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<Name of Agency>

Nutrition Services  
Food Storage and Handling  
Policies and Procedures

< Additional agency information>

<Date created/last updated>  
  
<Agency disclaimer, if applicable>

# FOOD STORAGE

## Dry Food Storage

* 1. Dry food and food supplies shall be stored in a clean, dry location not exposed to splash, dust, or other contamination.
  2. Dry food may not be stored in restrooms, dressing rooms, garages, mechanical rooms, under leaking water lines or fire sprinkler heads, under water lines on which water has condensed, under open stairwells, in proximity with other sources of contamination, or in any other location that does not have shielding to intercept possible drips.
  3. Dry storage rooms shall preferably be kept at a temperature of 50°F to 70°F to protect food quality.
  4. All foods and supplies shall be stored at least six inches off the floor and packed in a manner to facilitate air movement. Keeping food above the floor eliminates hiding places for pests, makes cleaning easier, protects food from dampness, and helps keep food containers clean.
  5. Food packages shall be in good condition and protect the integrity of the contents so that the food is not exposed to adulteration or potential contaminants.
  6. Bulk food — such as cooking oil, salt, sugar, flour, pasta, etc. — shall be stored in the product container package in which it was obtained or stored in an appropriate container identifying the food by common name.
  7. Dry foods shall be stored in a separate storage area from all chemicals, toxic materials, and maintenance or cleaning tools.
  8. Any cracks or crevices in the floor or walls in the dry storage area shall be filled.
  9. Shelving shall be of non-corrosive materials and be in good condition.
  10. Food inventories shall be rotated on a first-in, first-out (FIFO) basis. Each product shall be marked with date of entry and expiration date.
  11. Home-delivered emergency meals shall be stored in a clean, dry location that is not exposed to splash, dust, or other contamination.

## Cold Food Storage

* 1. Cold foods shall be stored at the proper temperatures necessary to prevent the growth of bacteria, cross-contamination of foods, and condensation or drippage onto other foods stored in the refrigerator or freezer.
  2. The temperature of all refrigeration units shall be kept at 38°F or below in order to maintain all food at 41°F or below.
  3. The temperature of all freezer units shall be kept at 0°F or lower.
  4. Temperatures shall be monitored in all refrigeration and freezer units, checked daily (or more often if there is a problem), and recorded. Even if there is an outside thermometer, one thermometer shall be placed in the warmest part of the unit, preferably near the door, to ensure that the proper minimum temperature is maintained.
  5. Immediately after delivery and inspection, all cold foods shall be stored in the appropriate refrigeration unit. Products must be kept frozen or refrigerated and not held at room temperature under any circumstances.
  6. Refrigeration shelving units must be sealed to the floor or elevated on legs at least six inches off the floor.
  7. Shelves must be constructed from nonabsorbent material and be removable for easy cleaning.
  8. The inside surfaces of any refrigeration units must be free of chipping, cracking, corrosion, debris, moisture, ice build-up, and condensation.
  9. Frozen food inventories shall be rotated on a first-in, first-out (FIFO) basis. Each product shall be marked with date of entry and expiration date.
  10. Undelivered, frozen home-delivered meals that are returned to centers and remain frozen may be stored in the freezer for future use but must be discarded when use-by date is reached. Drivers are encouraged to distribute any surplus meals to other clients rather than returning meals for storage and redistribution.
  11. Foods purchased in ready-to-eat form, such as sliced sandwich meats and hot dogs, shall be date-labeled, stored below 41°F, and served within seven days after opening.
  12. Refrigeration units shall not be over-packed to allow proper airflow to maintain the required cold and frozen holding temperatures and prevent moisture build-up.
  13. In the refrigerator, all foods shall be properly placed on shelves to prevent cross-contamination: fruits, vegetables, and ready-to-eat foods on the top shelf, uncooked meats on the middle shelf, and raw poultry on the bottom. Please refer to the [Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Point](https://www.fda.gov/food/hazard-analysis-critical-control-point-haccp/haccp-principles-application-guidelines) (HACCP) plan for further instructions.
  14. Any food delivered and hot held should not be placed in a refrigerator and/or reheated in a microwave oven.

# FOOD HANDLING

## Food-Contact Equipment

* 1. All food-contact equipment and utensils shall be stored in a sanitary manner.
  2. Food-contact equipment and utensils, including disposal items and home-delivered meal (HDM) insulated carriers, shall be stored at least six inches above the floor in a clean dry location.
  3. All food-contact equipment and utensils shall be completely air-dried before storing.
  4. Glasses and cups shall be stored inverted on a clean, nonabsorbent surface.
  5. All food-contact equipment and HDM insulated carriers shall be stored separately from all chemicals, toxic materials, and maintenance or cleaning tools.
  6. Food-contact equipment and HDM insulated carriers shall not be stored or exposed to unprotected sewer or water lines.

