Appendix I: Safe Food Handling

Child care facilities and schools in Manitoba that provide full menu meals for children, students, staff, and visitors in a cafeteria (or service to the classroom) are required to follow all government food regulations.

Most food-related illness can be prevented by following safe food handling practices. Child care facilities that serve a full menu and schools with cafeterias within Winnipeg require staff who have successfully completed the food handler training course recognized by Manitoba Health. Outside the Winnipeg area, food handler training is highly recommended. The Certified Food Handler Training Program is a comprehensive food safety training program designed for the food service industry. The course covers important food safety and worker safety information including food-borne illness, receiving and storing food, preparing food, serving food, cleaning, and sanitizing. The course is available online and offered by many contractors. For more information, see www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/protection/foodsafe.html.

Personal Hygiene

All food handlers must follow good personal hygiene, as outlined below, and not prepare food when ill or experiencing symptoms of fever, cough, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.

To limit the risk of contaminating food, which may lead to a food-borne illness, ensure all food handlers observe good personal hygiene:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water prior to handling foods, when entering the kitchen, and any time hands are contaminated.
- Follow proper handwashing steps when handling food. Hand sanitizer and disposable gloves do not replace the need for handwashing.
- Do not work with food when sick (e.g., vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, etc.).
- Wear disposable gloves if hands have cuts or sores or artificial nails/nail polish, and to minimize direct contact with food when necessary. Do not handle food if you have an infected cut or sore on your hands.
- Do not wear jewelry.

- Wear clean clothes with a clean apron.
- Restrain hair, such as in a hairnet, cap/hat, or similar hair covering, to effectively control hair.
- Do not wipe hands and utensils on clothing, aprons, or towels.
- Use single-use paper towels and not common towels for drying hands.
- Do not eat while preparing food.
- Cover a cough or sneeze and then immediately wash hands.

Poor personal hygiene habits the food handler must avoid include the following:

- licking fingers for any reason
- biting fingernails
- tasting food with fingers
- touching the nose and mouth
- touching boils, pimples, sores, or cuts
- touching hair
- using cloth handkerchiefs
- double-dipping utensils after taste-testing foods

Potentially Hazardous Foods

Potentially hazardous foods are those foods that require time/temperature control to keep them safe. Some examples of potentially hazardous foods are eggs, meat, poultry, fish, deli meats, cooked pasta or rice, gravy, soup, milk, ice cream, cheese, yogurt, and cut produce.

Foods that are known to not be "potentially hazardous foods" are dry, acidic, or sweet foods that have been modified and do not easily support the growth of disease organisms or toxins, such as crackers, pickles, jams, cookies, muffins, dry cereals, popcorn, etc.

Time/temperature is the most common cause of bacterial food-borne illness. The "danger zone" is 4°C (40°F) to 60°C (140°F), which is the temperature range where bacteria can multiply quickly. By limiting the time food is within this temperature range, the growth of bacteria is limited and the risk of food-borne illness is reduced. Therefore, potentially hazardous food shall not be kept in the "danger zone" for unnecessary periods.

Time-Temperature Control Requirements

- Thermometers must be available to verify food and refrigeration temperatures. Refrigerator thermometer is to be verified daily. A metal probe thermometer is to be used to verify internal temperatures of foods.
- Store potentially hazardous food in the refrigerator at 4°C (40°F) or colder.
- Discard potentially hazardous food left unrefrigerated for more than two hours.
- Freezer temperature shall be –18°C (0°F) or colder to keep food frozen.
- Do not thaw potentially hazardous foods at room temperature. It is safe to thaw foods using several different methods. Food shall be thawed either (1) in the refrigerator, (2) as part of the cooking process, (3) under cold running water, or (4) in the microwave to prevent it or portions of it from being in the danger zone.
- Cook potentially hazardous foods to proper internal temperatures to ensure they are safe to eat (e.g., meat and ground meat mixtures to be cooked to 71°C [160°F], poultry to 82°C [182°F]).
- Cooked food shall be held hot at 60°C (140°F) or above, and then kept in a hot holding unit for service.
- For cooling, hot foods shall be cooled from 60°C (140°F) to 4°C (40°F) within six hours. To speed up cooling, divide food into smaller portions, store in shallow containers, and refrigerate immediately.
- Reheat potentially hazardous food to a minimum of 74°C (165°F) within two hours.

