

HACCP Workshop Findings and Recommendations

Methodology

Following a focus group methodology, discussion groups were conducted to identify school nutrition directors'/managers' needs that should be incorporated into a HACCP workshop, with the primary intent of improving their food safety plan. A guide with questions was developed and reviewed by the Center's research team. Participants were recruited from Serving up Science alumni, which includes school foodservice managers/directors, school foodservice consultants, and state agency staff. Each participant received a Qualtrics® invitation to participate in a discussion group. Invitations asked participants to note their available dates and times and preferred format (videoconference vs. telephone) for the discussion group sessions. Participants who agreed to participate were reminded the day prior to the session via email.

Each participant attended one of the four discussion sessions. An experienced moderator facilitated each session. There were two to six participants in each discussion group. Discussions lasted from 26 to 45 minutes; all discussion sessions were audio recorded. The session began by welcoming the participants, reviewing the goals of the discussion, and describing the process that would be utilized. A moderator guide was used to assure that each group received the same instructions and were asked the same questions.

A total of 85 alumni were invited to participate and 14 alumni from 11 states participated in the discussion sessions. Recordings of all sessions were transcribed by an authorized transcription company. Three researchers then reviewed the transcripts and identified themes.

Key Findings

- All respondents agreed that a HACCP workshop would be valuable and that more specific, in-depth training is needed for directors, managers/supervisors, and employees.
- Monitoring and documenting SOPs is a need among most participants.
- The HACCP workshop should focus on the “why” behind the HACCP plan.
- Many of the participants indicated the need to educate directors and managers/supervisors that the HACCP plan is not just a listing of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). While the SOPs are an important aspect of the overall plan, the plan itself should be a dynamic document that meets the needs of the individual school.
- There is an interest in interactive computer software to help with HACCP plan development/implementation/customization. An opportunity exists to clarify this idea at the workshop to better inform the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) for future consideration.
- Incentives identified that would encourage attendance at a HACCP workshop included:
 - Travel and expenses to the workshop would need to be covered.
 - The ability to learn to train employees in a more effective manner.
 - Peer-to-peer mentoring that extends beyond the workshop.
- Barriers to attending the workshop:
 - Time – The respondents noted that time away from work was a barrier. However, they indicated that a workshop with an overall training length of 2 – 3 days, would be appropriate.

- A few respondents indicated that Serving up Science was fantastic, but that it could have been more effective if it were shorter.

Recommendations

- The Institute may consider multi-level HACCP training. However, given the financial restraints that this might entail, a true train-the-trainer approach might be best. It is important that training initiatives include actionable items for directors and/or managers to apply within the operation.
- Participation may better align within one of two groupings:
 - Those who have a functional plan, but the implementation of the plan needs improvement.
 - Those who need to focus on developing and customizing their plan. They have a plan, but it was taken from a template and not adapted.
- The topic of HACCP customization is of interest. However, clarity about what customization really entails is unclear.
- The Serving up Science course and Produce Safety University should be prerequisites to the HACCP workshop. These two training experiences would provide participants with a baseline of food safety knowledge and foundation of knowledge upon which to build.
- The workshop is a prime venue to cultivate the culture of food safety in child nutrition professionals, who can foster this culture within their schools. The value of a food safety culture can be discussed as an integral component of HACCP planning.
- The workshop might be pilot-tested as a pre-conference session at the SNA/ANC.
- Creative ventures, such as storytelling techniques or similar, can be used to enhance the workshop and also included as trainer resources for attendees.
- The workshop may benefit from organization and facilitation through ICN staff, and Center staff could be involved in the development and delivery.