## Handling Procedures

* 1. [Defrosting](https://www.fda.gov/media/164194/download) shall be done in the refrigerator at 41°F or less, under cold running water (completely submerged in running water at 70°F or less), or as part of a conventional cooking process.
  2. Cold foods shall be removed from cold storage only in quantities that can be used immediately.
  3. Food products shall be kept frozen or refrigerated and not held at room temperature under any circumstances.

## Prep Work/Cooking

All foods shall be prepared in a manner that protects against potential contamination and unacceptable microbial growth. Staff will follow proper procedures to prevent foodborne illness.

* 1. Employees will not prepare food or cook while they are ill.
  2. <Designated person> shall ensure sites follow the HACCP Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP).
     1. All foods most likely to be implicated in a foodborne illness outbreak shall be identified.
     2. A potentially hazardous food shall be followed through the flow of food production, critical control points are identified, and proper monitoring and corrective actions are taken.
     3. Proper documentation is maintained.
  3. <Designated person> shall be familiar with the conditions that lead to foodborne disease and shall reduce risk by implementing appropriate food production and cooking procedures.
  4. All employees shall ensure proper hand-washing techniques are used.
     1. A sign shall be posted at the hand-washing sink, reminding staff and volunteers to wash their hands and illustrating proper hand-washing technique.
  5. Except when washing fruits and vegetables, food employees and volunteers may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment.
  6. Food employees shall avoid bare hand and arm contact with food that is in a ready-to-eat form.
  7. <Designated person> shall ensure contamination from food surfaces, equipment, and utensils is prevented.
     1. All food-contact surfaces, including cutting boards and utensils, must be clean and sanitized before and between preparation of each food item, to prevent contamination and cross-contamination.
     2. Thermometers must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized.
  8. <Designated person> shall ensure proper techniques and temperatures are followed when preparing, reheating, or cooking foods.
     1. Raw fruits and vegetables shall be thoroughly washed with potable water before being prepped, cooked, or served.
     2. All cold, potentially hazardous foods shall be kept at 41°F or below during holding, serving, and transporting.
     3. All hot, potentially hazardous foods shall be cooked to the required temperature for each food item.
     4. All hot, potentially hazardous foods shall be maintained at 140°F or above during holding, serving, and transporting. Food shall be disposed of if food is less than 135°F for more than 2.5 hours.

## Equipment

* 1. Food service equipment  
     Food service equipment shall be:
     1. Adequate to serve current needs and level of service. The <designated person> shall ensure the necessary equipment is available to produce high-quality menu items in sufficient quantity to meet needs and timing.
     2. Kept clean and free of debris, breaks, open seams, cracks, chips, pits, inclusions, or similar imperfections.
     3. Kept in good repair and in operation. Any equipment not in use shall be removed, repaired, or replaced.
     4. Sealed to the floor, if floor-mounted equipment, or installed on a raised platform or elevated on legs to provide six inches of clearance for cleaning. Countertop equipment shall be mounted directly to the countertop or elevated 4 inches about the countertop for cleaning. Sufficient space shall be provided for easy cleaning between, behind, and above equipment.
     5. Commercial grade only. No household equipment shall be used in the kitchen.

### Multiuse utensils and food contact surfaces

* + 1. Materials that are used in the construction of utensils and food-contact surfaces of equipment may not impact the food in any way (adding colors, odors, or tastes to food) and shall be safe, durable, easily cleaned, and resistant to pitting, chipping, crazing, scratching, scoring, distortion, and decomposition.
    2. Cast iron equipment shall not be used for utensils or food-contact equipment surfaces except as the surface for cooking, such as the stove burners.
    3. Ceramic, china, crystal utensils, and decorative utensils that are used in direct contact with food, shall be lead-free.
    4. Cutting boards and blocks shall be made from plastic washable materials or hard maple that is not absorbent, meets all code requirements, and is free of seams and cracks.
    5. [Cutting boards](https://www.fda.gov/media/164194/download) should be replaced when boards become excessively worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves.
    6. Using color-coded cutting boards for separating raw animal foods from ready-to-eat products will help control the potential for cross-contamination.
    7. Cutting or piercing parts of can openers shall be readily removable for cleaning and replacement.

