Older adults and adults with special needs and disabilities are at greater risk of becoming sick from improperly handled foods than are younger, healthier individuals.
FOOD SAFETY AND SANITATION

Food safety is an essential part of the adult day care program to prevent foodborne illness. There is a need for a well-designed food safety program that protects both employees and adult day care participants.

It is important that adult day care providers serve safe food.

- Older adults and adults with special needs and disabilities are at greater risk of becoming sick from improperly handled foods than are younger, healthier individuals.
- Food that is stored, prepared, and served properly is more likely to retain its fresh quality and nutritional value.

This chapter discusses the components of a food safety program to help evaluate either in-house food preparation or a commercial vendor.

Food Safety Hazards

While the food supply in the United States is one of the safest in the world, there are many ways foods can become unsafe through improper handling.

Foods contaminated with bacteria, viruses, or parasites can cause illness, especially in high-risk groups.

The majority of adult day care participants are high-risk for foodborne illness due to age or medical conditions.

In order for a foodborne illness to occur, all of the following must be available:

- Presence of a pathogen (bacteria, viruses, or parasites) in the food
- Food to carry the pathogen
- Conditions that allow the pathogen to survive, multiply, and produce a toxin
- High-risk person who eats enough of the pathogen or its toxins to cause illness (Roberts, 2001)
Designing a Food Safety Program

Federal regulations require that adult day care programs receiving CACFP funds follow the State and local health and sanitation regulations governing the center.

The Federal standards for food safety are outlined in a model food code published by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These standards are reviewed and updated every 4 years.

State Health Departments may choose to adopt this model food code or develop a State food code.

Many states and jurisdictions require food safety training and certification for at least one person working in a food service establishment.

A food safety program should be designed to:
- Identify potential hazards
- Set up procedures that reduce the risk of foodborne illness

Although setting up a food safety program takes time and effort, it is important to set up a good one because food safety and sanitation are an important part of food service.

A food safety program should be designed to:
- Identify potential hazards
- Set up procedures that reduce the risk of foodborne illness

The following seven steps can be used to start an on-site program.
**Steps in Starting a Food Safety Program**

**Step 1: Do a self-evaluation.**

Compare the food handling practices in your operation to the local and State regulations.
- Look at the results of recent sanitation inspections.
- Review policies and procedures that relate to food safety.
- Be sure that employees are following the standards that are currently in place.

Make a list of all cleaning products used in the food service. Be sure to have a material safety data sheet (MSDS) on each product and file these sheets in a binder in the kitchen.
- A MSDS lists:
  - The manufacturer’s address
  - The chemical contents of the product
  - Potential hazards
  - Procedures for accidents or spills and personal protection
  - Procedures for handling and storage
- A MSDS can be obtained for a product via the Internet or from the manufacturer or supplier.
  - Web sites for the MSDS include:
    - http://www.msdsonline.com
    - http://www.msdssearch.com
  - Other sites can be found by doing a search for “MSDS” or “material safety data sheets.”

Check out each piece of food service equipment to see if it appears to be working correctly.
- Monitor and document temperatures in all food storage areas, temperatures in the dishwasher, and temperatures in other equipment.
- Be sure oven thermometers give accurate readings.
- Contact the equipment maintenance provider for assistance with repairs.

While completing the above actions, make three lists:
1. Food safety practices observed
2. Food handling practices that need improvement
3. Equipment needs

**Step 2: Map out the flow of food.**

Because all food is potentially hazardous, it is important to establish a food safety program that prevents, eliminates, or reduces the risk of food contamination at each point in the flow of food.

**The flow of food is the route food takes from the time it arrives at the adult day care center until it reaches its final destination as part of a meal or snack.**
Steps in the flow of food for in-house production might include:
- Purchasing
- Receiving
- Storing
- Preparing
- Cooking
- Holding and Serving
- Cooling
- Reheating

Meals purchased from a commercial vendor may have additional steps in the flow of food that include:
- Cooling
- Transporting
- Reheating

**Identify the flow of food in your adult day care center.**

**Step 3: Identify and write standard food handling practices for each point in the flow of food.**

Standard food handling practices are outlined in the FDA *2001 Food Code* (FDA, 2001), the *Supplement to the 2001 Food Code* (FDA, 2003), and State food codes. However, each adult day care center will need to pattern its standard food handling practices after the laws and regulations that govern its operation.

Some sample food handling practices for an in-house food service production can be found on page 65. The samples are based on the standards in the *2001 Food Code* (FDA, 2001) and the *Supplement to the 2001 Food Code* (FDA, 2003).

The sample food handling practices are not meant to be a complete list; they are only a starting place. Check the latest FDA *Food Code* for periodic changes in food safety standards.

