

Guidelines for Social Service Agencies and Community Groups Involved in Food Preparation and Distribution Activities for Charitable Causes

This set of guidelines serve to provide guidance to Social Service Agencies (SSAs) and community groups involved in food distributions, such as Charity Kitchens, on food safety practices during the preparation and distribution of food for charitable causes. Operators, staff, and volunteers should observe the following guidelines as well as advise beneficiaries on good food safety practices to minimise the risks of foodborne outbreak incidents. Operators, staff, and volunteers who handle food are also encouraged to attend the Food Safety Course Level 1¹.

Good Personal Hygiene

- 2 All staff and volunteers should ensure good personal hygiene:
 - i. Do not handle food when feeling unwell.
 - ii. Any injuries on hands should be covered by a clean, brightly-coloured bandage.
 - iii. Wash hands with water and soap before starting work, after handling raw food, before handling cooked or ready-to-eat food, after visiting the toilet, after handling waste, and in between tasks.
 - iv. Refrain from behaviour that could cause contamination to food, for example, smoking, spitting, eating, sneezing, or coughing when handling or preparing food.
 - v. Wear face masks or other appropriate physical barriers during food preparation and when handling cooked/ready-to-eat food.
 - vi. Remove any jewellery and accessories prior to handling or preparing food.
 - vii. Keep personal belongings out of food preparation areas.
 - viii. Use clean gloves or utensils to handle cooked/ready-to-eat food. Change gloves regularly, especially after different tasks and when they are torn or soiled.

Receiving, Selecting, and Storing Food Supplies

- 3 The use of safe and wholesome food ingredients reduces the risk of introducing hazards to food items. All operators, staff and volunteers should adopt the following practices for receipt and selection of food ingredients:
 - i. Obtain food supplies from licensed sources. For food donations, advise donors to obtain food from licensed sources.

¹ Course is provided by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG)-approved training providers. The list of SSG-training providers is available at <https://www-sfa-gov-sg-admin.cwp.sg/docs/default-source/food-retailing/food-safety-course-level-1-training-providers.pdf>

- ii. Visually inspect all food items received to ensure that they are generally clean, wholesome, and have not passed their expiry dates. Discard any food items that are determined to be compromised.
 - a. For fresh produce, discard any items that appear mouldy, slimy, discoloured, dried out, wrinkled, gives off odd odours, has a significant amount of blood or liquid (for raw meat), and potatoes that are green.
 - b. For shelf-stable food in cans, glass or plastic containers, discard any items that are swollen bulging, deeply dented, rusty, leaking, has a defective seam, or is suspected to have its integrity compromised.
- iii. For ready-to-eat perishable foods (e.g. bread, cakes, pastries), verify the date of production and expiry of all items with the donor. Where possible, limit distribution to lower-risk food with longer shelf-life, such as non-cream cakes, pastries without fillings, and plain bread.

4 All operators, staff and volunteers should adhere to the following practices to store food and food ingredients in a safe manner:

- i. Store food produce away and separate from non-food items such as liquid soap, detergent and pesticides.
- ii. Avoid storing food directly on the floor. Store food on shelves and racks away from the walls.
- iii. Ensure that ingredients used are fresh and stored at proper temperatures.
 - a. Store frozen food in a freezer at -12°C or below.
 - b. Store chilled food in a chiller at between 0°C and 4°C.
 - c. Always store raw food in tightly sealed containers below cooked/ready-to-eat food in the refrigerator.
 - d. Adopt First In First Out (FIFO) and First Expiry First Out (FEFO) approaches in the storage of ingredients.
- iv. Keep perishable foods refrigerated or frozen until they are used.
- v. Ensure that chillers and freezers are not overstuffed.

Safe Food Preparation

5 To ensure food is prepared in a safe manner, all operators, staff and volunteers should adopt the following practices:

- i. Clean and wash ingredients thoroughly before using.
- ii. Thaw only the amount of frozen food required thoroughly either in the refrigerator, microwave oven, or place food to be thawed in a clean leak-proof packaging/plastic bag and submerged in water.
- iii. Use separate gloves, equipment and utensils (e.g. chopping boards and knives) for handling raw food and cooked/ready-to-eat food.
- iv. Cook food thoroughly.
- v. Cook meat to an internal temperature of 75°C.
- vi. Keep hot foods above 60°C and cold foods below 5°C.
- vii. Place cooked/ready-to-eat food in clean containers or packages, and cover all cooked/ready-to-eat food.

- viii. Prepare food in appropriate food preparation areas. Do not prepare or place food on the floor or in the toilet. Water from the toilet should not be used for food preparation.

Good Environmental Hygiene

6 Operators should ensure staff and volunteers keep food preparation areas clean. Staff and volunteers should adopt the following practices:

- i. Thoroughly wash and sanitise surfaces that have come into contact with raw food.
- ii. Clean all food preparation surfaces and equipment regularly.
- iii. Clean and maintain chillers and freezers, including the rubber lining, regularly.
- iv. Practise good refuse management.

Delivery / Distribution of Food

7 All operators, staff and volunteers should ensure food are stored and transported safely to minimise cross contamination:

- i. Ensure all cooked food is stored in clean containers and covered.
- ii. Transport all cooked food within the shortest time possible from preparation.
- iii. Where possible, store hot foods above 60°C and cold foods below 5°C.
- iv. Maintain chilled food (e.g. raw meat) at between 0°C and 4°C, and frozen food at -12°C and below, such as by using cooler boxes and ice packs.
- v. Segregate all food items from non-food items and personal belongings during transport. Cooked food should also be segregated from raw meat items.
- vi. Ensure that all transportation vehicles, receptacles and equipment (e.g. carrier bags) are clean.
- vii. Clean the transportation vehicles before and after every use.

Advise Beneficiaries on Food Safety Practices

8 To minimise the risk of foodborne outbreak incidences, SSAs and community groups should advise their beneficiaries to adopt the following food safety practices:

- i. Check the condition of the food upon receipt.
- ii. Keep all cooked food covered.
- iii. Where possible, store all cooked food for later consumption in a refrigerator.
- iv. Reheat food thoroughly prior to consumption.
- v. Discard any food that gives off an odour, is mouldy, slimy, discoloured, infested with insects, or otherwise compromised (e.g. unusual product appearance).
- vi. Discard any food dropped on unclean surfaces, e.g. floor.
- vii. Practise good personal hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling food or utensils, after using the toilet, after touching rubbish/bins, after coughing or sneezing or caring for the sick, and/or after handling animals.

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