



## Food safety makes a difference

### Situation

People often do not think about food safety until a food-related illness affects them or a family member. Almost everyone has probably experienced a foodborne illness at some time. Restaurant food could be the cause, but actually many cases of foodborne illnesses occur when food is prepared at home. If food is handled and prepared safely, most problems can be avoided. All food may contain some natural bacteria, and improper handling can give the bacteria a chance to grow. Also, food can be contaminated with bacteria from other sources that can make people ill. Contaminated or unclean food can be very dangerous, especially to children and the elderly. The fact that an estimated one out of three people do not wash their hands after using the restroom adds to the danger. While the food supply in the United States is one of the safest in the world, the Centers for Disease Control estimate that 76 million people get sick, more than 300,000 are hospitalized, and 5,000 Americans die each year from foodborne illnesses. Preventing foodborne illnesses and deaths remains a major public health challenge.

The goals of food safety education offered by the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) are:

- to reinforce food safety education and training among restaurant and foodservice workers,
- to educate the public to handle and prepare food properly at home whether they are cooking from scratch or serving take-out meals and restaurant leftovers, and
- to help the public understand the importance of washing hands regularly.

The “Going for the Gold” intermediate food safety training class and the ServSafe® program were presented in cooperation with the consumer health specialist for Crook and Weston counties to Weston, Crook, and Campbell county food service personnel. In addition

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to team teaching with a consumer health specialist from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture at these sessions, the family and consumer sciences (FCS) educator also co-taught “Grazin’ the Food Guide Pyramid With Marty Moose” and a hand-washing lesson with Health Specialist Doug Krogman to 34 second grade youths at Gertrude Burns Elementary School. Training was also conducted for 4-H clubs working in concession stands during county fairs. The training included discussions of proper holding temperatures, food safety, and sanitation. In addition, 147 CentSible Nutrition Program participants completed a food safety curriculum lesson.

## Impacts Achieved

ServSafe evaluation results:

All 17 participants passed a certification exam offered by the National Restaurant Association Foundation. In a written evaluation, 100 percent rated the training “better than average” or “excellent.” When asked about the most helpful part of the training, participants’ responses included:

- becoming more aware of hand washing, cross contamination, and the importance of proper temperatures,
- learning about micro-organisms and foodborne illness, and
- learning why time and temperature control are so very important.

Following the ServSafe® training, 88 percent of those responding indicated that they planned to make changes at their workplace within three months such as:

- washing hands more,
- encouraging employees to apply what they learned about dress, and
- taking temperatures and calibrating thermometers.

Eighteen participants completed “Going for the Gold” intermediate training. A total of 88 percent rated the training “better than average” or “excellent” and indicated that the most helpful part of the training was its:

- explanations of each important item – temperatures, cooling, and heating;
- information on bacteria and growth; and
- training in cleaning and sanitizing.

A total of 92 percent of the participants said they planned to make changes at their workplace including:

- encouraging more hand washing and also checking the temperature of products more often,
- sending people home when they are sick, and
- sanitizing every day.

From youth programs conducted:

- All of the second graders who participated in the hand-washing program indicated an attitude change.
- Ninety percent of the 11 participants in the 4-H food booth training indicated that they had gained knowledge and skills. All of them reported that they planned to make changes in behavior.

CentSible Nutrition Program evaluation results:

- Twenty-two percent said they followed the recommended practice more often of not allowing meat and dairy foods to sit out for more than two hours. Furthermore, 16 percent said they always followed the recommended practice.
- Fifty-two said they followed the recommended practice more often of not thawing foods at room temperature. Furthermore, 21 percent said they always followed the recommended practice.

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