

Common Food Safety Issues

The five major areas of concern are:

1. The improper cooling of food
2. The lack of use of thermometers
3. Unacceptable food storage procedures
4. Incorrect utilization of sanitizer
5. Insufficient hand washing

The problems are addressed in each of the areas summarized below. The Food Safety Checklist item or sections that establish the minimum standard(s) are referenced.

Cooling Food

- Implement the use of cooling procedures to assure that all leftover cooked foods reach the proper temperature within the mandated time frame. Monitor and record temperatures for all potentially hazardous foods. Frozen meals prepared for homebound clients must also be monitored to assure they reach the proper temperature within the safe time frame.

Checklist References: F-25, H-6

Use of Thermometers

- Food thermometers must be available and used to check the temperature of foods stored in the refrigerator, freezer, and dry storage areas. Temperatures should also be monitored during the following activities: when purchased food is delivered from the vendor, during food preparation, cooking, serving, during the delivery of homebound or bulk meals and during the cooling of food.
- Food thermometers should be checked for accuracy and are recalibrated or replaced when necessary.

Checklist References: F-5, F-6, F-8, F-17, F-18, F-19, F-21, G-3, K-1, L-1, M-20, M-21, M-22

Food Storage Procedures

- The correct storage of all foods includes those items stored in the dry storage area, the refrigerators, the freezers, and any other acceptable storage area that is being utilized. Each storage area should be monitored to assure the proper temperature is being maintained. These temperatures should be recorded daily.
- All foods must be dated with the month, day, and year. Foods that are not stored in their original container must be stored in NSF containers or other approved food grade receptacles. These items must also be labeled. Dates should be prominently identified to ensure stock is properly rotated.

- All leftover foods must be dated with the month, day, and year and time. Foods that are not stored in their original container must be stored in NSF containers or other approved food grade receptacles. These items must be labeled.
- All leftovers must be used or discarded within three days. The program must maintain one test meal for each day. Test meals are to be kept in the freezer for thirty days.
- Cleaning supplies, poisonous substances, janitorial equipment, and discarded equipment must not be stored with food. Paper supplies can be stored in the same area, but should be stored on separate shelves.
- Storage areas and floors should be kept clean. All foods must be stored in a manner to prevent cross contamination.

Checklist References: Section B, Section C, E-5, F-26, F-28, F-29, Section K, Section L

Sanitizer

- The proper use of sanitizer requires test strips to measure the concentration level of the product used. In most cases the product is bleach, which is the most economical choice. If test strips are not available, then it is assumed that sanitizing is not taking place.
- Wiping cloths used for sanitizing are held in sanitizer, their use is restricted, and they are replaced when they become soiled.
- The three-step process is utilized for the proper sanitizing of all food contact surfaces, including dining area equipment.

Checklist References: F-9, F-10, F-11, F-12, Section I, Section J

Hand washing

- Stress proper hand washing procedures with all staff, including volunteers. A six-step hand wash sign needs to be posted and all steps followed. The proper hand washing procedure includes use of a nailbrush that is held/stored in sanitizer.
- Gloves and hands must be washed after touching nonfood contact surfaces.
- Employees need to wash their hands prior to putting away clean dishes, with particular emphasis on proper hand washing if they have been handling dirty dishes.

Checklist Reference: A-9, A-10, F-15, F-14, F-16, I-2