

Safe Food Handling in Today's Food Landscape: Food Safety Education for Extension Volunteers

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Objectives: To increase knowledge of safe food handling practices, improve food handling processes and to ensure that safe food is served at Extension events.

Method: In 2019, the UF/IFAS Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences agents conducted nine one-day food safety training sessions at multiple locations in Florida using materials based on Safe Staff® program (<https://www.safestaff.org/>). The Safe Staff® program is endorsed by the Department of Business and Professional Regulations (DBPR) for professional food handlers in Florida.

Over eight months, we taught a total of 131 participants in a train-the-trainer format. These participants were from several key extension areas such as Family and Consumer Sciences agents, 4-H volunteers, Master Gardeners, and other participants who serve food as part of their extension programming.

Three months after the training, participants (n=131) received a follow up survey using Qualtrics (UF-IRB 201801252). The survey items were selected using the FDA Consumer survey as a source [2,3,4], which corresponded with activities of traditional volunteers (Guo et al., 2018) (1).

Background

The Statewide Food Safety in-service training was a multimedia presentation and demonstration that focused on food safety best practices during volunteer events. Many educational programs and events (i.e., fund raising and concessions) associated with 4-H in Florida involve foods, which are handled by volunteers. If not properly handled, food provided at these events can become contaminated resulting in the risk of food-borne illnesses.

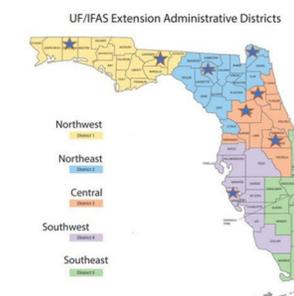
Results:

- Participant age range were between 24 to 65 years old (39/53) with the majority of respondents being female (41/53).
- Fifty-three participants responded to the survey (40% response rate)
- Respondents (43/47[(91%)] reported correct use and cleaning of cutting boards; 97% (46/47) reported proper personal hygiene practices; 93% (44/47) reported proper glove uses; 87% (41/47) reported having thermometers at volunteer sites and 60% always use thermometers when cooking poultry.
- The majority of respondents 91% (42/46); knew the proper temperature of a refrigerator.
- While knowledge gaps related to cooking were identified, respondents exhibited levels of food safety knowledge and practices that were equal to or higher than those in the 2016 FDA Consumer Food Safety Survey (3).

Food Safety Team



In-service Training Locations



Significance: UF/IFAS volunteers require basic food safety training yet none was being offered. Gaps in food safety knowledge and behaviors were identified in Extension volunteers. This study identified the need for food safety training and will guide UF policy for Extension volunteers that handle food.

References:

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