Foodservice Sanitation Training and Reciprocity in the 80s

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of FDA activities during the 1970s in development and implementation of foodservice manager sanitation training/certification programs. A number of these programs have resulted in reciprocal recognition by regulatory agencies in the United States. Suggested steps to be taken in the 80s to continue this trend are discussed. FDA encourages establishment of uniform manager training programs which meet the national criteria and result in reciprocal agreements. A vital component of any effective foodservice program is sanitation training. If it is provided, an additional step has been taken to protect the food the consumer receives.

There are nationally recognized criteria for training and certifying owners, operators, and/or managers in the knowledge of safe food-handling practices. A program was developed and tested in the decade of the 70s which resulted in reciprocity between regulatory agencies and the foodservice industry.

Many attempts have been made in the past to train food handlers, but little effort had been expended to teach sanitation to persons in management positions in the foodservice industry. It is recognized that management sets the "tone" as to how effectively an establishment will operate to meet minimum sanitary requirements.

In 1971, the National Conference on Food Protection recommended that all persons engaged in food-handling, especially persons in management positions, should demonstrate that they have knowledge of safe food-handling practices to operate foodservice establishments. Sanitary control over the industry is traditionally a function of state and local regulatory agencies. FDA has provided consultation and advisory assistance when requested. A coordinated effort of federal/state/local enforcement agencies with the foodservice industry is necessary to continue improvement in the sanitation level of the industry. It is through these agencies that a training program to improve knowledge in food sanitation should be administered.

Because of the mobility of persons engaged in food-handling operations, any recommended model training program should be designed to be "national" in scope and available to regulatory agencies and the industry for implementation. By working with several states in developing and field testing a model program in the 1970s, FDA gained information on how such training could be implemented.

OBJECTIVES OF A TRAINING PROGRAM

1. To increase significantly the level of consumer food protection by having an establishment operated under the management of a certified foodservice person.
2. To obtain a more cooperative effort between the regulatory agency and the foodservice industry in meeting sanitary requirements.
3. To conduct a series of foodservice training courses and to certify those persons who demonstrate their competence in the area of food protection.
4. To see that the training will result in reciprocity between regulatory agencies and within the foodservice industry.

ACTIVITIES IN THE 70s

FDA negotiated a contract with the State of Ohio (1) to develop a course of study that would be appropriate for foodservice management and to make recommendations to FDA for implementation of the course. It was tested with some modifications made and finalized by the States of Virginia, Colorado, Vermont, and Maryland for their own use.

The course developed is practical and includes basic public health concerns of the regulatory agencies. The "bottom line" is to acquaint management with the critical items of public health significance which results in action to improve and maintain the sanitation level of the foodservice industry at an acceptable level. Basic subject matter covers the areas of food microbiology, foodborne illness (causes and prevention), critical items in food-handling operations and management tools for instructing employees in safe food-handling practices.

Implementation plans include the solicitation of support and advice of the foodservice industry, public health agencies and other interested parties. Only qualified persons who can teach foodservice sanitation should be used for instruction. Data (sanitation results) from field inspections should be available to evaluate the training program and check its effectiveness. Initially, it is recommended that pre- and post-testing be done to check the sanitation knowledge gained and to assist the instructor in evaluation of the material presented. Making pre- and post-inspections of the establishments
whose managers attend the program is another device to monitor progress of the training experience. The support of local health departments is crucial to the continuing success of any training program.

A variety of programs grew like "topsy" in the early 70s but as national criteria were developed and promoted, more uniformity was noted in program planning. DHEW Publication No. (FDA) 76-1009 (2) lists the FDA recommendations for uniform foodservice sanitation training.

To facilitate upgrading of foodservice management qualifications, a plan for sanitation training which results in certification was adopted by FDA as a national goal. It has been promoted throughout the country since 1975. Elements of such a program are:

1. Acceptance and promulgation of the minimum standards of training content, with flexibility in management training programs to meet local requirements.
2. Acceptance and promulgation of program administration through monitoring to assure complete and satisfactory training.
3. Programs jointly sponsored by industry and the regulatory agencies wherever possible.
4. Recognition of training which results in certification and meets the national criteria.
5. Reciprocal recognition of all training programs.

A plan to implement uniform sanitation training of foodservice managers was detailed in a final report to the FDA from the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry in 1977 (3). Recommendations contained in this report have been used to implement a number of programs throughout the United States.

As of October 1979, there were approximately 160 program sponsors with an estimated 300 actual training sites where sanitation training programs for the foodservice industry were being offered. Over 50% of the total number of foodservice establishments in the United States exist in areas where a manager training/certification program is now offered.

During the latter part of the 70s, there was considerable interest in mandating manager training programs. Reports to FDA in October of 1979 indicated 26 such programs in effect. An additional 39 regulatory agencies have been identified as program sponsors conducting sanitation training on a voluntary basis. Twenty-six foodservice industries have been identified as having their own training programs. More no doubt exist.

