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FOOD NEWS YOU CAN USE



2025

Volume 90

31st Annual Food Service Seminar Held in September

Thank you to everyone who attended the Food Service Seminar on Monday, September 8, 2025, at Senica's Oak Ridge. There were eighty-nine (89) participants in attendance. Attendees heard presentations from Quik-Kill Pest Eliminators, Inc., Performance Food Service - Thoms Proestler (PFG), Peoria City/County Health Department, LaSalle County Health Department, Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Cintas Corporation, and OSF Healthcare.

Topics included:

Pest control
Chemical hazards and safety in the food service industry
Public health emergencies in a food establishment
History of food safety
Service animals and food establishments

IDPH Program Updates
Plumbing in food establishments
First Aid/Life Vac
Norovirus

Attendees were also able to visit vendor tables and speak with representatives from:

Cintas Corporation
LaSalle County Health Department
Quik-Kill Pest Eliminators, Inc.
Performance Food Service -Thoms Proestler (PFG)

Evaluations were distributed to all participants and overall, attendees felt the information presented during the seminar was beneficial. Environmental Health Staff will utilize the comments and suggestions to aid in the planning of future seminars. We would like to thank this year's speakers, vendors, and the staff at Senica's Oak Ridge for helping us provide this educational event. We look forward to seeing you next year!

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Sanitarian Spotlight - Liz Cannon

Liz Cannon has deep roots in LaSalle County, where her family resettled in 1991 when she was just five years old. Her mom, Sherry Senica Henkel, brought the family back to the area, making it a place Liz has called home ever since.

A graduate of LaSalle Peru Township High School, Liz excelled in volleyball, playing for both school and club teams. Her talent earned her a scholarship to Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC), where she completed her general education studies. Following IVCC, Liz continued her education at Western Illinois University (WIU), following in the footsteps of her dad, Dean Cannon. She graduated from WIU with a Bachelor's Degree in Zoology and a minor in Psychology.

Liz first joined the LaSalle County Health Department in 2013, where she worked until 2015, when she moved to Colorado to be closer to her sister and one of her brothers. While she loved her time in Colorado, Liz returned home in 2021 to support her mom following a health diagnosis. Upon her return, Liz reconnected with her former colleagues at the Health Department, leading her to rejoin the team in 2022.

In her free time, Liz is an avid traveler, having visited Germany (twice), Ireland, Austria, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, and Tortola. She also occasionally teaches private volleyball lessons, bartends a few days a week to fund her adventures, and enjoys reading. Liz currently resides in Oglesby with her three cats: Sprinkles, Cupcake, and Dave.

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Do you know one of the most crucial ingredients in any dish is the overall health and hygiene of the kitchen staff. Recent updates to the FDA food code highlight the connection between staff health and foodborne illnesses.

First and the most important thing is that if you handle food you must report several types of health conditions to your manager (Person in Charge or PIC). You might be wondering what specific health conditions require reporting. These include vomiting, diarrhea, a sore throat with fever, and an open or infected wound. These are the signs of contagious illnesses that can spread easily and fast. No one intends to spread illness, but prioritizing your and others' safety is always paramount. You also need to report a doctor's diagnosis of illnesses such as Norovirus, Hepatitis A, Shigella, E. coli (Shiga toxin-producing), or Salmonella.

How is your reporting going to help?

Your reporting is vital as it helps determine if you consumed an implicated food, allowing for smooth investigation and potential recalls. Furthermore, by reporting a household diagnosis, such as informing a restaurant that your sister, who lives with you, was diagnosed with norovirus, managers can quickly implement measures to prevent the spread of a contagious illness, like enhanced cleaning or staff adjustments. This proactive approach is crucial in safeguarding public health.

Employees must report if they have been exposed by attending or working in a setting where there is a confirmed disease outbreak caused by Norovirus, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* or *Shigella spp.*, *Salmonella*, or Hepatitis A virus.

Beyond reporting, taking a few steps for your general well-being also plays a huge part in a healthy work environment. Simple habits like getting enough rest, staying hydrated and good personal hygiene plays an important part in your own overall health as well as other individuals. You can only make others feel best when you feel your best.

Key update: As per the new food code under Section 2-201.13, faster and modern lab testing can be used to confirm that an employee is clear of illness. This means a quicker and safer return to work.

Finally, managers also have a role in making sure that their team knows these things. They must confirm that all the employees are aware of their reporting duties via training or general discussion. Form 1-B can assist with this.

By communication and awareness, all the food service employees can become the frontline heroes and make sure every meal is safe and of course delicious.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." — Benjamin Franklin

Harsh Vyas—UIUC Summer Intern

Your Plate, Safer Than Ever: New Food Rules Take Effect in Illinois

Good news for Illinois diners and grocery shoppers! The state has updated its food code aligning with FDA's 2022 food code. These comprehensive updates, aligning Illinois' existing food safety regulations with the latest national standards, aim to enhance consumer protection and reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses in all food establishments.

Sesame Now a Major Allergen

One of the important changes in the new food code is adding sesame as a ninth major food allergen. This means that food establishments have to treat sesame with the same strict protocol as the other major eight allergens such as peanuts, soy and milk. This is going to help people with a sesame allergy as well as improving overall food safety. But remember, all of your servers should have information about all of the allergens so if anybody asks them a question about it they are ready to respond/answer.

Server needs to let PIC know of the allergy.

Crucial Updates for Thawing and Preparation

The new regulations also enforce good practices for food handling, particularly concerning thawing. Improper thawing can cause bacteria to multiply rapidly. Always thaw food in a refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave if you are going to cook the food immediately. Never thaw food at room temperature by leaving it on the counter. Improper thawing methods are now a priority foundation violation with a 10-day correction. Additionally, packaged food to be used as an ingredient in a cold food recipe, must be prepared following the manufacturer's cooking instructions, for example – if the bag of frozen peas states to cook to 165 F °they must be cooked before adding to the pea salad recipe for the salad bar.

Clearer Allergen Information for Unpackaged and Bulk Food

Everybody has at one time picked up a fresh donut or cereal from a dispenser. Have you ever wondered about what the ingredients are or what types of allergens are in there? The updated code addresses this problem. Now, food establishments selling/cooking unpacked foods are now required to provide written information about the ingredients as well as all the allergens present in the food. This allows the consumer to be more informed and can make safer food choices.

Storing It Right: From Food to Forks and Everything In Between

The new food code emphasizes the proper storage of everything that touches your food. This includes all single serve items like paper cups, spoons, forks, napkins as well as food equipment. In addition, these items are also prohibited from being stored in locker-rooms and restrooms that can lead to contamination. Any food packaging, food container, utensils and equipment stored in a restroom are now a priority foundation violation. This ensures that even the utensils should be kept in a clean and protected environment adding another layer of trust in the food establishments.

Harsh Vyas—UIUC Summer Intern

