

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?

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. Food-safe schools address a broad range of 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.

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. ■