



## Food Safety Requirements

To reduce the risk of foodborne illness among the nation's children, the federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires all schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program to:

- implement a food safety program for the preparation and service of school meals, and
- obtain two food safety inspections per year.

It is the responsibility of district and school site administrators and food services staff to develop the food safety program and arrange for food safety inspections. It is the responsibility of the governing board to ensure that the district's food safety program meets the requirements of law and to support implementation of the program through policy and budget decisions. The board also should monitor program effectiveness by receiving and reviewing the reports from the inspections and any other measures agreed upon with the superintendent.

### Risk of foodborne illness

Foodborne illness results from the consumption of foods or beverages contaminated with disease-causing microorganisms (e.g., bacteria, viruses, parasites), chemicals or other harmful substances. These substances can be spread by people, unsanitary facilities or equipment, or disease-spreading pests such as mice and flies. Temperature, if not controlled properly during food preparation and service, also can contribute to a higher risk of foodborne illness.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 76 million people get ill and 5,000 die nationwide each year due to foodborne illness, even though the food supply in the United States is one of the safest in the world.<sup>1</sup> In California, there were 3,716 reported cases of foodborne illness in 2000, an increase of 17 percent over the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

Children are considered to be at a higher risk for foodborne illness because of their low body weight and underdeveloped immune systems; they can become ill by ingesting less of a contaminated food or beverage than adults.

District food service programs have a responsibility to minimize the risk to children by addressing potential hazards during each step of the food preparation process, from receiving to service.

### Food safety program

In accordance with federal law (42 USC 1758), all schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program must develop and implement a written food safety program that is based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. The minimum elements that must be included in the program are described in *Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP Principles*, issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in June 2005. The guidance also includes a food manager's checklist and a sample food safety program. Districts may use the guidance to develop a program that meets the needs of each food preparation and service site.

The program should include a food safety training program for food service employees and supervisors, as well as site-specific standard operating procedures for:

- classifying all menu items based on their food preparation process in accordance with HACCP classifications;
- determining what control measures are needed to prevent the introduction of hazards at each stage of food production;
- monitoring through direct observations or measurements to ensure that the food safety program is being implemented;

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site, [www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Health Services, Division of Communicable Disease Control, "Foodborne Disease Outbreaks in California, 1999-2000," September 2004, available through the Publications and Resources list at [www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/disb/disbindex.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/disb/disbindex.htm)

- establishing corrective actions to be taken if the appropriate time or temperature range for food preparation or service is not met;
- keeping records to verify that the food safety program is working; and
- periodically reviewing and revising the overall food safety program.

## Food safety inspections

At least twice during each school year, all schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program must obtain a food safety inspection conducted by a state or local governmental agency responsible for food safety inspections (42 USC 1758, 7 CFR 210.13). In California, such inspections are conducted by local environmental health agencies located within each county.

According to the California Department of Education, the law applies equally to districts that contract with a food service management company to manage their food service operations. As long as a school participates in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program, it must abide by all program requirements.

The content of the food safety inspection is not addressed in federal law. In California, laws regarding food safety are found in the California Retail Food Code (Health and Safety Code 113700-114437), which took effect on July 1, 2007. These laws specify the minimum rules that must be followed in food service establishments and the issues that constitute violations during food safety inspections. Schools are subject to the same requirements as all other food facilities. The inspections cover all food service areas, which may include the cafeteria, vending machines, mobile food carts and other areas depending on the school's food service operations.

Schools must post the report of the most recent inspection in a publicly visible location and must provide a copy of the report to a member of the public upon request.

## Resources

CSBA, [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org), offers a number of publications, policy briefs and sample board policies and administrative regulations related to food service and child nutrition.

*U.S. Department of Agriculture, Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP Principles*, June 10, 2005, [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Guidance](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Guidance). Also see [www.fns.usda.gov/fns/food\\_safety.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/food_safety.htm) for additional food safety resources.

California Department of Public Health, [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division, [www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)