



# MACOMB COUNTY

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

### **Increasing Food Preparation and Handling Safety Awareness Educational Handout**

#### **Purpose:**

This educational resource is for direct care workers (DCW) and direct support professionals (DSP) in specialized residential settings and areas such as private homes, workshops, and the community.

#### **Background:**

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Each year, roughly one out of six Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick; 128,000 are hospitalized; and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases.”<sup>1</sup> By creating awareness on best practice of food preparation, the chance of foodborne illness will be decreased to nearly zero.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. **Clean:**

Before eating, wash your hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Count to 20 slowly or sing the “Happy Birthday” song to yourself twice. Wash countertops, cooking surfaces, and insides of refrigerator, freezer and microwave frequently with hot, soapy water when visibly dirty and daily. Wash cutting boards, knives, and other cooking utensils in hot, soapy water or the dishwasher after each use. Wash food packaging, especially lids of cans and jars, before opening. Rinse fruits and veggies under running water.

2. **Separate:**

Raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and flour should never come into contact with produce or any food that is ready-to-eat. Keep them separate while shopping, storing, and cooking. If you can, use a separate set of cooking tools for raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and flour. If you can't, wash them thoroughly in hot, soapy water between cooking with produce and cooking with meats, eggs, or flour. Place raw meats in sealed containers or plastic wrap on lower shelves of fridge or freezer. When cooking meat, use different plates for raw and cooked meat. Do not store eggs in the refrigerator door. This can expose them to uneven temperatures. Keep them on lower shelves in their original carton instead. Thaw frozen food safely in the refrigerator, in cold water (changing the water every 30 minutes), or in the microwave. Never thaw food on the counter because bacteria multiply quickly in the parts of the food that reach room temperature.<sup>2</sup>

3. **Cook:**

Use a thermometer to check if food has reached a safe temperature.

**145 degrees F** for seafood.

**145 degrees F** for beef, pork, and ham.

**160 degrees F** for ground meat, meat mixtures, and egg dishes.

**165 degrees F** for poultry, microwaved foods, and reheated leftovers.

When microwaving, make sure to rotate food to allow for even heating. Always follow directions for cooking and standing time. Note that eggs and flour are not safe to eat unless fully cooked.

4. **Chill:**

Leave space for air to circulate between containers in your fridge and freezer. At the grocery store, pick up perishable foods last and take them straight home. If bringing cold foods on-the-go, pack them with ice in an insulated container. Chill groceries, leftovers, and food delivery items within 2 hours, or 1 hour if exposed to temperatures above 90 F. Use an appliance thermometer to set fridge to 40 F or below and freezer at 0 F or below.<sup>3</sup>

**Resources:**

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodborne-outbreaks/foodproductionchain/index.html>
2. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/big-thaw-safe-defrosting-methods>
3. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety#Danger>