includes everyone in your community to create a culture of food safety. What's a culture of food safety? A culture of food safety means that everyone, every day, plays their part to keep the food that you eat at school safe!

Students Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You can make healthy behavior choices to keep your food safe.
- You have a voice at your school. Let your principal, teachers, and school nutrition (cafeteria) team know that food safety is important to you.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Do you wash your hands before eating meals and snacks?
- Do you know what your principal, teachers, school nutrition (cafeteria) team, and parents are doing to keep your food safe?
- What simple things can you do to keep your food safe?

Take Action!

- **CLEAN!** Wash your hands before eating snacks and meals.
Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, including the back of your hands and

under fingernails, and dry them with a paper towel, before eating snacks and meals. Don't be afraid to ask your teacher for permission to wash your hands before eating!

- **SEPARATE!** Think carefully about what you do with food.
Always keep raw meat, chicken, and fish separate from each other and other types of food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables so harmful bacteria don't move from food that will be cooked to food that won't be cooked. Some people may have food allergies – that means that eating a certain food can make them very, very sick. Food allergies are very serious, so think twice about swapping lunches with your friends!
- **COOK!** Eat your hot food right away.
You may not have to worry about cooking food at school, but you do need to follow some basic rules when eating it. When you are served hot food, in the cafeteria, classroom, or anywhere else, eat it before it gets cold. It will taste better and food that sits out and is not kept hot may grow germs!
- **CHILL!** Keep your cold food cold.
If you bring your lunch from home, ask your parents to include ice or ice packs in your lunchbox, or ask your teacher if you can keep your lunch in a refrigerator. Try not to keep leftover food from snacks or meals served at school. Food may grow germs if it's not kept cold! ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for School Nurses

Not every school has a nurse; your school is lucky to have you! An outbreak of foodborne illness can fill your clinic fast – preventing illness is a top priority. You can prevent foodborne illness by helping your school nutrition team engage community partners in the school’s food safety efforts. You also can work with partners to detect illnesses early and quickly implement measures to prevent additional illnesses.

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School Nurses Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You have a unique perspective and can help develop and implement health education curricula.
- You play a key role in promoting prevention strategies, such as regular and proper handwashing.
- You are integrally involved with disability and allergy care plans.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Are you aware of your school’s existing food safety efforts? What is your role in these efforts?
- Can you quickly recognize the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction to food or a foodborne illness?
- If you could take some steps to enhance food safety, what would they be?

Take Action!

- Promote handwashing among students and staff. Handwashing – an oldie, but goodie! Leverage your role as the medical professional within the school to promote the importance of proper handwashing. Visit with individual classes to discuss the topic and provide demonstrations. Encourage administrators and custodial staff to keep hand sinks equipped with warm, running water, soap, and paper towels. Help teachers find ways to schedule handwashing breaks for students before meals.
- Verify that your school has a Food Allergy Action Plan. As a nurse, you know how devastating an allergic reaction to food can be. Is your school community prepared to prevent allergic reactions from occurring and respond to reactions when they do occur? Meet with your administrators and school nutrition team to ensure that your school’s plan identifies all students with food allergies, maintains an individualized emergency care plan for each student with a food allergy, and prepares others in the school community to prevent and respond to allergic reactions to food.
- Develop a recordkeeping system to track absences related to illness. Surveillance is critical to identify and track outbreaks of illness, including foodborne illness. Help your school develop *and use* a recordkeeping system to track absenteeism. The system should capture information to help identify symptoms, diagnoses, and treatments, etc. Review these records regularly to identify potential trends you may want to share with other partners. ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for the Local Health Department

If a foodborne illness outbreak occurred at a school in your district would the school be prepared to respond and assist you, the Local Health Department (LHD) professional, in your investigation? Does a close relationship exist between the LHD and the school district to facilitate communication? Do you have a partnership that strives to prevent and rapidly respond to foodborne illness outbreaks, food recalls, and food defense threats?

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The Local Health Department Is Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

As the local expert in food safety, the LHD professional can:

- Serve as an invaluable food safety resource and provide training to the school nutrition team.
- Assist schools in developing food safety policies, procedures, and activities to promote sound food safety practices throughout the school community.
- Lead investigations of foodborne illness outbreaks and implement control measures to stop the spread of illness.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Are you aware of each school's existing food safety efforts? What specific role do LHD professionals play in these efforts?
- Does the LHD help the school district meet its legislative requirements by conducting two food safety inspections at each school, each school year?
- What are some ways that the LHD can help the school nutrition team enhance food safety in the school community?

Take Action!

