**Teens Serving Food Safely, 2003-2018**

**Public Value Statement**
On average, each person consumes four meals away from home per week. Handling food safely can help prevent foodborne illness outbreaks. The total cost associated with the six leading causes of foodborne illness (Campylobacter, C. perfringens, E. coli, Listeria, Salmonella and Shigella) is $6.6 billion.

**The Situation**
Recent high-profile foodborne illness outbreaks have placed more emphasis on food handling at all levels of the food chain. Teen food handlers play a major role in preparing food at home and in commercial food service establishments.

In fact, a job at the local café or fast-food establishment often is the first employment experience for many teens. However, with the rapid turnover that occurs in food service workers, training in safe food handling often does not occur.

**Extension Response**
Teens Serving Food Safely is a statewide food safety education effort NDSU Extension conducts in cooperation with high school family and consumer science teachers, with outreach to parents. Teens learn the four steps to food safety: clean, separate/don't cross-contaminate, cook and chill.

The curriculum consists of five lessons based on the Fight BAC (short for bacteria) campaign. It has been used with more than 10,000 students since 2003. Through grant funding and donations, each student receives a food safety kit, which includes meat and refrigerator thermometers, a magnet showing internal temperature recommendations, a wash-your-hands mirror cling and brochures to take home. The North Dakota Beef Commission provided food thermometers, and the North Dakota Nutrition Council provided funding for other materials in the kit.

**Impacts**
Test score averages for 11,251 students have increased from 52 to 85 percent correct. Follow-up surveys have shown positive changes in food-handling behavior.

As measured by a one-month follow-up survey with 7,248 students:
- 80 percent reported washing their hands more often during food preparation
- 68 percent reported being more careful about cleaning and sanitizing utensils
- 48 percent had shared their knowledge about food safety with others
- 39 percent already had applied what they learned when preparing food for the public
- 23 percent had used a food thermometer more often
- 22 percent had checked refrigerator and freezer temperatures more often

**Feedback**
*Students said:*
- “I liked when we got to go into the lab and do each lesson. The hands-on experiences were the ones that stuck out the most and helped me remember the information a lot better.”

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