

A Strategy For Field Training New Food Service Sanitation Program Sanitarians

Introduction:

Occasionally, local health department trainers seek guidance from MDA relative to training procedures for new employees. The “Training Program for the Professional Food Service Sanitarian” provides an organized approach for teaching technical program information. This document is intended to be a voluntary guide to help trainers provide structure to the field training component.

Prerequisite:

Prior to beginning the field training procedures, the following is recommended to help provide a base of knowledge:

1. “Training Program for the Professional Food Service Sanitarian”;
 - Module 1 – Food Service Sanitation Program Introduction
 - Module 2 – Introduction to the Food Service Industry
 - Module 3 – Risk Communication
 - Module 4 – Facility Operation
2. Completion of an approved manager certification program such as “Serv-Safe®”.
3. 1999 Food Code Familiarization Guide including a review of the Michigan Food Law 2000.
4. Video: “Communication Skills for Regulators”.

Minimum Program Requirements:

H7.2 states: An employee first assigned to conducting inspections of food service establishments satisfactorily completes field training that includes the following components:

1. Twenty-five joint training inspections with a standardized trainer from a local health department; and
2. Twenty-five independent inspections reviewed by the standardized trainer (either on-site or paperwork review).
3. Five evaluation inspections with a standardized trainer from a local health department or MDA.

Goal:

The purpose of the field training component is to teach a set of personal and technical skills that will provide the basis for conducting uniform and effective inspections. Upon completion of the field training component, the new sanitarian should be able to independently conduct inspections of the varying types of food service establishments in accordance with the Michigan Food Law 2000 and achieve results. The environmental health director should have complete confidence in the trainee's abilities to independently perform assigned tasks and responsibilities in the community as a representative of both the department and the environmental health profession.

Elements of Field Training:

The inspection process should be taught using the risk based inspection elements outlined in "Procedures for Field Standardization of Local Health Department Trainers; Chapter 3 – Field Requirements for Standardization". An effective training session observes the following procedures: A) Trainer describes the task. B) Trainer demonstrates the task. C) Student performs the task. D) Trainer evaluates performance and makes recommendations for improvement.

Scope of Training:

The food service program sanitarian must be able to master a wide range of personal and technical skills that are necessary to conduct competent inspections. Each training session must have a purpose. It is therefore important to understand the individual skills that must be taught and create a lesson plan that accomplishes that mission. In addition, the industry varies from conducting simple to highly complex operations. Each type of operation poses unique food safety challenges, and requires varied inspectional approaches. Examples include fixed establishments that range from cocktail lounges to complex full service operations, and includes mobile, temporary, vending, catering/commissary, and special transitory food unit operations. The trainer should assess the skills that have been achieved and determine which types of facilities the individual is qualified to inspect.

Tracking System:

To meet the MPRs, the standardized trainer must track and document the field training and evaluation activities. Ideally, the standardized trainer should advise the environmental health director as to the skills the new sanitarian has accomplished and which types of establishments the new sanitarian is fully trained and prepared to inspect.

Skills: Appendix A – "Basic Food Service Sanitation Program Skills" is a summary of the basic skills needed to conduct foodservice inspections. The form documents the student's progress as each skill is mastered.

Establishment Type: Appendix B – "Standardized Trainer Endorsement" lists the types of establishments the trainer believes the student is qualified to inspect.

General Training Strategy for Food Service Operations

The MPRs are minimum program requirements. Twenty-five inspections with the standardized trainer may not be enough inspections to accomplish training goals. In addition, some students learn faster than others. The training process should be continued as long as necessary to accomplish the task.

Have a Lesson Plan:

Develop both a master plan and timetable along with daily lesson plans. Before heading into the field, complete an outline of the skills you intend to cover and go over the outline with the student. Describe the day's planned activities and how you intend to convey the training information.

Start with the Basics:

Start with simple operations. Evaluate which skills are needed for each type of establishment. Most of the skill requirements come into play for even simple operations. Simple operations, such as coffee shops, bars, and theaters, offer fewer distractions for laying the basic foundation of the systematic risk based food service inspection. Increase the level of difficulty with each new facility.

Debriefing:

At the end of each inspection and at the end of the day, review the events and the lessons that were covered. Allow time for questions and the opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings. Ask the student to tell you the most valuable and least valuable experiences of the day. Ask the student to describe to you what areas they would like to focus on during the next inspection. Provide feedback on how you thought the day went and how the student's overall skills are progressing. Use this information to help refine the lesson plan for the next training exercise.

Gradually Hand Over the Reins:

Initially, the trainer will be in charge and do most of the talking and demonstration. However, once the subject is sufficiently covered, the student should be encouraged to take on the responsibility for evaluating compliance. For example, once field inspection techniques for mechanical warewashing machines have been described and demonstrated, the student should be encouraged to take the lead in evaluating warewashing machines from that point on under the guidance of the trainer. At the end of the field training experience, the student should be competent as well as confident.

Be a Coach and a Mentor:

Remember that some training days will go better than others. Neither the trainer nor the student should allow themselves to become discouraged. Understand that we are all human. Each day is a new day full of opportunity. The following are some basic principles:

- The trainer should be careful not to run the student down by constantly pointing out faults and shortcomings. The key is to help provide the skills the student needs to improve. As the student improves, he/she will gain more self respect, plus develop confidence and self-esteem. The enjoyment and productivity of each training session will increase proportionally with the student's level of confidence.
- Progress is based upon a forward moving momentum. Where is the student today, where do you want the student to be tomorrow, and how are you going to help them get there? Establish a timetable for completing the goals. Break the tasks necessary to achieve the goals down into bite-size doable pieces. Avoid procrastination.
- Trainers are not there to simply give answers but to ask questions to help students figure things out for themselves.
- Always do your best. Focus on continuous improvement.