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Food Safety Innovations in Federal Guidelines

Editor's Note: NEHA strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we feature a column from the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the *Journal*.

In these columns, EHSB and guest authors share insights and information about environmental health programs, trends, issues, and resources. The conclusions in this column are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of CDC.

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In January 2017, the Department of Health and Human Services released an updated version of the *Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities* (Figure 1), previously known in 2011 as the *Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations*. These guidelines apply to food service concession and vending operations at federal facilities (e.g., a full-service cafeteria in a federal building, a full-service restaurant in a national park, or a self-service food operation at a national monument), and will be used for developing contracts and permits. The Food Service Guidelines Federal Workgroup that developed the guidelines included more than 60 representatives from the following nine federal departments and agencies:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture,
- U.S. Department of Commerce,
- U.S. Department of Defense,
- U.S. Department of Education,
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

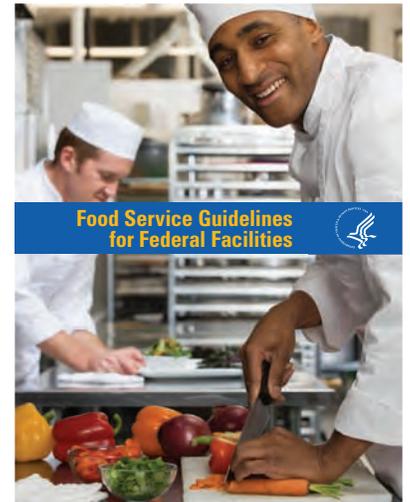
- U.S. Department of the Interior,
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and
- U.S. General Services Administration.

The updated guidelines include four sections: Food and Nutrition; Facility Efficiency, Environmental Support, and Community Development; Food Safety; and Behavioral Design. Each section identifies two levels of criteria implementation that are considered during the negotiation of contracts between federal facilities and food service contractors. The two levels of criteria are:

1. Standard Criteria
 - a. Criteria that are considered to be widely achievable.
 - b. Implementation at this level is expected.
2. Innovative Criteria
 - a. Criteria that promote exceptional performance and are deemed more attractive by federal facilities during contract bidding.

FIGURE 1

Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities



b. Implementation at this level is encouraged. These two levels of implementation are supported by scientific findings and align with existing national policy or guidance.

Food Safety

September is National Food Safety Month and we would like to highlight the Food Safety section of the *Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities*, which was not included as its own section in the 2011 guidelines.

Each year in the U.S., foodborne illness causes approximately 48 million illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths (Scallan et al., 2011). To reduce this burden, the Food and Drug Administration publishes the *Food Code*, which provides a scientific

TABLE 1

Food Safety Standard and Innovative Criteria Categories

Category	Standard Criteria The contractor shall follow the recommendations in the most recently published <i>Food Code</i> regarding:	Innovative Criteria
Food safety management system/active managerial control	The development and implementation of food safety procedures.	The contractor shall establish a comprehensive written food safety plan that seeks to achieve active managerial control of foodborne illness risk factors, including but not limited to a) improper holding temperatures; b) inadequate cooking, such as undercooking raw shell eggs; c) contaminated equipment; d) food from unsafe sources; and e) poor personal hygiene. The plan could describe the food safety procedures for the particular food service facility, including how employees are to be trained on those procedures and the methods by which proper implementation of those procedures are routinely monitored.
Undercooked meat, poultry, and egg products	Minimum cooking temperatures for raw animal food.	The contractor shall not serve raw or undercooked meat, poultry, or egg products, even upon request of the customer.
Practices to control <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> in ready-to-eat products	The preparation, storage, and display of refrigerated, ready-to-eat foods.	The contractor shall develop and implement written sanitation and temperature control programs that target the control of <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> in ready-to-eat products, including documentation of cleaning frequencies for equipment, utensils, and nonfood contact surfaces (e.g., walls, floors, ceilings) and temperature control in coolers, deli cases, and refrigerators.
Sick employees	Excluding and restricting ill workers from working with food.	The contractor shall develop and implement a written employee health policy that outlines how employees are trained on the reporting of symptoms, diagnoses, and activities that are associated with the transmission of foodborne illness from food workers and how such training is documented and the policies for excluding, restricting, and reinstating employees who have or report symptoms, diagnoses, or activities as described in the <i>Food Code</i> .
Food handler training	Food safety training for food employees.	The contractor shall develop and implement a written policy that addresses employee food safety training.
Certified food protection manager	The contractor shall have at least one management/supervisory employee who is a certified food protection manager present during all hours of operation.	

cally sound basis for addressing food safety issues in retail food and food service establishments. The *Food Code* has served as the primary model for retail food regulation since its first edition in 1993.

The primary food safety standard criteria in the guidelines is that contractors operating in federal facilities are expected to adhere to the most recently published version of the *Food Code* and its Supplement. This standard applies to concessions where food is prepared and sold or served.

The food safety innovative criteria identify behaviors and practices that go beyond the *Food Code*. When implemented, these criteria could further reduce the risk of foodborne illness in federal foodservice operations. The Food Safety section has five categories that include the following innovative options (Table 1):

1. food safety management system/active managerial control;

2. undercooked meat, poultry, and egg products;

3. practices to control *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat products;

4. sick employees; and

5. food handler training.

The guidelines also plan to offer innovative implementation criteria for the area of food protection manager certification. Since the topic is to be included as an update in the 2017 *Food Code*, it became standard criteria in the guidelines.

The inclusion of the new Food Safety section helps the guidelines meet one of its three goals: to “ensure that food safety practices are followed to minimize the risk of foodborne illness” (Food Service Guidelines Workgroup, 2017). We invite you to review the new *Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities* and to pay particular attention to the new Food Safety section. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/guide

[lines_for_federal_concessions_and_vending_operations.pdf](#). 🐼

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