

This Week's Topic: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)

Key to Excellence: Sanitation and Inspection

Hazards Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is a dynamic process that ensures safe food through a combination of proper food handling procedures, monitoring techniques, and record keeping. HACCP was developed for NASA in 1959 to keep food safe during space travel where there is no room for error. School kitchens strive to maintain those same high standards by implementing HACCP in their everyday food preparation.

There are seven principals for a HACCP plan:

- conduct a hazard analysis to determine the critical control points (determine where things could go wrong)
- establish critical control points (what food prep steps are essential to food safety)
- determine critical limits (what must happen and when a food must reach a certain temperature)
- establish monitoring procedures (make sure limits are met at an essential step such as taking temperatures at specific times)
- take corrective actions (when something goes wrong take action and document it)
- record keeping (documenting and keeping records of daily temperatures/critical limits)
- verification (is the plan being followed and keeping food safe)

A HACCP plan is specific to the operation, menu, equipment, and processes for each kitchen. Potential hazards can be prevented, eliminated, or reduced to safe levels when identified at specific points in the flow of foods.

Due to the highly susceptible population (HSP) served in school nutrition, a HACCP system is vital for food safety. HSP includes small children, pregnant women, infants, individuals with compromised immune systems or on certain medications such as chemo, and elderly adults. These groups are considered to be at high risk and are more susceptible to foodborne illness, and may have symptoms that are more serious if they do become ill. A HACCP system should include standard operating procedures (SOPs) to help prevent foodborne illness. SOPs are used every day for doing things right in the kitchen. Most schools are not required to have a HACCP plan for their health inspections, but USDA requires HACCP based SOPs to make sure school kitchens go the extra mile to keep their students safe.

If you want to learn more go to: <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/food-safety/hazard-analysis-critical-control-points-haccp>

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