

The Local Board of Health Environmental Health Primer Food Safety Factsheet



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Background

- Researchers in 2011 estimate that there are 9.4 million episodes of foodborne illness, and 55,961 hospitalizations and 1,351 deaths caused by foodborne illness each year.
- USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) has estimated that the direct medical costs and productivity loss range from \$6.6 billion to \$37.1 billion for seven foodborne pathogens.
- Everyone is at risk for contracting a foodborne illness, although the very young, the elderly, and those already ill are most at risk.
- Foodborne illness outbreaks in the past 5 years, such as *E. coli* found in spinach, ground beef, and prepackaged cookie dough or salmonella in peanut butter or tomatoes, demonstrate that serious threats continue in the food supply.
- It is a primary responsibility of state and local public health agencies to protect the public through education, licenses or permits, routine inspection of all food service and retail establishments within their jurisdictions, and the investigation of potential foodborne illnesses.

Board of Health Actions

- Ensure that the local public health agency has the resources needed to support the food safety program, as well as measurable objectives to assess the program's accomplishments.
- Adopt an enforceable food code, such as the FDA model food code, and also adopt guidelines for the enforcement of regulations and procedures to address repeat violators or any noncompliance of the established food safety regulations.
- Conduct hearings, issue and revoke licenses, and assure that staff, food service agencies, and consumers receive regular education and training.
- Review food protection programs to guarantee that there is a proper mix of public education and enforcement activities.

Resources for Continuing Education

- Food and Drug Administration. Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Available at www.fda.gov/food/default.htm
- National Association of Local Boards of Health. (2005). *Role of Local Boards of Health in Community Food Safety Guide*.
- National Association of Local Boards of Health. (2011). Food Safety. In *The Local Board of Health Environmental Health Primer* (2nd ed.).
- United States Department of Agriculture. Food Safety and Inspection Service. Available at www.fsis.usda.gov/

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