

▶ **DIRECT FROM CDC** ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

# Retail Collaborative Provides Tools and Resources to Drive Food Safety

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**Editor's Note:** The National Environmental Health Association strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we feature this column on environmental health services from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the *Journal*.

In these columns, authors from CDC's Water, Food, and Environmental Health Services Branch, as well as guest authors, will share tools, resources, and guidance for environmental health practitioners. The conclusions in these columns are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of CDC.

The authors represent organizations participating in the Communications Workgroup within the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative.

## Addressing Restaurant Food Safety Is Key to Reducing Foodborne Illness

More than one half of all foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. are associated with restaurants (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019). Reducing foodborne illness is one of the nation's Healthy People 2030 goals (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). To reduce foodborne illness and outbreaks at the retail level, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) brought together key partners to expand the capacity of food safety programs.

## Mobilizing Leading Organizations Around Food Safety Goals

The Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative (Collaborative) brings together representatives from seven member organizations with a role in improving retail food safety in the U.S.:

- Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)

- Conference for Food Protection (CFP)
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
- National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

These organizations leverage their combined strengths and resources as the Collaborative to create and share tools and resources that food safety programs can use to improve food safety in their jurisdictions. In addition, the Collaborative's six objectives are poised to influence or benefit regulatory food safety programs and the food safety culture at restaurants and other retail food establishments. The Collaborative's objectives are as follows:

- Develop a strategy to support national FDA *Food Code* adoption.
- Increase use of risk-based inspections and intervention strategies.
- Increase use of the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards.
- Improve foodborne outbreak investigation methods.

- Increase the number of restaurants and other retail food establishments with well-developed food safety management systems that use active managerial control.
- Develop a strategy to enhance communication and better tell our collective story.

This column highlights some of the resources from the Collaborative for food safety programs. All Collaborative resources are available at [www.retailfoodsafetycollaborative.org](http://www.retailfoodsafetycollaborative.org).

## Using the Food Code Adoption Toolkit to Support Adoption Efforts

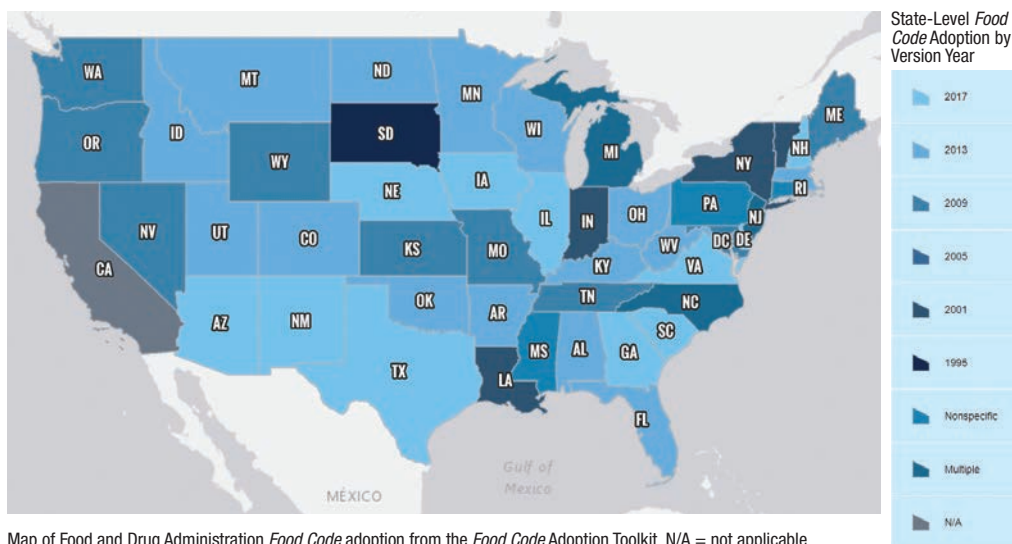
With release of the FDA 2022 *Food Code* earlier this year, adoption is fresh on the minds of regulators. The Collaborative's *Food Code* Adoption Toolkit helps food safety programs learn more about how the *Food Code* is used across the country. These programs can access resources to educate decision makers about the importance of these science-based standards. The Toolkit includes a map of current *Food Code* adoption across the U.S., along with statements supporting adoption from national organizations, major players in the food industry, and food safety programs. It also includes links to articles on the impact of the *Food Code*, including a study (Kambhampati et al.,