Use of Microwave Ovens and Food Safety Tips

- Always use containers labelled as microwave-safe.
- Cut food into small pieces for uniform cooking, and arrange items in a uniform manner.
- Add a liquid such as water, juice or gravy to solid foods.
- Stop partway through cooking to stir foods or rotate trays or containers.
- Cover food with a microwave-safe lid or with microwave-safe plastic wrap to trap steam.
- Follow directions for “standing times.” This helps ensure that heat is distributed uniformly, even after cooking.
- Use protective oven mitts or pot holders when you remove containers/dishware from the oven.

Leftovers

Leftover foods that have not yet been served/plated can be served at a later date if safely cooled, refrigerated, and reheated. Ensure all leftovers are time-dated and used within three days. Leftovers should only be reheated and served once. WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

Safe Food Sources

Food can be contaminated prior to purchasing. To manage this risk, it is important to follow these food safety rules when purchasing food:

- Only purchase or accept food products from approved sources (e.g., government-inspected facility). When purchasing foods locally, ensure the operator has a health permit to operate.
- Do not use unpasteurized juice, unpasteurized milk and milk products, or ungraded eggs.
- Ensure canned foods are free of large dents or any dent at the seams.
- Check all foods and food bags for signs of contamination (e.g., insects, rodent droppings).
- Clean and sanitize or launder reusable bins and grocery bags, especially if used to carry raw meat, poultry, fish, seafood, or other perishable foods.
- Store raw meats and poultry in bags separate from ready-to-eat foods when purchasing and storing.

Home-Prepared Foods (sent by parents for the children/students to share at a child care facility or school for celebrations, birthdays etc.)

- Review the child care facility/school's policy on bringing store-bought or home-prepared foods to share with other children/students.
- Acceptable home-prepared foods are limited to those that are not potentially hazardous, such as crackers, cookies, muffins, and other baked cakes that do not need to be refrigerated.
- Products brought from home should be in their original store-bought container or have an ingredients list with any allergens listed.

Food Storage Requirements

To ensure the food being prepared is safe to eat, child care facilities and schools must adhere to the following guidelines when receiving and storing all food products:

- Refrigerate (at 4°C/40°F or less) or freeze (at –18°C/0°F or less) potentially hazardous food products as soon as possible.
- Store raw meat, poultry, and fish separately and below cooked or ready-to-eat food products (e.g., fruit and vegetables) to prevent cross-contamination.
- In a refrigerator, store all produce and ready-to-eat foods in bins, crispers, and drawers.
- Keep foods such as raw meats in containers to prevent any raw meat juices from leaking onto other foods.
- Cover foods to protect them from contamination.
- Do not overload the refrigerator (overloading will prevent proper air circulation and cooling abilities).
- Date and label foods before repackaging and storing them.
- Food storage containers and packaging should be made of food-grade materials that will not contaminate the food. Do not use garbage bags, used meat trays, or chemical containers for the storage of food.
- Store food in a location to prevent contamination (e.g., clean, dry, on shelves 6 inches [15 cm] off the floor and away from chemicals and/or poisonous surfaces).
- Check and monitor all foods and storage facilities for evidence of insects or rodents.
- Maintain the food storage facilities in a clean and sanitary matter.
- Rotate food in storage by the "first in, first out" method; check for dates on food labels and discard old and spoiled food.

Prior to and During Food Preparation

- Wash hands prior to food preparation and when needed/dirty, following proper handwashing procedures.
- Ensure the designated handwashing sink is equipped with hot and cold water.
- Liquid soap and single-use hand-drying towels shall be provided in the kitchen by the designated handwashing sink.
- Sinks are to be cleaned and sanitized prior to being used for food preparation and between different types of food preparation.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables before you eat or cook them, even if they are peeled. This helps prevent the spread of any disease organisms that may be present. A clean vegetable scrub brush can be used on carrots, potatoes, melons, squash, and other produce with a firm skin.

Tableware and Utensils

- Keep dishware and utensils clean and in good condition (e.g., free of chips, cracks, or other damage).
- Polystyrene (Styrofoam) cups are not to be used, as they pose a choking hazard to young children.
- Commercial-grade equipment and utensils are recommended.
- Do not reuse single-use dishes and utensils (e.g., paper plates, plastic forks, foil pans, straws, and wooden chopsticks). These articles cannot be properly cleaned or sanitized, and are not meant for repeated use.

