

# Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools

## Strategy Sheet

## Strategies for Administrators

What can you do to safeguard students' health, decrease absenteeism, prevent legal liabilities, and maintain positive relationships with parents and the community? Make food safety a priority! School administrators are responsible for the health and safety of students and staff in their schools. By placing food safety high on your list of priorities, others will follow the lead.

Food-safe schools adopt a school-wide approach to food safety and, with the help of partners in the school community, can create a culture of food safety. Food-safe schools address a broad range of topics beyond the scope of what may be required by legislation. This starts with building and supporting strong food safety policies and procedures, and continues with education and training. Partners can help achieve the ultimate goal of making food safety second nature to everyone in the school community, thus creating a culture of food safety.

### Administrators Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You can launch a school-wide approach to food safety. Your support is critical for developing and putting school food safety policies and procedures into action—in the cafeteria and *throughout* the school community.
- You have the power to make food safety a priority in schools, protecting students, staff, and the school from foodborne illness.

### Thinking About Food Safety

- Among the many priorities you juggle as an administrator, where do you place food safety—in the cafeteria as well as throughout the school?
- Could increasing the focus on food safety help you deal with other important concerns—like absenteeism, legal liabilities, and relationships with the community?

- Are you concerned about food served through other school programs (independent of school meals programs)? An example would be food served through fundraising events or celebrations.
- If you could take some steps to enhance food safety, what would they be?
- How can the school nutrition team help you take those steps?

### Take Action!

- Enhance your knowledge of food safety. Find out more about your school district's food safety efforts by meeting with members of the school nutrition team. These efforts should address everything from receiving food from safe sources, to safely preparing nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables, to managing food allergies. You have a role in all of these efforts!
- Understand why food safety has a place in schools. Did you know that norovirus, a very contagious stomach illness that can cause people to feel sick suddenly with no warning, was responsible for more than 10,000 illnesses associated with foodborne outbreaks in schools between 1998 and 2009? This is just one example of how foodborne illness can interfere with education.
- Promote good food safety behaviors among students and staff. Take the lead and set the example! By encouraging sound food safety practices, such as proper handwashing and safe food handling inside *and* outside of the cafeteria, you will show the school community that you value food safety. Find ways to promote food safety such as in-service training sessions for teachers, handwashing competitions for students, and educational outreach for parents.