



# Training is Critical to Public Health

by *Melissa Vaccaro, MS, CHO*

**D**oes training really impact how well a foodservice facility functions? Do facilities do better on their inspections if they have a certified food manager or trained food handlers? Can you reduce the potential for a foodborne illness in your facility if you have properly trained food employees?

The answer is simple: YES!

Having a Person-In-Charge (PIC) who is knowledgeable about food safety during all hours of operation guarantees

there is always someone in the facility who is responsible for monitoring and managing all operations and, most importantly, is permitted to make decisions and take immediate measures should a corrective action be needed. The food industry is changing rapidly and it's important that the PIC be knowledgeable and up-to-date on code changes. By engaging in ongoing food manager certification courses, you maintain your knowledge base. But we cannot forget about our food employees. They need to be trained as well. Although a certified



## FACILITIES PERFORM BETTER WITH A CERTIFIED PERSON IN CHARGE

food manager may be knowledgeable about food safety, they may not be effective at conveying that information to employees. So if that's the case, managers must find effective solutions to meet employee food safety training needs.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a study in 2014 with the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net) to determine if there is a link between food safety certification and food safety knowledge. In addition, they evaluated if there

is a link between knowledge and other concerns, such as restaurant traits and job experience. EHS-Net is a cooperative program of the CDC, the US Food and Drug Administration, and state and local health departments.

The study results, as noted by CDC, indicate:

For both managers and workers, greater food safety knowledge was related to:

- Being certified in food safety
- Speaking English as a primary language

For managers, greater food safety knowledge was related to:

- Having more manager experience
- Working in a chain restaurant
- Working in a larger restaurant

For workers, greater food safety knowledge was related to:

- Having a manager with greater food safety knowledge
- Speaking English as a primary language
- Having many job duties

The study concludes that food safety certification (i.e. taking a course and exam) increases food safety knowledge for both managers and workers. Larger chains and restaurants had greater food safety knowledge; however, they also have greater resources for food safety training. Workers who had managers with poor knowledge had less food safety knowledge themselves. Interestingly, the study also submits that manager knowledge directly affects worker knowledge. "Managers who have poor food safety knowledge will not be able to teach food safety to their workers," according to the study.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted a 10-year study to determine compliance with the key food safety risk factors (i.e. employee behaviors and preparation practices repeatedly identified as contributing to foodborne illness). In the finding published in 2009, FDA suggests that the risk factors can be controlled by several intervention strategies, one of which is Demonstration of Knowledge. Data collected in this study showed "a correlation between the presence of a certified food protection manager and better food safety practices and behaviors." The study continued to the development of a Trend Analysis in 2014, where the same results were noted.

In a study conducted by Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo., "A sample of foodservice managers were

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surveyed regarding the value they placed on food safety training; whether they would provide higher pay or bonuses for trained new workers or pay a fixed amount for current employee training. They were also asked how important public image was to their business. Approximately 72 percent indicated they would be more likely to hire food safety trained workers, and 50 percent would be willing to pay higher wages to those trained.”

Are you convinced yet that trained foodservice workers are more valuable employees? Thoroughly trained foodservice workers (whether general employees or managers) gain important knowledge and skills that enable them to prevent foodborne illness from occurring in their facilities. Every foodservice worker should understand how important their job is to the public.

Many regulatory jurisdictions today require some form of manager certification or food handler training. Some do not require anything at all. Whether your facility is tightly regulated or not regulated at all, allowing *all* foodservice workers to attend food safety training will be invaluable

to your business. With one in six Americans getting sick and 3,000 dying from foodborne illness annually, we must continue to support and encourage training opportunities for foodservice workers. It will be your best spent money. Properly trained staff will improve food safety and reduce risks and behaviors that are associated with foodborne illness. Protect the public health and protect your business by training all foodservice workers on food safety practices. **E**



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## Survey Shows Workers Often Go to Work Sick

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A survey conducted by Wakefield Research (sponsored by GOJO Industries) revealed some startling facts about how Americans handle illness during the winter germ season:

- Sixty-nine percent don't take sick days because they don't want to miss a day of work, even if they're sick
- Sixty-two percent have gone to work sick
- Nearly three in four parents have sent their children to school sick
- Sixty percent of those surveyed saw their co-worker sneeze without using a tissue

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 80 percent of infectious diseases are transmitted by touch. The CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water, and when soap and water are not

available, using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol to reduce germs on hands and decrease the spread of illness-causing germs.

Remember these key times for practicing hand hygiene:

- Before and after preparing food
- Before eating
- Before and after caring for someone that is sick or when around someone who is ill
- After using the bathroom
- After sneezing or coughing
- After touching anything that is in a high-traffic area that may have been touched by many different hands, such as the grocery cart handle, a phone, or a handrail.