New agreement simplifies food handler licensing process

As of August 2013, workers licensed by one department may now work in other jurisdictions without retraining

Six local public health and environmental health agencies recently signed an agreement to recognize each other’s training and certification of food handlers at restaurants and grocery stores.

Previously, a worker had to complete training and apply for a food handler license issued by the city or county in which his or her place of employment was located. In some cases, getting a job in another city or county — even if working for the same company at a different location — required the employee to go through the training and certification process in the new jurisdiction and pay additional license or permit fees.

Participating agencies drafted the reciprocity agreement with support from the Mid-America Regional Council’s Environmental Health Workgroup. The Memorandum of Agreement (see reverse) outlines standard operating procedures for food handler training programs. Workers in these areas will only have to complete training and testing, pay fees and secure a license in one community to be eligible to work in the others. Workers will still be required to renew their licenses periodically.

Participating agencies
- Cass County Health Department
- Clay County Public Health Center
- Independence Health Department
- Jackson County Environmental Health
- Kansas City, Mo., Health Department
- Platte County Health Department

In Missouri, local public health and environmental health departments establish and enforce standards for handling food at restaurants, grocery stores and other establishments to ensure that food served to the public is free of food-borne illness and safe to eat.

Food handler training typically encompasses:
- Personal hygiene.
- Preventing contamination and cross-contamination of foods.
- Sanitization methods.
- Time and temperature controls.

For information:
Donna Martin, Public Health Project Coordinator, Mid-America Regional Council, dmartin@marc.org; 816/701-8369.
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOOD HANDLER TRAINING RECIPROCITY

Six local public health and public works agencies serving the Missouri portion of the Kansas City metropolitan area are working together to increase the effectiveness of environmental health services, including food handler education. Each local agency issues licenses to individuals who successfully complete food handler training. This license is necessary for such individuals to work in food service jobs in the metropolitan area. The local agencies that are a party to this Memorandum of Agreement will utilize common training content for food handler education and will recognize individuals licensed by other Kansas City metropolitan area public health and public works agencies participating in this MOA.

1. Definition
   a. Food handler license is synonymous with permit or certificate for purposes of this Memorandum of Agreement.

2. Food Handler Education/Training Standard Operating Procedure for KC Metro Reciprocity
   A. Standardization of Food Handler Education or Training Programs
      a. Purpose. This policy is intended to provide the framework for acceptable governmental food safety education or training programs for the Kansas City Metropolitan area.
      b. There will be reciprocal acceptance of food handler training among the jurisdictions of Metropolitan Health Agencies of the Kansas City Area (MHAKCA) that have signed this Memorandum of Agreement.
   B. The food handler education/training program for participating jurisdictions must cover the following basic food safety principles.
      a. Foodborne disease outbreaks. Instruction on foodborne disease outbreak shall include the definition of foodborne disease outbreak, the causes and preventive measures, including employee reporting requirements.
         a. Personal Hygiene. Instruction on good personal hygiene practices including when, where and how to wash hands.
         b. Preventing contamination by employees. Instruction shall include the requirements for handling ready-to-eat food and proper glove.
         c. Cross- Contamination. Instruction on cross-contamination shall include procedures on the prevention of cross-contamination of foods, sanitization methods and corrective actions.
         d. Time and temperature. Instruction shall include time and temperature control of foods to limit pathogen growth or toxin production.
      e. Course length. The course length may not be less than one hour or exceed three hours.
      f. Course examination. Participants must achieve a passing score on an examination to successfully complete the course.
      g. Internet programs. An approved program may be delivered via the Internet provided that provisions have been made to verify participant's identity. Additionally, for first time online training, participants must validate their test results by taking an abbreviated proctored exam.
         i. Food handler cards for jurisdictions that have not previously verified identity or validated test results will be accepted once the jurisdiction(s) implements a verification/validation process.
         ii. A jurisdiction may offer two cards. One card would be valid in their jurisdiction only and would not require a proctored exam. The second card requires a proctored exam and shall be designed differently to show that it meets this reciprocity agreement.
      h. Food handler certificate term. Food handler certificates issued by participating jurisdictions shall be valid for no less than three years and for up to five years.
         i. A jurisdiction may approve training programs within their jurisdiction that meet the requirements of basic food safety as listed above. A proctored exam will be required with a qualified person giving that proctored exam.
   C. Participating jurisdictions will not require any individual with a valid food handler license from a participating agency to transfer their license or otherwise obtain additional training.
      a. Agencies who require a copy of the food handler's card to be kept at the food establishment will accept a photocopy of the card.
      b. Agencies who physically spot check cards will accept any participating agency's card.
      c. If there is a question about another agency's card, please call the appropriate number listed below:
         i. Cass County Health Department – 816-380-8425
         ii. Clay County Public Health Center – 816-595-4350
         iii. Independence Health Department – 816-325-7803
         iv. Jackson County Public Works – 816-881-4649
         v. Kansas City Health Department- 816-513-6315
         vi. Platte County Health Department- 816-858-2412
      d. Attachment A shows a sample of each participating jurisdiction's food handler permit.

3. This Memorandum of Agreement will remain in force until such time as the participating health and public works agencies determine that it should be terminated or modified. Any changes to this Memorandum of Agreement require approval by all participating agencies.

4. The local public health and public works agencies agree to follow the stated Food Handler Education/Training Operating Procedures for Kansas City metropolitan area reciprocity:

   CASS COUNTY, MO HEALTH DEPARTMENT
   Tiffany Klassen, Administrator

   CLAY COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER
   Gary Zaborac, Director

   INDEPENDENCE, MO HEALTH DEPARTMENT
   Larry Jones, Director

   JACKSON COUNTY, MO PUBLIC WORKS
   Scott George, Administrator

   KANSAS CITY, MO HEALTH DEPARTMENT
   Dr. Rex Archer, Director

   PLATTE COUNTY HEALTH CENTER
   Mary Jo Vernon, Director