The FDA predicts there will be more activity in the training area during the 80s, especially the establishment of training on a mandated basis. The academic communities throughout the country are offering courses of study in foodservice sanitation in increasing numbers. The foodservice trade association itself is promoting and conducting many training programs.

FDA recognizes there are obstacles to be overcome in initiating and/or maintaining a training program. These concern: (a) workloads of regulatory agencies; (b) trained personnel to provide instruction; (c) administrative details in recordkeeping; (d) poor communication among regulatory agencies and with industry; (e) the concept that education will correct all the problems; (f) failure to follow up or monitor training; (g) a lack of initiative by the manager to provide employee training; (h) honoring training programs of the industry and (i) failure to recognize certification from other jurisdictions.

A need for some kind of a plan to honor programs which meet uniform criteria was seen by the FDA in the late 70s. A contract was negotiated with the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry (NIFI) to develop a reciprocal plan and submit it to the FDA with recommendations for implementation. In 1979 a Final Report from NIFI (4) was received outlining steps for such a plan, namely, (a) agency and reciprocal acceptance of sanitation training to avoid duplication of training efforts, (b) reciprocal acceptance based on conformance to FDA recommendations contained in DHEW Pub. No. (FDA) 76-1009 (2), (c) 5-year limitation on certification and no infringement on local requirements for additional criteria and (d) statements of intent to be signed by sponsors in agreement with national uniform criteria and filed with FDA.

Additional steps are: (a) state and local regulatory agencies are encouraged to review their present programs and to modify them where necessary to meet the national criteria, (b) new program sponsors are encouraged to meet national minimum training standards where possible, (c) state and local agencies are encouraged to work cooperatively with non-agency program sponsors in the conduct of programs, monitoring progress and keeping records and (d) following review of industry training programs, regulatory agencies are encouraged to validate such programs which meet the national criteria.

Twenty program sponsors (all regulatory agencies) have signed statements of intent indicating their acceptance of certified persons who have received training and been certified as meeting the national guidelines.

**ACTION IN THE 80s**

Increased industry awareness of sanitation problems, improved communication between industry and regulatory agencies and upgrading of professional abilities of foodservice managers appear to be the most beneficial aspects of training programs. Most sponsors have indicated the level of foodservice sanitation has improved as the result of manager training. However, only limited statistical evidence is available to show that sanitation levels have improved as the result of training.

We expect improvement in the sanitation level of the foodservice industry during the 80s. If efforts expended during the 70s are continued and perhaps accelerated, there is bound to be improvement both in knowledge obtained and the level of sanitation in the foodservice industry.
We have what we believe are the basic tools to promote, initiate and monitor a national uniform foodservice manager training/certification program. If it is administered properly, it should permit reciprocity between regulatory agencies and within the foodservice industry.

We are all partners to improve the sanitation level of the foodservice industry. Industry is eager to move forward. We would expect the regulatory agencies and the academic communities to do likewise in the 80s.

FDA realizes that manager training in foodservice sanitation is but one component of a total and effective foodservice program, but a very important one.

FDA action plans call for establishment of foodservice manager training programs which meet the national criteria and result in reciprocal agreements between the regulatory agencies and within the foodservice industry. We will encourage modification of existing programs to provide more uniformity where the national guidelines are not met. FDA will publish periodically a roster listing all training programs which meet the national criteria.

A number of professional organizations have endorsed the concept of foodservice manager training which would result in reciprocity. Included are the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), the National Environmental Health (NEHA), the International Association of Milk, Food and Environmental Sanitarians (IAMFES), the National Restaurant Association (NRA) and the Great Lakes Chapter of the Association of State Sanitary Engineers.

Let's keep going until we have at least one certified person on duty, whenever the establishment is open, in every foodservice facility in the United States. This person must be knowledgeable in the basic principles of safe food-handling practices. The establishment he/she manages should show signs of good sanitation. By encouraging such training and by implementing and monitoring it we will perform a service to the foodservice industry. We have an obligation to the public for this service.

**CONCLUSION**

As time progresses and effective training programs are established, the regulatory agencies may be able to reduce some of their current inspection activity depending on the sanitation status of the industry. By working together, we shall continue to improve the image of the industry and provide an additional measure of food protection for the consumer.

**REFERENCES**

1. Anonymous. 1975. Development of a program to collate information as to food protection afforded consumers by owners/operators/managers who must demonstrate competency. Ohio Final Report to FDA.
2. Anonymous. Food service manager training and certification program: recommendations for a training course to improve food protection practices in food service establishments. DHEW Publication No. (FDA) 76-1009* or as amended.

*Copies available from the Division of Retail Food Protection, FDA, HFF-340, Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D.C. 20204.