

Using the Action Guide

Creating food-safe schools takes time and hard work. The Action Guide will help you recognize where you're starting and what you can build over time. Once you have a complete blueprint, with all the necessary pieces in one place, you will have a valuable and lasting tool. The biggest reward, of course, is getting closer to the goal—creating a culture of food safety that will safeguard the health of the children in your school community. Now, let's get started!

Let's take a closer look at the three parts of the Action Guide.

Part 1

Reviewing Your Current Food Safety Efforts: A Checklist for Food-Safe Schools

Completing the checklist is your first step. Use it to determine the current status of your food safety efforts. The results will help you identify both strengths and areas that need improvement. You will be able to see which activities are already in place, which need updating, and what new steps are necessary.

The principal questions in the checklist correspond directly to the action steps identified in the Action Sheets in Part 2. The secondary questions correspond to content that can be found in the resources listed in the Action Sheets.

Part 2

Taking Action To Build Food-Safe Schools

Each Action Sheet addresses a specific area of food safety by providing you with background information, action steps that will help you build your framework, and resources for the in-depth information you will need to develop or strengthen that area. The first

Action Sheet describes the food safety requirements of the National School Lunch Act. Understanding these requirements will give you a firm foundation for building food-safe schools. The remaining Action Sheets provide information that will help you meet and go above and beyond the requirements and improve on your foundation. These Action Sheets include information on a school food safety program based on HACCP principles, training and education, employee health and personal hygiene, produce safety, managing food allergies, food defense, responding to food recalls, and responding to a foodborne illness outbreak.

Note that each Action Sheet corresponds to a section in the Action Guide checklist. When you've completed your checklist, you will be able to see which areas need your attention. You can then turn to the matching Action Sheet for guidance in improving your food safety efforts. The resources found on each Action Sheet are also collected together in the resources pages at the end of Part 2.

Part 3

Communicating With the School Community To Create a Culture of Food Safety

As you build food-safe schools, you will need to communicate with your school community and other groups. You can ask for their input and encourage them to become long-term partners in working toward shared goals. Part 3 includes tips for communicating with key groups—school administrators, teachers, parents, students, school nutrition managers, school nurses, your local health department, emergency management planners, and cooperative extension educators. This part also offers communication strategies specific for each group, and resources to support these strategies.