

Help sheet no.2

Food safety issues in residential care

The legislation relating to food safety (hygiene and handling) changed in Victoria in 1998. All organisations that provide food are now required to have **food safety plans** that conform to the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles and guidelines. Prevention is the key and it is achieved through assessing and controlling hazards and focusing on food handling practices. Organisations that provide food to older people are required to comply with the legislation.

Older people at risk

Older people are considered at high risk for food borne illness. Some staff have been concerned about the potential for increased risk from:

- visitors bringing in food for family members
- special occasion celebrations involving food (see **help sheet 10** Special occasion catering – increasing variety at mealtimes)
- activities where residents participate in preparing food.

These opportunities add to the resident's nourishment; allow the family to contribute something valuable to the care of their relative; and improve residents' enjoyment of food and activity. Special occasion celebrations play an important social role for residents, often providing opportunities for activity, participation in food preparation and improved food intake. Opportunities to involve family and friends are also important for resident wellbeing.

Some organisations have ceased to provide these opportunities to avoid problems with meeting the requirements of food safety plans. This was not the intention of the legislation. Thought needs to be given to including these opportunities in the organisation's food safety plan.

Key actions

- Consider how special activities can be incorporated in your food safety plan.
- Liaise with your local government food safety officer to develop the processes that will ensure that the legislative requirements are met.
- If catering is provided by a contractor, ensure that your requirements for these types of activities are incorporated in your specifications and that they have included them in the food safety plan.
- Inform relatives of these requirements – it is better that they are aware and can participate constructively.

More information

Contact Food Safety Unit, Department of Human Services for answers to your questions about interpreting food safety legislation. Phone: 1300 364 352.