ABSTRACT

According to the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST), approximately every second of every day, someone is stricken with food poisoning. CAST estimates that as many as 33 million Americans suffer from food-borne illnesses each year, with an annual death toll of 9000. The Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service estimates that food-borne illnesses affect as many as 81 million Americans a year. It has been determined that Food Safety Education is a critical need in the community because of the threat of food-borne illness not being recognized or easily understood, large numbers of at-risk elderly and immuno-compromised individuals for whom food-borne illness may be an unknown killer, and no plans to assist consumers in becoming aware of the health risks involved and those who choose not to practice safe habits and preventative measures.

Purpose
To promote an organized effort among organizations and concerns in the Washington Metropolitan Area in order to create an awareness of food safety information, resources, and practices in the community that will significantly impact the ability of citizens at every level of responsibility for food safety to prevent the occurrence of food-borne illness.

Subjects
Participants consisted of 400 individuals from the representative organizations concerned with food safety education. Over 700 community service organizations that interface with the National Capital Area Food Bank participated. Of the 400 individuals who attended the conference, forty-three percent (43%) of them were females and fifty-three percent (53%) were males.

Goals and Objectives
1. To identify a representative cross-section of organizations that will commit to examining the existing parameters of food safety and effective ways to ensure prevention of food-borne illness in their local areas.
2. To assess the needs of representative organizations such that a collaborative community can be established and strengthened beyond this program.
3. To provide copies of descriptive information about food safety in the District of Columbia such that intercommunication, availability of community services, and science-based principles of food safety will be easily accessible to persons at every level of interest.
4. To provide a mechanism through which at least 500 individuals in the food safety network can receive expert information concerning food safety, establish relationships with other members of the network, and work together to create community-based solutions concerning food safety issues in the District of Columbia.
5. To establish a mechanism for persons in the food safety collaborative to provide input into the District of Columbia’s next comprehensive health plan.

Conference Theme
The conference theme was “Fighting BAC in the Nation’s Capital: Community Food Safety Awareness and Action - A Community-wide Conference on Food Safety Education.”

Workshop Descriptions
1. New Regulations and Inspections - What Agencies Need to Know: D.C. Department of Health representatives examined the most current municipal codes of their federal background. Learn about the Mayor’s reorganization for e-control of food safety and inspection of small agencies. Get first-hand hints for self-inspection and the know-how to pass food safety inspection the first time around.

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II. Networking to Ensure Food Safety—Organizing the D.C. Coalition: Actively engage in developing a network to collaborate for food safety eradication of food borne illness through education of area stakeholders at all levels. Help create the voice that will impact decisions about food safety resources in our Nation’s Capital. Outcomes will include an organizational structure and commitments to establish the D.C. Coalition for Food Safety Education.

III. Training and Certification in Food Sanitation—Food Service Supervisors Adhering to the Law: Learn from the top experts what the D.C. Municipal Code requires of at least one supervisor in every food service concern. Receive an overview of the exciting topics in the curriculum and how it relates to the certifying examination.

IV. Impact of Federal Food Safety Initiatives on the District—Staying in Sync with the 21st Century Momentum—The Feds have finalized and begun to implement food safety guidelines for the Nation. Get your update from the source, especially concerning the President’s Food Safety Initiative and Partnership for Food Safety Education, the Nationwide Consumer Education Campaign for Food Handlers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

V. Food-Borne Illness and Prevention Strategies—Coming Together, Working Together, Succeeding Together: Examine state-of-the-art information and best practices regarding food safety, particularly, the principles of HACCP. Expert service providers will share District trends in assisting at-risk populations, where the grant dollars are found and how to get a piece of the pie. Since education is a key strategy in “Fighting BAC,” attendees will also examine multimedia resources for working with community residents.

At the conclusion of the conference, participants will be able to:
1. Describe new regulations and inspection systems.
2. Network to help ensure food safety in the District.
3. Provide input into the DC Comprehensive Health Plan 2000.
4. Understand Federal initiatives for food safety.
5. Access training for food sanitation certification.
6. Participate in District activities to improve food safety.

Results
Results are based upon the completed written evaluations submitted by the participants at the conclusion of the conference. A Likert scale was used with ranges of poor, fair, average, good and excellent.

Personal Responses
“This was a very refreshing and interesting up to date series of lectures and workshops.

It is very helpful and you can apply it to your own family.”

“Food Safety Initiatives explanations and examples were well given. Easy to understand.”

“Conference is excellent, especially provided continuing education for RD’s & meals for free!”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the seminar or conference. Hope to return in the future.”

“Excellent!”

“Thank you one and all for all your efforts to help us in keeping food safe and to network.”

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