



# Teens Serving Food Safely, 2003-2020

## 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 11,000 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.

## Impacts

Test score averages for 11,739 students have increased from 54% to 86% correct. Follow-up surveys have shown positive changes in food-handling behavior.

As measured by a one-month follow-up survey with 7,616 students:



78% reported washing their hands more often during food preparation



75% reported being more careful about cleaning and sanitizing utensils



40% had shared their knowledge about food safety with others



46% already had applied what they learned when preparing food for the public



35% had used a food thermometer more often



24% had checked refrigerator and freezer temperatures more often

## Feedback

- “The lessons were very thorough and made what we learned easy to remember.”

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