

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
PORTLAND AREA
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS)

Food Safety Program

The goal of the food safety program is to protect the public from disease spread through food consumption. Estimates indicate that every year 48 million Americans experience foodborne illness, which results in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. Foodborne illness also has a considerable economic impact. A 2010 study revealed that foodborne illness costs the United States approximately \$152 billion annually.

The DEHS activities provided over the past several years have proven to prevent large foodborne illness outbreaks and have decreased the incidence of foodborne illness. DEHS funding is used to conduct activities to prevent and control foodborne illness.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND HAZARD CONTROL

The DEHS assesses and investigates environments in which food is stored, prepared, processed, handled, and served in order to identify and control hazards that contribute to foodborne illness.

- The DEHS determines the environmental health status of food service establishments through an inspection program.
 - The Tribes are the regulatory authority for retail food service and food manufacturing establishments. Tribes are responsible for licensing/permitting, inspecting and enforcing codes and ordinances. The DEHS provides food safety inspection program audits.
 - The DEHS conducts inspections of institutional food service kitchens in schools and child care centers through a consultative approach. The DEHS recommends the public health interventions and control measures to ensure compliance with federal and Tribal regulations.
 - The DEHS conducts surveys of food commodity warehouses to ensure compliance with federal regulations.
 - The IHS does have Public Health Authority in imminent health hazard situations.
- The DEHS provides Food Handler Operator Training (FHT) Certification and educational materials to private and commercial vendors and employees of food service establishments.

FOODBORNE ILLNESS SURVEILLANCE AND INVESTIGATION
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Foodborne illness surveillance is the routine monitoring of diseases potentially spread through food. Surveillance is vital in detecting disease clusters and problems in the food supply chain.

When DEHS detects an outbreak, an investigation is initiated. The general goals of an investigation are to identify the (1) disease agent, (2) people at risk, (3) mode of transmission, (4) source of contamination, (5) potential for further transmission, and (6) disease control measures. These investigations will often include interviews of people affected, environmental

health assessments of implicated facilities and informational trace backs of food items through the distribution chain to determine the source of contamination.

Outbreak response is coordinated with Tribes, IHS Epidemiology, and the state or local health jurisdiction.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, AND STUDY

The DEHS advises and consults in planning and policy development related to food science and sanitation.

- Development of codes, ordinances, and policies through engaging with Tribal officials and food committees to encourage adoption of a Food Code.
- Meetings with Tribal Gaming Commission and other industry representatives concerning food safety issues in their facilities.
- Plan review of kitchen and facility designs for new construction.
- Participate in professional associations in order to network with other food agencies throughout the state(s).
- Conduct studies to improve the effectiveness of the food safety program.