

Lives have been saved, illnesses avoided, healthcare costs controlled, fewer work days missed, and local businesses and institutions are stronger.



## Food safety coalition shields Wyoming residents' health

### Situation:

Microbial contamination of food is a serious public health problem. Each year in the U.S, food-borne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths. With approximately 60 percent of food-borne illness outbreaks nationwide attributable to food service establishments, food service personnel are key to reducing the risk of food-borne illness.

The Wyoming Food Safety Coalition (WFSC) is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary partnership that has become the primary source of food safety education throughout the state. The heart of WFSC is a core of local trained teams, most of which include a county-based University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) educator and a health inspector from either the Wyoming Department of Agriculture or a local city/county health department, or both. These teams plan and conduct a wide variety of educational programs. U.S. Department of Agriculture grants helped establish WFSC, and workshop registration fees now fund WFSC.

### Impacts:

In fiscal year 2009,

- Coalition team members trained 1,570 food handlers in the following workshops: Basic – 154; Intermediate – 237; Advanced – 23; ServSafe – 278; Day Care – 447; Food Preservation – 190; Other (i.e., temporary food permits, other sanitation training, “Food Safety Works” programs, etc.) – 241.
- In-house training reached 379 individuals.
- Consumer programs and displays reached 1,488 individuals.
- News releases and public service announcements distributed via print and other media avenues reached thousands of readers and listeners statewide on a regular basis.

### **Medium term**

Based on data from an evaluation project conducted by UW CES for WFSC, this year's 515 participants in WFSC's Going for the Gold Advanced and ServSafe workshops are estimated to have made the following changes:

- 97 percent (500) made at least one change related to cleanliness; for example, washed their hands more often.
- 80 percent (412) made at least one change related to cooling food; for example, put food into shallow containers or cut meat into smaller pieces before placing in refrigerator.
- 78 percent (402) made at least one change related to food preparation; for example, prevented cross contamination by keeping raw meats, cooked foods, and fresh produce separated.
- 75 percent (386) made at least one change related to other miscellaneous areas; for example, monitored critical control points more closely.
- 70 percent (361) made at least one change related to cooking food; for example, used a stove or microwave – not a steam table – to reheat food.

### **Long term**

Overall: Improved food-handling behaviors such as those listed above increase the likelihood food served in Wyoming is safe, and, therefore, lives have been saved, illnesses avoided, healthcare costs controlled, fewer work days missed, and local businesses and institutions are stronger.

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