

Help sheet 6:

Food safety issues for group settings

The legislation related to food safety, hygiene and handling changed in Victoria in 1998. It requires all organisations that provide food to have food safety plans that conform to the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles and guidelines. Prevention is the key and is achieved through assessment and control of hazards and a focus on food handling practices.

Older people and people with compromised immune systems are considered 'high risk' for food borne illness. Organisations that provide food to this group are required to comply with the new legislation; this includes having a food safety plan, appointing a food safety supervisor and arranging for an independent auditor to monitor the plan.

When drawing up a food safety plan issues to consider, for example in a planned activity group, would include:

- carers, volunteers and visitors bringing food into the group
- special occasion celebrations involving food (see Help sheet 4 in this Resource Kit, 'Increasing variety at mealtimes')
- activities where older people can participate in food preparation.

These opportunities have the potential to add significantly to the older person's enjoyment of food and activity. For example, special occasion celebrations play an important social role, often providing opportunities for activity, participation in food preparation and improved food intake. Similarly, opportunities to involve family and friends are important for the older persons' 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.

The key actions are:

- consider how special activities can be incorporated in your food safety plan
- liaise with your local government food safety officer or auditor 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 activities that include food are incorporated in your specifications and that the contractor has included them in the food safety plan
- inform carers and volunteers of these requirements – it is better that they are aware and can participate constructively.

For more information

Contact the Food Safety Unit for answers to your questions about interpreting the legislation on food safety in your organisation.

Phone: **1300 364 352** or go to their website at

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety>

Department of Human Services (2003) *Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) Program Manual* (See sections 7.8.3 and 7.7.10).

Food hygiene and safety is important.