ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research project was to secure and expand the capability of the existing food and nutrition services for at-risk populations in the Nation’s Capital and to promote personal responsibility for practicing food safety. The program serves to provide food sanitation certification and re-certification training for 100 supervisory food handlers. Seven hundred and eighty four (784) community service facilities within the District of Columbia received letters asking them to participate in the project. Individuals were randomly selected from a list that their agency provided. A needs assessment was completed by each agency to derive the curriculum for the food handler course. Among the materials developed for the course were a pre-test and post-test. Findings of the study suggest that there was a significant increase in understanding and ability to handle food safely upon the completion of the course.

Purpose

To promote personal responsibility for practicing food safety and enhance the community’s access to information and services including precautions for at risk populations in the District of Columbia.

Subjects

Participants included 103 second level food handlers from 68 District-wide community-based, non-profit facilities. The majority (84.5%) of the participants were females as revealed in the study. The participants were between 19 and 80 years of age and 53.3% of the participants were between 31 and 50 years of age.

Objectives

1. To establish an advisory committee to assist in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project.
2. To provide mandatory food sanitation certification and re-certification (train-the-trainer) training for 100 supervisory food handlers.
3. To develop a curriculum that supervisory food handlers can implement to teach the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach to food safety to food handlers and their at risk customers.
4. To determine the effectiveness of the curriculum in bringing about an increase in knowledge of safe food handling practices, and changes in food handling behaviors and attitudes among food handlers to reduce the risk of food borne illness.
5. To develop and distribute food safety training materials that community agencies can utilize for on-going training of their staff, volunteers, and customers, once the project funds have expired.
6. To establish a high technology resource lending library on food safety information that will be accessible to the general public beyond the project funding period.
7. To facilitate the licensing process (certified card) for persons who pass the National Certification Examination.

Participants by Age

- 19-30: 14%
- 31-50: 53%
- 51-70: 29%
- 71-80: 4%

Participants Mean Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Certification Examination</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods and Procedures
1. Every fourth agency of 784 community service facilities within the District of Columbia was randomly selected to receive a flyer, brochure, and letter describing the project.
2. Each agency was asked to post the flyer, fill out the agency registration form and agency profile form and provide the project with a listing of names of the supervisory food handlers who were eligible to participate.
3. Individuals were randomly selected from each agency list if more than two names were provided. Otherwise, the first of the two names was selected to participate.
4. A needs assessment was completed by each agency that participated in the project. The assessment included questions detailing the type of services provided by the agency, the clientele and food safety education needs.
5. Individuals registered for one of the four 15-hour classes and became trained and certified.
6. Completed registration information was returned to the project by fax.
7. Classes were scheduled and materials were developed including the course outline, pre-test, post-test, and a bank of study questions for the course.
8. Individuals trained and certified will be able to provide training and education for audiences within their specific purview.

Conclusion
The Food Handler Education for Small Non-Commercial Service Agencies program significantly improved test scores. The mean percentages for each class indicate that the course prepares the individuals in food handler training to pass the national exam. The average score for the national examination was reported at 78.8%, which is well above the required 70% to pass. The posttest average was not far behind the national examination scores at 78.5 percent. A sample t-test indicated that the improvements were highly statistically significant in comparing the mean pre-test and post-test scores (p<.01). There were no indications that age was a significant variable in the success rate; however, it is typically more difficult for older adults to adjust to training in the classroom. Despite a disparity in the amount of familiarity with studying and classroom environments, a majority of the food handlers were able to pass the exam on the first try. The results of this study indicate that food handler training in the classroom is an effective and necessary tool to increase food handler integrity.

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