Haldimand-Norfolk REACH

supporting children, families, communities

TO: Local Student Nutrition Program Coordinators and Volunteers

FROM: Ian Stoddart, Food and Logistics Coordinator

Hamilton-Niagara Regional Student Nutrition Program

DATE: June 7, 2017

SUBJECT: Food Safety

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I would like to thank everyone for their efforts over the last several years in assuring the food being served in our nutrition programs is as safe as possible. By informing me or your Community Development Worker of current food procurement strategies, and existing vendor relations, the lead agency is able to ensure food entering our nutrition programs is meeting the provincial guidelines for food safety. Although many programs rely on the webtracker ordering platform to purchase food from approved vendors, we also realize that many programs benefit from shopping at local grocery stores. We have included some tips to help ensure that the process of purchasing and transporting food to your program is as safe as possible.

Food safety at schools is especially important and we know you share our goal of ensuring that all foods used in student nutrition programs are procured from sources that take appropriate food safety precautions. As we all know sourcing nutritious foods is a large component of running a student nutrition program.   For your reference please find below the link to Ontario's *Student Nutrition Program Guidelines*. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services *Student Nutrition Program Guidelines* clarify the requirements for sourcing food for student nutrition programs.   By adhering to these new procedures, we can be assured that the food being served in our nutrition programs have been procured stored and transported from/by sources that take appropriate food safety precautions.

On behalf of our local services providers (Hamilton Tastebuds, Brant Food for Thought, Niagara Nutrition Partners, and the Child Nutrition Network of Haldimand & Norfolk) we are pleased to provide further clarification regarding these guidelines relating to food procurement. Some of the key points, as well as tips are outlined on the next pages, please print and post these pages at your nutrition program.

Student Nutrition Program Guidelines, 2014
https://www.osnp.ca/osnp_ca/bank/pageimages/snp_program_guidelines_2014_eng1.pdf

Identifying Safe Food Sources for Student Nutrition Programs

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Vendors on Web-Tracker

Vendors that are present on the Web-tracker system are vendors that have been able to demonstrate that they are taking the steps necessary to ensure the food they are producing, or distributing, meets safety guidelines. These vendors have been approved by the Food and Logistics coordinator, and programs are encouraged to continue to use these vendors.

Farmers/Farmer's Markets

When sourcing food directly from a local farm, Nutrition Programs need to inform the Food and Logistics Coordinator. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has outlined very specific on-farm practices for farms wishing to provide products to student nutrition programs and any local decision to source produce directly from a local farm must be pre-approved by the Food and Logistics Coordinator. The Food and Logistics Coordinator will conduct an on-site assessment to ensure safe on-farm practices are being followed, and if the farm is a safe source of food for a Student Nutrition Program. The Food and Logistics Coordinator will then review this information with the appropriate local service provider.

Food Service

For programs sourcing food from a food service company, such as a caterer, they should ensure that the facility is inspected by the local Public Health Unit. The local Public Health Unit's website can provide you with a list of inspected facilities and inspection reports. A copy of a passing inspection should be provided before food is sourced from a food service company.

Grocery Stores, Wholesalers and Distributors

Suppliers to these facilities should be certified in a food safety program. When considering a partnership with a wholesaler or distributor; look for proof or certification.

Transportation of Program Food

When transporting food from a grocery store please consider the following recommendations:
a) Whenever possible, food should be delivered directly to the SNP site.
b) Transport vehicles should be clean and well-maintained.
c) Perishable and refrigerated products must be kept cool during transit.
d) Produce must be loaded and stored to minimize physical damage and risk of contamination.
e) Food products and non-food items should be kept in separate areas of the vehicle.

Thank you very much for your attention to these new procedures related to purchasing food for your student nutrition program. I welcome the opportunity to facilitate discussions about working with the new practices and protocols. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding these new practices.

