

About the Action Guide

What is the Food Safe Schools Action Guide?

The Food-Safe Schools Action Guide is a multifaceted implementation tool comprised of a variety of products specially designed to help school staff in their efforts to make their school food-safe. The Food-Safe Schools Action Guide can help schools identify gaps in food safety and develop an action plan for becoming food-safe. **The Food-Safe Schools Action Guide is available in two formats:**

1. **The Food-Safe Schools Action Guide Toolkit** is the hardcopy version of the Action Guide. The Toolkit comes in a durable container which includes:
 - o How-to Guide booklet
 - o The How to Become a Food-Safe School video in both VHS and DVD formats
 - o Motivational PowerPoint® Presentation Script
 - o Administrator's Briefing
 - o A Needs Assessment and Planning Guide
 - o Action Sheets for Action Team Members
 - o Additional useful resources from NCFSS partners

The Food-Safe Schools Action Guide Toolkit premiered in June 2005, in limited quantities. If you are interested in receiving Toolkit copies from the initial printing, or placing your name on the waiting list for copies when additional Toolkits are available, please do so by clicking on the [Request the Action Guide Toolkit](#) link located on the left navigation bar on this website. Additional print runs may occur depending on available funds.

2. **The Food-Safe Schools Action Guide** consists of all of the items found within the Toolkit in downloadable format from [this website](#), along with additional resources not yet included in the hardcopy Toolkit version. www.foodsafeschools is your one-stop resource for preventing foodborne illness and is the key source for accessing Food-Safe Schools Action Guide additions, updates and supplemental resources.

How the Food-Safe School Action Guide was Developed

To develop the Food-Safe School Action Guide, ORC Macro, under contract to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reviewed published literature (e.g., peer reviewed journal articles, books, private and government reports, and Web sites) to identify risk factors for foodborne illness and strategies that schools could implement to prevent foodborne illness. Many strategies had been subjected to scientific evaluation in environments other than schools, however, little research was available on strategies and risk factors specific to schools. Therefore, primary qualitative research (focus groups, interviews, and expert panels) was conducted with persons representing education, health, and agriculture organizations at the federal, state, and school building level to inform the Action Guide.

After the literature review was completed, CDC and ORC Macro convened a panel of experts in health, education, and agriculture at federal and state levels. Panel participants included representatives from food safety education and infectious disease prevention, school foodservice

administration, environmental health organizations, local health departments, foodborne illness epidemiology, coordinated school health programs, school nursing, and school administration. The panelists:

1. considered the foodborne illness risk factors and strategies that were identified in the literature review,
2. reviewed available evidence of effectiveness of strategies and identified food safety theory and best practices,
3. discussed the extent to which evidence existed to support each strategy, the potential effectiveness of each strategy, and the feasibility for schools to implement each strategy,
4. determined which strategies would be most effective in schools, and
5. identified gaps in the literature and knowledge base, particularly related to actions that key audiences in schools could take to prevent foodborne illness and promote school food safety.

The gaps in research identified in the literature review and by the expert panel served as the foundation for focus groups and interviews with the target audiences of the Food-Safe School Action Guide. Sixteen focus groups were conducted in Rhode Island, Florida, and Georgia with school principals, teachers, school nurses, and school foodservice staff to fill in the gaps in the literature, test if the principles and messages derived from the literature are practical, and illuminate building level food safety issues for the Food-Safe School Action Guide. In-depth interviews also were conducted with cooperative extension service and local health department staff to aid in the in-depth analysis of the roles and responsibilities of school system personnel relating to food safety from the building to the state level.

The results from the focus groups and interviews were integrated with the findings from the literature review and the expert panel to create the Food-Safe School Action Guide. A coordinating committee of CDC-funded national non-governmental organizations and the funded Rhode Island State Education Agency closely reviewed outlines and draft versions of the Food-Safe School Action Guide. The national organizations were the American Nursing Foundation, American School Foodservice Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the National Environmental Health Association. The Action Guide was revised and expanded based on their review. The Food-Safe School Action Guide was also reviewed by members of the National Coalition for Food-Safe Schools (NCFSS), which includes representatives of federal and state agencies and national organizations with member constituencies engaged in school health promotion throughout the United States.

The Food-Safe School Action Guide represents the state of the science in school based foodborne illness prevention. The recommendations in the Food-Safe School Action Guide are based on research evidence. They also are based on food science and evidence from exemplary practice in food safety and foodborne illness prevention, health education, and public health. However, every recommendation is not appropriate or feasible for every school to implement nor should any school be expected to implement all recommendations. Schools can determine which recommendations have the highest priority based on the needs of the school and available resources. As more resources become available, schools could implement additional recommendations to support a coordinated approach to preventing foodborne illness.