

## RELEVANCE

**Foodborne illnesses are a public health burden and contribute a significant amount to the cost of health care each year.** Foodborne illnesses are preventable and typically underreported. Many cases go unreported due to people not seeking medical care for mild cases. A small percentage of foodborne illnesses are the result of identified foodborne outbreaks. These illnesses certainly pose a public health risk, but can present certain populations with many challenges.

- **Children under 5 years old** have the highest incidence of lab-confirmed infections from some foodborne pathogens.
- **Pregnant women, adults over 65 years old and those with compromised immune systems** are at higher risk of hospitalizations and death from foodborne illnesses.

The **Texas Health and Safety Code, Texas Food Establishment Rules** state that food establishments handling, preparing, or serving exposed time/temperature control for safety foods, could be required to have a **certified food manager** on staff at all times. These rules also state that **all food employees** should complete an accredited food handlers program within 60 days of employment. In many cases, well-trained food handlers are more valuable employees.

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Food Protection Management** program was developed to meet the need for quality food safety education in Texas retail food establishments. Our hands-on Certified Food Managers course equips employees with the latest in food safety principles and practices, and prepares them for the National Certified Food Manager's Exam. The 2-hour food handler program is accredited by the Department of State Health Services, and trains front-line food service workers on the basic principles of food safety.

## RESPONSE

**Family and Community Health Committees** and **residents across the North Region** have identified the need for food safety education programs. The *Family and Community Health Agents from Lubbock and Hale counties* and *Health Agent from Castro, Hale and Lamb counties* joined together to offer Food Managers Courses across District 2. We were able to offer four food managers courses in the year 2022. Agents were also able to offer food handlers courses individually in their home counties.

### Target Audience

- These programs targeted potential Food Managers and Food Service Workers.

### Partnerships & Collaborators

- Lubbock Restaurant Association
- Plainview Chamber of Commerce
- City of Plainview Sanitarian
- Shelby's Bridge of Sudan (*continued partnership since 2019*)
- School Districts of Littlefield, Plainveiw (*continued partnership since 2019*) and Sundown (*new partnership*)

## VALUE STATEMENT

### Food Safety Education

Both those who work in food-service establishments and those who simply cook in their own kitchens benefit from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's food-safety education programs. The resulting improvement in safe food handling benefits consumers by helping prevent food-borne illnesses and the public health care costs they cause.

**1 IN 6**

**AMERICANS**

get sick from a foodborne disease each year in the United States

**31**

known pathogens that can cause foodborne illness

**\$15.6 BILLION**

estimated cost of foodborne illness each year in the United States



## RESPONSE EXAMPLE

### Certified Food Managers

Using the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension "*Food Safety: It's Our Business*" course book, handouts and curriculum, the FCH and Health agents in Lubbock, Hale, and Lamb counties were able to offer **four** in-person food Managers courses. The food manager course is designed to be delivered using a team-teaching approach and utilizes *handouts, videos, guest speakers, PowerPoint presentations and a course book.*

The food manager course consists of **two days of intense education and training.** Participants also complete the National Restaurant Association **ServSafe Exam** at the end of the second class day. Once a participant passes the ServSafe exam, their certification is valid for five years.

### Food Handlers

Utilizing the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Food Handlers curriculum, agents are able to offer education and training to food service workers in their counties.

The food handlers curriculum is a **two-hour training course**, designed for in-person delivery, but can be completed online too. The course uses *PowerPoint presentations, handouts and real-life examples* to teach the importance of safe food handling procedures. Upon completion of the Food Handlers course, the participant's certification is valid for two years.



## EVALUATION STRATEGY

The Certified Food Managers course offers a pre/post test to evaluate the amount of knowledge gained and intent to adopt best practices. Another evaluation of knowledge gain is the passing of the ServSafe Exam.

The Food Handlers Course is evaluated using a pre/post survey to measure the amount of knowledge gained.

## RESULTS



## FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Based on the results from 2022, Shelby's Bridge and Plainveiw High School have expressed interest in continuing to partner with AgriLife Extension for 2023 Food Handler trainings and Certified Food Manager trainings. We will continue to expand partnerships as our District 2 FPM Team grows.

As more agents in District 2 became certified to teach courses in Food Protection Management, we plan to expand our teaching group and area. In 2023, we have plans to partner together and offer four certified food manager courses throughout the South Plains District and one Cottage Food Law Training.



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