**Centers that purchase meals from vendors should do the following:**
- If possible, tour the vendors’ operations to observe food handling practices as part of the contract negotiations
- Discuss the procedures for food preparation and the safe transport of meals to the adult day care center
- Follow the temperature guidelines in the FDA *Food Code* or State food code for minimum food preparation temperatures and holding temperatures
- Ask the vendor to provide records documenting:
  - Food temperatures during production
  - Holding temperatures at the time the food leaves the vendor
  - Food temperatures once the food is received at the center
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flow of Food</th>
<th>Sample Food Handling Practices: In-House Meal Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Purchasing  | 1. Buy from reputable vendors, grocery stores, or food buying clubs.  
|             | 2. Check “use by” dates to purchase the freshest foods.  
|             | 3. Place frozen foods in cooler during transport between store and center.  
|             | 4. Place fresh meats in separate area from ready-to-eat foods. |
| Receiving   | 1. Store foods immediately.  
|             | 2. Avoid cross-contamination.  
|             | 2. Keep receiving area clean. |
| Storing     | 1. Record delivery/purchase date on food.  
|             | 2. Use oldest food first (FIFO).  
|             | 3. Avoid cross-contamination.  
|             | 4. Store chemicals away from food and other food-related supplies.  
|             | 5. Maintain proper refrigerator, freezer, and dry storage temperatures. |
| Preparing   | 1. Wash hands frequently, properly, and at appropriate times.  
|             | 2. Avoid cross-contamination.  
|             | 3. Keep foods out of the “temperature danger zone” (41 °F–135 °F).  
|             | 4. Prepare foods no further in advance than necessary.  
|             | 5. Thaw foods properly. |
| Cooking     | 1. Avoid cross-contamination.  
|             | 2. Use a clean food thermometer.  
|             | 3. Cook food to the proper internal temperature for appropriate time without interruptions.  
|             | 4. Record internal temperatures. |
| Serving and Holding | 1. Avoid cross-contamination.  
|             | 2. Hold foods at proper temperature, either below 41 °F or above 135 °F.  
|             | 3. Record internal temperatures.  
|             | 4. Monitor the temperature of hot-holding and cold-holding equipment.  
|             | 5. Follow rules for good personal hygiene.  
|             | 6. Maintain a sanitary food service operation. |
| Cooling     | 1. Chill rapidly.  
|             | 2. Stir frequently.  
|             | 3. Use shallow, pre-chilled pans.  
|             | 4. Record internal temperatures.  
|             | 5. Store appropriately. |
| Reheating   | 1. Reheat rapidly.  
|             | 2. Reheat to internal temperature of 165 °F for 15 seconds.  
|             | 3. Record internal temperatures.  
|             | 4. Never reheat food in hot-holding equipment. |
Polices need to be in place for handling meals once they arrive at the center. Listed below are sample food handling practices for programs that purchase meals from vendors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flow of Food</th>
<th>Sample Food Handling Practices: Meals from Vendors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Purchasing** | 1. Buy from reputable vendors.  
2. Include food safety standards in purchasing agreement.  
3. Accept food only if delivered at proper temperature in clean, well-equipped trucks. |
| **Receiving** | 1. Inspect food upon arrival for proper temperature, content, and damage.  
2. Reject all products that do not meet requirements.  
3. Store foods immediately.  
4. Keep receiving area clean. |
| **Serving and Holding** | 1. Avoid cross-contamination.  
2. Hold foods at proper temperature, either below 41 °F or above 135 °F.  
3. Record internal temperatures. |

**Step 4: Purchase equipment needed for safe food handling.**

Invest in quality thermometers that give accurate readings.
- Accurate thermometers are vital to safe food handling because they are the only tools to measure the internal temperature of food. The length of time a food has been cooked and the appearance of food are not good indicators of the safety and doneness of the product.
- Be sure that employees are trained to determine if the thermometers are working properly.
- *Kitchen Thermometers* (USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service [FSIS], 2002) is a good resource for thermometers. It describes the various types of thermometers that can be used in food service and explains how to use them correctly. A copy of this publication can be downloaded at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/thermy/kitchen.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/thermy/kitchen.pdf).

Evaluate storage space. Adequate refrigerated space is needed to keep raw foods, thawing foods, and ready-to-eat foods separated.

**Raw and thawing foods must be kept away from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.**

Provide employees with adequate utensils for serving food and with disposable gloves (if required by the regulatory authority governing the center). Also, provide hair restraints (nets or hats) for all employees.
**Step 5: Train employees.**

Training employees is an ongoing job.

- Remember that employees most likely handle food at work the same way they do at home.
- Many employees do not bring safe food handling practices to the job, and habits are hard to change.
- When employees are rushed and tired, they are more likely to do the easiest and most efficient method regardless of whether it is a safe practice. Haste not only makes waste, but increases the potential for hazards as well.
- Centers using employees to work in more than one area (for example, personal care and food service) must train these individuals on safe food handling practices, such as handwashing, to prevent cross-contamination of foods.

When planning employee food safety training, refer to the list you made in Step 1 of food handling practice areas that need improvement. Chapter 12 provides more information on employee training.

**Step 6: Set up a system of monitoring food handling practices.**

Once your food safety system is in place, it must be monitored to assure that it is working.

Monitor all the steps in the flow of food where food may become unsafe if handled improperly.

Listed below are some examples of monitoring practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flow of Food</th>
<th>Sample Monitoring Practices for In-House Meal Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>Record product temperatures on receiving log for all fresh and frozen foods received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storing</td>
<td>Record room temperature of all storage areas on temperature log as scheduled. Check for proper labeling and dating of foods stored and out-of-date stock as scheduled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving and Holding</td>
<td>Record food temperatures on temperature log prior to service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooling</td>
<td>Record internal temperatures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reheating</td>
<td>Record food temperatures on temperature log prior to service. Reheat to internal temperature of 165 °F for 15 seconds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 7: Evaluate the program.

Set aside time to evaluate the food safety program.
- A reasonable timeframe might be every 3 to 6 months.
- Compare your initial self-evaluation to the current food handling practices.
- Determine the policies and practices that are effective and ones that need improvement.
- Reevaluate your training program for effectiveness. Remember that it takes time to change habits.

Resources

Food safety resources are available from a variety of private, professional, and governmental organizations.

Be sure the resource selected is up-to-date with the latest FDA Food Code or local regulations.

Appendix 11 contains sample temperature logs.