At the Table

- Prepare and cook foods in the kitchen/designated area as close to the meal/snack time as possible.
- When applicable, clean and sanitize food trays or carts before placing food containers and utensils on them.
- Clean and sanitize the table and trays on high chairs and/or booster seats before children sit down to eat.
- Make sure children, students, and staff wash their hands thoroughly before a meal or snack.
- When serving family-style with shared food containers, use utensils, not fingers, to serve all food items.
- In the serving area, provide a dedicated-use, adult-height food-serving counter/cart, which is located separate from the washrooms and diaper change area.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Food Contact Surfaces

Most commonly used chemicals approved as sanitizers for food contact surfaces include chlorine bleach (plain, unscented household bleach, which is approximately 5 to 6.5 percent sodium hypochlorite), and quaternary ammonium (quats).

To prevent the spread of germs that can cause food-borne illness, follow these general rules:

- Food contact surfaces shall be cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Food contact surfaces shall be protected from contamination.
- Food contact surfaces need to be cleaned before being sanitized.
- Equipment and utensils shall be in good repair (e.g., free of chips, cracks, or other damage).
- Clean food spills immediately and develop a routine cleaning schedule.

To use chemical sanitizers safely and effectively, follow these tips:

- Make sure all chemicals are properly labelled.
- Sanitizers MUST be used according to manufacturer's instructions and only for their intended purpose, as directed by the product label.
    - If a sanitizer does not list directions for use on food contact surfaces, it should not be used for this purpose, as it may leave a toxic residue on the surface that contaminates food and food contact surfaces. The one exception to this is plain, unscented household chlorine bleach. (See Appendix E for instructions on how to make a food contact surface sanitizing solution using plain, unscented household chlorine bleach.)
- Mixing or using sanitizer solution at a lower concentration than recommended will result in an inadequate reduction of germs; a concentration that is too high can leave a chemical residue or be corrosive to equipment (e.g., knives).
- For sanitizers to be effective, items must be in contact with the sanitizer for the manufacturer-recommended wet contact time, as specified on the label.
- Sanitizer spray bottles must be changed or tested daily, as the chemical may lose its effectiveness over time.
- Do not mix chemicals such as soap and sanitizer together!
- Products, such as vinegar, baking soda, and tea tree oil, have not been scientifically proven to be effective at sanitization and are not approved for this use.

Cloths used for cleaning and sanitizing can spread disease, causing germs. The following tips will help to prevent this:

- Cloths used for cleaning and sanitizing cutting boards, countertops, and other food contact surfaces must be visibly clean.
- Use cloths for one purpose (e.g., don't use the same cloth for wiping the countertop and the floor).
- Use one cloth for cleaning and another for sanitizing. It is recommended to use a different type or colour of cloth for cleaning and sanitizing, as this may help staff to manage reusable cloths, appropriately reducing the risk of cross-contamination.
- If a sanitizer cloth is used continuously, store it in a clean sanitizing solution pail between uses. Label this pail to identify its sanitizer solution and use.
- Cleaning and sanitizing cloths should be laundered often in the hottest appropriate water and dryer setting for the items.
- A spray bottle of sanitizing solution at proper concentrations can be used along with disposable paper towels to sanitize.
- See Appendix E for sanitizer guidance.

Bagged Lunch Guidelines for Child Care Facilities

There is a risk to eating lunches and snacks that have not been stored at a proper temperature. To minimize the risk, bagged lunches may be stored at 4°C/40°F. If a refrigerator is not available, consider the following options to share with parents:

- Store lunches in a cooler with ice packs.
- Encourage parents to use an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack or frozen juice box inside, or to freeze their child's lunch the day before.
- Store lunches away from any heat source (e.g., radiators, heat registers, direct sunlight).

When lunches are provided that are eaten warm, consider the following:

- Encourage parents to store hot foods in an insulated container.
- Heat lunches thoroughly to 74°C (165°F).
- Discard all leftover, potentially hazardous foods.

Families are encouraged to pack foods that are ready-to-eat when children are attending field trips or other activities outside of the child care facility or school.

Dishwashing Procedures

For manual and mechanical dishwashing, see Appendix F.