**School Nutrition Inspection Top Areas of Concern**

According to USDA Policy Memo SP 39-2008, school districts operating the National School Lunch programs are responsible to request **two food safety inspections for every kitchen and meal serving site** operating federal nutrition programs each school year (July 1 through June 30). After the inspections are performed, NDDPI Child Nutrition receives a copy of the inspection report. These are the most common issues:

1. **Sanitizing cloth not stored in a pail containing sanitizer in the appropriate strength.** The dish cloth being used to sanitize food contact surfaces should not be draped over the faucet or left on the counter. It should be in the pail that contains sanitizer at the proper parts per million. For a chlorine bleach solution, the strength should be between 50 ppm and 100 ppm; for a quaternary ammonia (quat) the strength is 200 ppm to 400 ppm. The only way to know if the strength is appropriate is by using a test strip.
2. **Thermometers – not present OR not calibrated:** Freezers, coolers, storage pantries all need a thermometer that is working and the temperature must be recorded on a log each day. Not only are you recording the temperature though, also make sure it is normal. A freezer that is being marked at 12°F for the last week has a problem!! Also remember the coolers that are not in your kitchen such as a concession stand. Your ND Food license covers all areas of the school where food is sold to the public. Don’t forget a thermometer to check food temperatures coming out of the oven, food on the service line, in the salad bar and milk cooler.
3. **Handwashing –** According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) handwashing is the number 1 way to prevent the spread of illness. Hands should be washed before starting work; before putting on a fresh pair of gloves; after emptying the garbage, touching their face or hair or using the restroom. Handwashing sinks must be designated with signage and used only for washing hands.
4. **Labeling Food –** There are two issues here. First, date marking perishable, ready-to-eat food once it is opened or prepared from scratch and held for longer than 24 hours is a priority. You have 7 days to use the food from opening or preparation, which is Day 1 and then it must be discarded.
5. **Labeling Food –** The second issue is labeling food and all items that come in bulk and are taken out of the original package. Boxes take up a lot of real estate in a small freezer, so many kitchen managers will unbox the 6 bags of chicken nuggets in clear plastic and set them on the shelf. There is a lot of information contained on the box that is needed in case of a recall of that product including the brand, manufacturer number and lot number or production date. In the case of chemicals, it is ultra-important to make a label for each container, so everyone knows that the clear fluid contained in a bottle is quat, not water and safety data sheets can be accessed in the case of poisoning.
6. **Dishwasher sanitizing –** Sanitizing food contact surfaces of service pans, pots, dishes and utensils is almost as important as handwashing. Who would eat with a fork that someone else ate with? That is the ‘Russian roulette’ that you are playing if you are not making sure that the sanitizing process of the dishwasher is doing its job. AND the only way to know that is by taking the temperature of the hot water sanitizing dishwashers or measuring the chemical sanitizing strength with a test strip. Best practice is to record the temperature or test strip measurement on a dishwasher temperature log.
7. **“Double Duty” Dishwasher –** One person is washing the dishes and also working with the sanitized dishes without properly washing hands in between. Best practice in a kitchen is to have at least 2 people working with the dishwashing process particularly during the busy, end of day. If only 1 person is available, the person must do the 30 second hand wash process EVERY time they switch from working with the dirty dishes to the clean, sanitized dishes. Also remember to AIR DRY all dishes. Towel drying is not allowed.

1. **Thawing Food at Room Temp or in Hot Water –** Neither of these ‘thawing’ methods are permitted. Plan ahead and thaw food in the cooler the day before. Otherwise the only acceptable methods are: in cold, running water where the water is 70°F or less and the water is running fast enough to wash food particles away, (the food must never go over 41°F.) OR the food may be microwaved as part of the immediate cooking process after microwaving is finished OR thaw during the actual cooking process.
2. **Cooling Food properly –** If food is to be stored and reheated for use later, it must be cooled from the hot holding temp of 135°F (or higher) to 71°F within two hours and then to 41°F in another 4 hours. The cooling process must be recorded. Most kitchen staff are not around the school kitchen 6 hours later so make sure the cooling process is done. To hasten the process, placing the pan on an ice bed, using an ice paddle to stir the food, separating the food into smaller, shallower containers and leaving the pan uncovered in a way to prevent cross contamination can all help. Make sure to date mark your food!
3. **Facility Maintenance –** All kitchen equipment and surfaces must be in good condition and food contact surfaces cleaned daily. Get on a preventive maintenance schedule to ensure major appliances are ready for work when you need them. Clean can openers, microwaves, ice machines daily. Make sure all wood surfaces are sealed and contact paper is not what is used to do the ‘sealing’. Eliminate all pest entrances and food sources to keep vermin from spoiling your meal.
4. **Re use of single service food containers –** Not in the top 10, but worth the note. Commercial kitchens including a school kitchen are not allowed to reuse containers that other food items came in for food storage, such as a deli salad or pickle bucket. Take a look on the internet for all the other useful and crafty ways these containers could serve a purpose, such as paint buckets for the kindergarten class, pencil storage for the testing room or send them to the recycle bin. All food must be stored in food-grade containers. (FDA Food code 4-102.11) *The safety and quality of food can be adversely affected through single service and single use articles that are not constructed of acceptable materials. The migration of components of those materials to food they contact could result in chemical contamination and illness to the consumer. In addition, the use of unacceptable materials could adversely affect the quality of the food because of odors, tastes, and colors transferred to the food.* Last year, 29 schools were cited for storing food in single use containers.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT FOOD SAFETY IN SCHOOLS**

**ND Century School Code: 15.1-35-07: Food service personnel – Training.** Each individual who manages the food service operation of a public or nonprofit private entity, with which the superintendent of public instruction has entered a contract under this chapter, shall undergo initial and continuing training regarding the safe handling, preparation, and service of food.

Initial training for School Foodservice personnel (Lead Food service worker as designated by NDDPI) is available at the Institute of Child Nutrition ([www.theicn.org](http://www.theicn.org)), under the “E-learning” tab.

Enroll in “Food Safety in Schools”,

listen to each of 6 modules on different food safety issues relevant to schools,

pass a short quiz after each module

and this will earn the Sanitation Certification.

**Please send the ICN certificate to the NDDPI Child Nutrition Office as this information is**

**needed for the Administrative Review process.**

Sanitation must be updated at least every 5 years. Updates are available through the NDDPI Child

Nutrition office, either online or in a class format.