### Food Temperature Measuring Devices

* + 1. Food temperature measuring devices may not have sensors or stems constructed of glass, except that thermometers with glass sensors or stems that are encased in a shatterproof coating, such as candy thermometers, may be used. Food temperature measuring devices shall be accurate to plus or minus 2°F in the intended range of use.
    2. Weekly calibration shall be conducted and documented to maintain accurate temperature readings. Per the [FDA Food Code](https://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-protection/fda-food-code), document/log that it has been calibrated and when.
    3. If a thermometer cannot be calibrated, it should be discarded and a new one should be requested. Thermometers that use batteries should have the batteries replaced when they display “low battery.”

### Thermometer Calibration

### There are two methods to calibrate a thermometer. Thermometers should be calibrated weekly and any time the thermometer is dropped.

* + 1. With ice (preferred method):
       1. Fill a container with crushed ice. Add ½ cup tap water until container is full. Stir mixture well. Let sit for five minutes.
       2. Put the thermometer stem or probe into the center of the ice water. Make sure the sensing area is under water. Wait 30 seconds or until the indicators stop moving. Probe should not touch container. The thermometer should read 32°F.
    2. With heat:
       1. Bring a pot with three cups of water to a boil (212°F) using a stove, burner, or other heat source. Turn off water once boiled.
       2. Insert the sensor part of the probe into the water about mid-way. Wait 30 seconds or until the indicator stops moving. The thermometer placed in a cup should reach 212°F.
       3. It may be necessary to reheat water to recheck calibration.
    3. To adjust the thermometer so it reads 32°F or 212°F.
       1. Bimetallic stemmed thermometer – Hold the calibration nut with a wrench or other tool. Rotate the thermometer head until it reads 32°F or 212°F.
       2. Digital – If, when trying to calibrate a digital thermometer, it reads “Error” or another temperature, repeat steps one and two under “With heat” above. Press the “reset” button on the side of the thermometer. The digital thermometer is now calibrated.

## Serving

All foods shall be served in a method that protects against potential contamination and unacceptable microbial growth.

* 1. Congregate Meals
     1. At all sites, upon receipt of the meal from the delivery driver, the temperature of all foods shall be measured and recorded. If not at the correct temperature, food is placed in the oven to reheat or refrigerator to cool down. If food is the correct temperature, then food is placed on a steam table or in the refrigerator to maintain temperature. Temperatures should be taken just prior to serving and shall be recorded.
     2. <Designated person> shall ensure employees and volunteers have washed their hands, are wearing hair coverings and are using the proper serving utensils to provide the proper serving size. A portion size of foods used/served shall be posted on the food container.
     3. The <designated person> shall ensure all serving utensils are touched only by the handles. If food servers’ hands must be in direct contact with food, the <designated person> shall ensure food servers are wearing single-use gloves.
     4. The <designated person> shall ensure silverware is pre-wrapped in a napkin or is placed in the silverware container with the handles facing up to ensure participants and servers touch only the handles.
     5. <Designated persons> shall ensure all employees and volunteers handle cups, glasses, bowls, and plates (reusable or disposable) without touching the inside surfaces or surfaces that contact users’ mouths.
     6. Condiments, seasonings, and dressings for counter use and self-service shall be provided in individual packages or from dispensers, with the exception of ketchup and mustard which can be served in original containers or a pour-type dispensers.
     7. Any food on display shall be protected from consumer contamination by packaging or a protected display case.
  2. Home-delivered Meals
     1. Upon receipt of meals from the caterer’s driver, the temperature of home-delivered meals shall be taken and recorded. If not at the correct temperature, the <designated person> should be contacted to determine a course of action, which will depend on the time and temperature of the item when it left the caterer. If home-delivered foods are at the correct temperature, the meals stay in the coolers and are placed in the refrigerator/freezer. Temperatures for home-delivered meals shall be taken and recorded before the volunteer driver receives the meals for delivery to clients. The time that meals are picked up for delivery is also recorded.
     2. Drivers shall maintain home-delivered meal temperatures by transporting meals in coolers with ice and ice packs.

## Leftovers

* 1. Congregate Meals
     1. The <designated person> shall take appropriate measures to not have leftovers from congregate meals.
     2. The <designated person> shall ensure that no senior participant has been denied a meal or a second serving if food is left over.
     3. Eligible participants shall be offered the opportunity for second servings before staff or employees are entitled to purchase individual leftover meal items.
     4. Leftover food from congregate dining sites must be discarded. It cannot be used to extend future meals (i.e., leftover vegetables that have been on the steam table may not be used for vegetable soup.) Foods such as fresh fruit, packaged cookies, crackers, bread, juice, and unopened cartons of milk that have been properly refrigerated **can** be saved for future meals.
  2. Home-delivered Meals  
     If a home-delivered meal volunteer has a leftover meal, the meal may be given as an additional meal to a client on the delivery route. If a hot meal is not distributed, then it must be discarded. Frozen meals that remain unthawed may be placed in the freezer.