- Establish partnerships within the school district. Establish working relationships with the school nutrition director and the school nutrition managers. Communicate with the director when a food safety issue arises in a school. Share new information with the director to enhance food safety efforts within the school community.
- Establish guidelines for responding to foodborne illness outbreaks. Establish guidelines for contacting the LHD about a suspected foodborne illness outbreak. Prepare the school community members for a potential investigation by letting them know what to expect during an investigation and what information the LHD will need to collect. Investigate suspected foodborne illness outbreaks in collaboration with school staff. ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Emergency Planners

Who knows more about preparing for emergencies, preventing crises, and responding to emergency situations quickly and effectively than you, the emergency planner? Sharing your expertise and working with the school nutrition team can help establish and support safe and healthy schools. By working with partners in the school community, you can help the school nutrition director establish plans to prevent and respond to foodborne illness, particularly illness that may result from intentional contamination.

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Emergency Planners Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You are the local expert in planning and preparing for crises and emergencies. An incident involving the school food supply may warrant an emergency response.
 - You can help schools understand how the effective application of the Incident Command System (ICS) will help when responding to an emergency.
 - You can help school nutrition directors identify and plan for potential emergencies involving food served in schools and the impact of those emergencies on the school community.
- You can assist schools with rapid crisis communication during food-related emergencies.

Thinking About Food Safety

- How do the four phases of effective emergency management planning (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery) apply to school nutrition? Should food-related emergencies be part of a comprehensive school emergency management plan?
- What are some ways that you can help the school nutrition team enhance food safety in the school community?

Take Action!

- Establish a partnership with the school nutrition director.
Collaboration and communication are critical to emergency management. Talk with the school nutrition director about a food-related emergency management plan. Ensure that it takes an “all-hazards” approach; includes a risk assessment, Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), and emergency feeding plan; and addresses intentional and unintentional incidents that may contaminate the food supply.
- Assist in developing a food defense plan.
Meet with the school nutrition director to discuss and review the school district’s food defense plan. Provide specific suggestions to include in or enhance that plan. Assist the school nutrition director in running a drill or exercise to test their preparedness. ■

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Cooperative Extension Educators

The Cooperative Extension Service, located at county offices across the United States and at land-grant colleges and universities, receives Federal funds from the USDA to focus on research, education, and extension in the food and agricultural sciences and related environmental and human sciences. Cooperative Extension educators may provide training, materials, and resources on a variety of topics including food safety. You, the Cooperative Extension educator, can play a vital role in providing practical information and reliable training to schools on food safety topics.

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Cooperative Extension Educators Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

Cooperative Extension Educators can:

- Provide food safety training and materials to the school community.
- Help schools incorporate food safety into existing healthy school plans.
- Contribute to and provide access to scientific knowledge that can inform and assist with the development of school food safety procedures.
- Provide a communication network to inform the community of school food safety efforts.

Thinking About Food Safety

- Are the schools that you serve taking full advantage of your services and resources to maximize their food safety efforts?
- What are some ways that the Cooperative Extension can help the school nutrition team enhance food safety in the school community?

Take Action!

- Take a proactive role in the school district's food safety efforts.
Meet with the school nutrition director and discuss specific types of food safety support and training, including food safety curricula, materials, and updates on current food safety research and practices, that the Cooperative Extension can provide.
- Publicize and provide recognition for food safety activities of schools.
The Cooperative Extension Service has strong connections in the community and can help to publicize and provide recognition for the school district's food safety activities. Working with schools to get their story out could strengthen food safety partnerships throughout the school community. ■

Food Safety Resources for the School Community

These resources are provided for you, the school nutrition director, to communicate about food safety with your partners, or share with your partners to help them communicate food safety to others.

Resources for All Community Members

- *The Stomach Bug Book: What School Employees Need to Know* is a booklet that explains what school employees need to know about stomach illnesses at school. Available in both English and Spanish, it speaks to school nutrition workers, nurses, custodians, teachers, para-educators, education assistants, bus drivers, and school secretaries.
www.neahin.org/educator-resources/stomach-bug-book-english.html
- FoodSafety.gov is the gateway to food safety information provided by Federal Government agencies. It compiles information from the White House, USDA, FDA, CDC, and NIH.
www.foodsafety.gov
- FightBAC! – Learn more about food safety, become a BAC! Fighter, and/or sign-up for free weekly e-cards through the Partnership for Food Safety Education. You can even modify the FightBAC! E-cards to meet the needs of your school community.
www.fightbac.org
- *Food Safe Families* aims to raise awareness of the risks of food poisoning, motivate consumers to take action to reduce their personal risk of food poisoning, and achieve safe food handling behaviors—Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill. The Food Safe Families Campaign Toolkit offers downloadable public service announcements, media outreach, and other resources to bring food safety into the home and classroom!
www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics
- The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has published a number of safe food handling fact sheets to help you keep your food safe in a variety of settings. Get tips on how to keep bagged lunches safe, food safety after school, and how to safely cook for groups such as those served at school fundraisers and pot lucks.
www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets
- The CDC Healthy Youth! Food Safety Web site connects you to resources and information related to food safety in schools.
www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodsafety
- Food Allergy Research & Education maintains a Web site with school guidelines for managing students with allergies. It contains a variety of resources including tips; State, school, and camp guidelines; and an e-learning center.
www.foodallergy.org/resources/schools