Ian Stoddart, Food and Logistics Coordinator
istoddart@hnreach.on.ca, 1-800-265-8087 Ext 247

Tips for Choosing, Transporting, Receiving and Storing Food for Your Student Nutrition Program[i]

Choosing foods for your program:

- Check expiry and best before dates when selecting and serving food.
- Select or accept produce that is fresh, not wilted or overripe. Do not offer vegetables and fruits that are partly spoiled (spots or soft mushy parts), or stale bread and baked goods.
- Only use cans labeled with clear identification of lot # and expiry or best before dates, free from rust and dents and are not leaking or swollen.
- Shop for cold foods last.
- Do not accept food from an emergency food source, such as a food bank.
- Avoid serving foods with a high risk of causing a food-borne illness such as: cold deli salads made with egg or dairy; home canned food items; home cooked or baked food items; foods which are not in their original container; food packages which have seals broken
- Prepare food for your SNP in an appropriate facility. Foods prepared at home are not permitted in your SNP under the Ontario Food Premises Regulation.

Transporting food from store to program:

- Keep re-usable grocery bags clean and wash and sanitize them regularly (if used).
- Keep raw food away from cooked or ready to eat foods.
- Transport food in a clean, pet-free vehicle and separate from contaminants such as washer fluid, and other toxic and poisonous substances
- Take food directly from the store to the school
- Keep perishable foods cold during transport using a cooler and thermometer. Bacteria can multiply rapidly in foods that are left in the temperature danger zone - between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F) – for longer than 2 hours. Discard perishable food that has been in transport and in the danger zone in excess of 2 hours.
- Confirm with your personal vehicle insurance company that your policy covers volunteer activity of transporting food to the school.

Receiving food at a program:

- Ensure that sufficient refrigerates and dry storage space is available to accommodate the incoming food items
- Organize freezer, refrigeration and dry storage before deliveries
- Compare delivery invoice against products ordered and products delivered to ensure products meet nutritional and allergen concerns.
- Check frozen foods to ensure that they are all frozen and show no signs of thawing and refreezing, such as presence of large ice crystals or liquids at the bottom of cartons

Receiving food at a program, *cont'd*:

- Check perishable items for signs of deterioration or mishandling, such as mold, excessive bruises or decaying product
- Check best before and expiry dates
- Reject any product that does not meet criteria, inform the driver that the food will not be accepted, have the driver make necessary adjustments on delivery slips
- Inform the Food and Logistics Coordinator at istoddart@hnreach.on.ca that you rejected product, and the reason for rejection
- Ensure food is immediately placed in appropriate storage area

Storing food at a program:

- Always wash your hands before handling food.
- Refrigerate perishable food immediately.
- Place raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so that raw meat juice can't drip onto other foods.
- Cover, label and date all foods in the refrigerator. Make sure that older foods are used up first to maintain nutrition and freshness.
- Store non-perishable food at least 15 cm off the ground in a clean, dry place – such as cupboards or shelves

Schools that provide meal or snack programs are considered "food premises" and are covered by provincial food safety laws (*Ontario Food Premises Regulation 562*). Refer to the [Ontario Food Premises Regulation 562 (O.Reg 562/90)](#) of the Health Promotion and Protection Act to find out more about preparing, storing and serving food using public health practices.

For more information:

- Refer to Section 5 of the **Student Nutrition Program Nutrition Guidelines (2016):** Safe Food Handling, Storage and Preparation. https://studentnutritionontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SNP-nutrition-guidelines-2016-.pdf
- Contact your **local public health unit** or check their web-site for more information and resources about hand washing, safe food handling and provincial food safety laws
- The *In Good Hands* online safe food handling course is based on Canadian content as well as Ministry of Health guidelines for the province of Ontario. The course is also available in French. http://www.ingoodhands.ca/index.html
  The Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education website (http://www.canfightbac.org) has lots of information for the general public about food safety issues such as food selection, handling, preparation and storage and food-borne illness. The web-site has facts sheets and other resources that you can download for free.

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[i] Information reviewed and confirmed by the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors-Ontario Branch