Overview to the Process Approach to HACCP

HACCP is a systematic approach to construct a food safety program designed to reduce the risk of foodborne hazards by focusing on each step of the food preparation process from receiving to service. USDA recommends that SFAs use the Process Approach to HACCP because it gives you flexibility to create a food safety program specific to your school nutrition operation. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) originally developed the Process Approach for retail food establishments. The Process Approach groups food preparation into three broad categories based on how many times each menu item moves through the temperature danger zone. The guidance and this resource provide a modified version of the Process Approach to make it practical for your school nutrition operation.

Serving safe food is a critical responsibility for school nutrition program and a key aspect of a healthy school environment. Keeping foods safe is also a vital part of healthy eating and a recommendation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015. When properly implemented, HACCP-based food safety programs will help you ensure the safety of the school meals served to children in your school nutrition program.

Food Process
These are the preparation categories in the Process Approach to HACCP: Process #1 No Cook, food items meant to be kept cold from preparation through service; Process #2 Same Day Service, food items meant to be prepared hot and served hot the same day; and Process #3 Complex Food Preparation, food items meant to be prepared hot and served cooled, or possibly reheated. You will need to put each menu item (recipe) into one of the three categories and then keep it hot (or cold) while it is being stored, prepared, transported, held, and served.

If you see a failure in sanitation or temperature control, be sure to have a means of correcting the problem and verifying that the corrective steps resolved the problem. Once your food safety program is in operation, someone should be checking to see that it is working, perhaps once a month. Then, every year you should review the entire program to incorporate any changes, such as new menu items, new equipment, changes in staff, and remodeling.