Resources for School Nutrition Managers

- The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) is dedicated to applied research, education and training, and technical assistance for child nutrition programs. NFSMI provides child nutrition (i.e., school nutrition) professionals with a variety of resources to enhance their knowledge and application of food safety principles.
www.nfsmi.org
- The School Nutrition Association (SNA) connects school nutrition professionals to a variety of food safety resources.
www.schoolnutrition.org

Food Safety Resources for the School Community

- The International Association for Food Protection (IAFP) has developed simple, wordless food safety icons to reinforce key food safety tasks. The icons are available free of charge for educational and non-commercial uses.
www.foodprotection.org/resources/food-safety-icons/icons.php

Resources for Administrators

- *Safe at School and Ready to Learn* offers school policymakers and administrators a comprehensive policy guide for protecting students with life-threatening allergies.
<https://www.nsba.org/safe-school-and-ready-learn-comprehensive-policy-guide-protecting-students-life-threatening-food>

Resources for Teachers and Students

- The *Partnership for Food Safety Education's Curriculum and Kids* section contains curricula for all age ranges from day care through high school.
www.fightbac.org/kids
- The FDA and the National Science Teachers Association have partnered to offer teachers a host of resources to create or enhance a food safety curriculum. Online lesson plans and resources, called *SciGuides*, and free subject-matter teacher tutorials, called *Science Objects* and *SciPacks*, are available in food science, microbiology, and nutrition. *Science and Our Food Supply* is a free supplementary curriculum designed for middle- and high-school classrooms.
www.nsta.org/pd/fda.aspx
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodScienceResearch/ToolsMaterials/ucm2006975.htm>

- The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service hosts a food safety education page for kids and teens that has food safety tips, activities, and games. www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/teach-others/download-materials/for-kids-and-teens

Resources for Parents and Children

- *Cook It Safe* provides parents and children with four simple steps for the preparation of safe convenience foods. Commercially prepared convenience foods can be purchased refrigerated, frozen, or off the shelf. It's important to carefully read and follow package cooking instructions. Not following the instructions can result in undercooked food, which can lead to foodborne illness.
www.fightbac.org/cookitsafe
- Learn more about food safety and how to protect your children from foodborne illness by becoming a BAC! Fighter.
www.fightbac.org

Resources for School Nurses

- The *Handbook for School Nurses* provides comprehensive information on foodborne illness, prevention, and early response. The leadership role of the school nurse in developing food-safe schools is identified, and a thorough and comprehensive guide is provided that is applicable in all school settings.
<http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/5163/>
- The National Association of School Nurses offers a variety of resources and tools to assist school nurses in the development of wellness resources, including extensive guidance on food allergy and anaphylaxis.
<http://www.nasn.org/ToolsResources/FoodAllergyandAnaphylaxis>

Food Safety Resources for the School Community

Resources for the Local Health Department

- The National Environmental Health Association's (NEHA) Food Safety Programs are dedicated to educating food safety and environmental health professionals. NEHA's Food Safe Schools (FSS) Program is dedicated to improving the health, education, and well-being of young people. www.neha.org/food_safety
- The *Food Related Emergency Exercise Bundle (FREE-B)* is a compilation of scenarios based on both intentional and unintentional food contamination events. It is designed with the intention of assisting government regulatory and public health agencies in assessing existing food emergency response plans, protocols and procedures that may be in place, or that they are in the process of revising or even developing. <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/ToolsEducationalMaterials/ucm295902.htm>

Resources for Emergency Planners

- The Emergency Management Institute, hosted by FEMA, strives to improve the competencies of individuals in Emergency Management at all levels of government to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the potential effects of all types of disasters and emergencies. <http://training.fema.gov/emi>
- The U.S. Department of Education hosts a Web site for the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center. Training covering food defense preparedness for schools is located on the REMS page under the "distance learning" tab. <http://rems.ed.gov/>

- DisasterAssistance.gov compiles resources from the USDA, FDA, and FEMA that offer guidance to emergency planners on how to keep food safe during an emergency situation. <http://www.disasterassistance.gov/disaster-information/immediate-needs/emergency-food-and-water>

Resources for Cooperative Extension Educators

- The Center of Excellence for Food Safety Research in Child Nutrition Programs offers a variety of resources for Cooperative Extension educators to assist schools in enhancing food safety within their child nutrition programs. <http://ensafefood.k-state.edu/>
- The Food Safety Research Information Office at the National Agricultural Library maintains a database of food safety educational and training materials developed by universities; private industry; and local, state, and federal agencies. http://fsrio.nal.usda.gov/nal_web/fsrio/fseddb/fseddbsearch.php

