How to Prepare for Agency Monitoring Visits 2011

Monitoring Visit

Feeding America San Diego (FASD) conducts monitoring visits (or site/facility visits) for all new partner agencies (applying for partnership) as well as existing agencies (every two years of partnership). These visits are designed to:

- Give FASD a thorough understanding of the agency’s operations, programs, and services provided to clients.
- Ensure the agency transports, stores, and distributes food safely and in accordance to the proper food safety policies and procedures as outline in the Agency Capacity Handbook and Agency Agreement.
- Allow FASD to better access potential or current partnership with the agency.

During the visit FASD staff will look at:

- All food storage areas (dry/pantry, coolers/refrigerators, and freezers) that are both on and off-site (please notify FASD prior to the visit should the agency maintain off-site food storage.
- All food preparation, staging areas, and serving areas (including kitchens, dining areas, etc.)
- All FASD records maintained by the agency including (but not limited to): agreements/contracts, distribution records (e.g. client in-take applications/sign-in sheets), agency certifications (e.g. food handler’s card), invoices, and billing statements.
- Nutritional menus (if applicable)

During the monitoring visit, the agency should feel free to comment on services provided by FASD as well as ask questions, request materials, and request technical support if needed.

After the visit, FASD will issue the agency a results notification, via email, mail or both, outlining findings, compliancy discrepancies (including action items the agency may take to amend discrepancies), as well as other useful information.

Food Storage

Storing Dry Food Product

- Ensure storage rooms are locked and secured.
- Keep storage rooms clean of dust build-up, cobwebs, and soil.
- Store all food product a minimum of 6” off the ground by means of shelves, pallets or other platforms.
- Maintain a minimum of 4” of space between wall and food items.
- Maintain a minimum of 4” space between ceiling and food items.
- Ensure dry storage temperatures remain between 50°F and 70°F.
- Follow First In - First Out (FIFO). Items that enter inventory first/or first to expire items should be distributed or used first.
- Rotate stock at least every 2-3 months. Avoid stockpiling.
- Store all chemicals (e.g. bleach, household cleaners, soap, shampoo, laundry detergent, etc.) 4-6 feet away from food.
- Do not store dry food under sinks.

Storing Refrigerated Product

- Keep refrigerators clean.
- Do not overcrowd refrigerator with food.
- Ensure door seals tight.
- Store raw meat products below produce, ready-to-eat, and prepared foods.
- Maintain temperatures at or below 41°F.
- Equip each refrigerator with an internal thermometer.
- Maintain a daily temperature log. Check temperatures at the beginning of the day for accurate readings.
- Label receiving dates on each item or case of items.
- Follow First In - First Out (FIFO). Items that enter inventory first/or first to expire items should be distributed or used first.
- Rotate stock at least every 1-2 months.
Storing Frozen Product
- Keep freezers clean and free of thick frost.
- Do not overcrowd freezer with food.
- Ensure door seals tight.
- Store raw meat products below ready-to-eat and prepared foods.
- Maintain temperatures at or below 0°.
- Equip each freezer with an internal thermometer.
- Maintain a daily temperature log. Check temperatures at the beginning of the day for accurate readings.
- Label receiving dates on each item or case of items.
- Follow First In - First Out (FIFO). Items that enter inventory first/or first to expire items should be distributed or used first.
- Rotate stock at least every 1-2 months, especially frozen animal products (beef, chicken, salmon, turkey, venison).

Pest Control
The best way to avoid pests is to keep your facility clean. Containers used for storage, garbage, and recyclables should be leak-proof, non-absorbent, and kept covered with tight fitting lids. Be sure to keep garbage cans lined with plastic bags and tightly sealed. Always inspect incoming food and supplies for signs of contamination. Be sure to also inspect the facility’s premises for holes, gaps, or any other openings to the outside that may allow unwanted pests into the building. Ensure to seal any openings that you come across. Keep in mind, only professional pest control companies should spray hazardous chemicals near food products.

Food Safety

Food safety remains an utmost priority to FASD and partner agencies for the following reasons:

1. Product traveling through the emergency food network passes through many hands. As a result, there are numerous places for possible contamination and temperature abuse.
2. The emergency food network encounters some products, usually through salvage and gleaning programs that may be unfit for human consumption (e.g. bulging cans, torn boxes of food, etc.).
3. Many people (including young children, pregnant women, senior citizens, and people with chronic illnesses), who visit emergency food programs are susceptible to food borne illness.

Food safety procedures for both pantry programs as well as on-site meal programs include:

- Maintaining good personal hygiene
- Avoiding cross-contamination
- Preventing time-temperature abuse of foods

Personal Hygiene

Any agency staff or volunteer handling food should maintain good personal hygiene. If a staff member or volunteer is ill or has an infected cut he/she should not work with food. Hand washing signs should be posted at all sink stations, including in kitchens and bathrooms. Food workers should wear kitchen gloves whenever handling food that will not be cooked. Kitchen gloves should be changed every time cross-contamination is possible. Food should not be prepared or served with bare hands. Please remember: wearing kitchen gloves is not a substitute for washing hands. Hair restraints should be worn while serving food.

Cross-Contamination

Cross contamination is the transfer of harmful microorganisms to already cooked or ready-to-eat foods. The contamination can come from raw food, unclean food-service equipment, unclean gloves, clothes, clothing, and unclean hands. To prevent cross-contamination, raw food should be kept separate from ready-to-eat foods; all utensils and equipment should be washed and sanitized after preparing raw foods and before preparing cooked or ready-to-eat foods; and hands should be washed and clean gloves used after handling raw foods and before handling cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
Time-Temperature Abuse of Food

Food handlers should avoid the temperature danger zone (40°F-140°F) for food at all times. This will prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, thus decrease the likelihood of contracting food borne illnesses. Pay special attention to thawing, warming, and reheating procedures as well as transporting warm and cold foods off-site.

Additional Food Safety Resources

For additional information on food safety, please contact Christine Ho at cho@feedingamerica.org or Liz Landa at elanda@feedingamerica.org or visit the following sites:

Food Handlers:  www.co.san-diego.ca.us/deh/fhd/food_handler.html
USDA Food Safety and Inspection:  www.fsis.usda.gov/home/index.asp
Government Food Safety Info:  www.foodsafety.gov/
ServSafe Program:  www.nraef.org/servsafe/
Meat Safety:  www.meatsafety.org/