FIGURE 1

## Explore Resources From the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative That Your Food Safety Program Can Use

- *Food Code* Adoption Toolkit
- Foodborne Illness Outbreak Resource Library
- Active Managerial Control Incentive Programs: Examples From Jurisdictions Leading the Way
- Issue Brief on Retail Program Standards Networks
- Study on Factors Influencing the Implementation of Risk-Based Inspections
- Study on Implementation of Effective Intervention Strategies

Find these resources and more at [www.retailfoodsafetycollaborative.org](http://www.retailfoodsafetycollaborative.org).



2016) and a plain language summary (CDC, 2022) documenting that adoption of *Food Code* provisions is linked with lower rates of foodborne norovirus outbreaks.

### Learning How Programs Meet the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

Members of the Collaborative researched how regulatory food safety programs are meeting the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards, including the benefits of participating in state- and region-wide networks focused on supporting programs to meet the standards. Extensive qualitative research revealed these networks played a huge role in helping participating programs. Specifically, the networks helped programs meet the standards more efficiently, facilitated resource sharing among jurisdictions beyond the standards, and strengthened communication among programs and state and federal agencies.

### Exploring the Foodborne Illness Outbreak Resource Library

This open-access library houses materials to support foodborne illness outbreak investigations that food safety programs wanted but had trouble finding, according to a survey conducted by the Collaborative (National

Environmental Health Association & Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative, 2022). These resources include a printable guide to help identify the roles and responsibilities of team members during an outbreak investigation, an interactive case study exercise based on an outbreak at a hotel, and instructions for collecting various types of environmental samples.

This library focuses on ready-to-use materials addressing various aspects of foodborne illness outbreaks. Resources include tools and links to training on such topics as interviewing restaurant staff members, collecting clinical and environmental samples, using pathogen-specific guidance, communicating with the media, and completing after-action reports. It also features links to well-known resources, such as the CDC Environmental Assessment Training Series and the Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response *Guidelines for Foodborne Disease Outbreak Response*.

### Discovering How Jurisdictions Lead the Way With Active Managerial Control Incentive Programs

Certified food protection managers can play an important role in creating safe food policies in their restaurants and actively ensuring those policies are followed. Active managerial

control (AMC) is when retail food establishments proactively incorporate specific actions and procedures into their operations to control hazards and reduce risks that cause foodborne illness outbreaks. To help encourage these practices, regulatory food safety programs can create AMC incentive programs to help shift the retail culture from a reactive mindset to a proactive approach to food safety.

The Collaborative asked regulatory food safety programs to identify key materials and resources they used to promote AMC, including incentive programs. In the words of one respondent, facilities that participate in the AMC incentive program have “fewer violations and have been able to conduct fewer inspections. It is a very positive outcome for both the facility and the health department” (National Environmental Health Association & Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative, 2021). Explore the resources other regulatory food safety programs have developed to educate and support restaurants in using AMC, including educational classes, sample templates, and an AMC self-assessment.

### Exploring Other Resources and Getting Involved

The Collaborative website houses a repository of tools and resources for food safety professionals at all levels (Figure 1), including stud-

FIGURE 2

**Sign Up For Email Updates and Follow the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative on Social Media**



ies on how regulatory food safety programs apply risk-based inspection methods and use interventions to address risk factors for foodborne illness in their jurisdictions. Visit the Collaborative website at [www.retailfoodsafetycollaborative.org](http://www.retailfoodsafetycollaborative.org) to find more information and sign up to receive email updates to be notified about new tools and events (Figure 2). Thank

you for all you are doing to improve food safety in your community. 🌸

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# Did You Know?

September is National Food Safety Education Month. Every year, an estimated 1 in 6 people in the U.S. get sick from a foodborne disease. Check out our food safety resources at [www.neha.org/food-safety\\_2](http://www.neha.org/food-safety_2). You can learn about the credentials, courses, and study materials we offer to strengthen your skills. You can also explore our policy statements that cover a broad range of topics, including food freedom operations, raw milk, uniform and integrated food safety systems, and more.

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