In 2015, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provided 164 million meals and snacks.

Complex SFSP operational conditions could increase food safety risks:
- Diverse cooking sites
- Diverse, including outdoor, service sites
- Transportation from preparation to serving sites
- Higher ambient temperatures during meal service hours

This research examines the effectiveness of current TCS food safety practices in the SFSP.

Methodology

- A total of 28 SFSP sites was observed, four in each USDAFNS region in July and August, 2015 (Fig. 1)
- Practices utilized to control temperatures throughout the day of service were observed
- Data loggers were utilized to capture the temperature of foods just after preparation through service

Results

- Cooking, Cooling, and Thermometer Use Practices
  - Most Common: checking internal cooking temperatures (68%), and checking end-point cooking temperatures (62%)
  - Least Common: proper cleaning and sanitizing of thermometers (40%), and thermometer: calibration (27%)

- Transportation and Serving Practices
  - Most Common: delivering hot meals at proper temperatures (79%), and checking food temperatures at delivery (50%)
  - Least Common: recording food temperatures at delivery (3%), and using refrigerated trucks (16%)

- Lunch Food Temperatures
  - Average Time in Temperature Danger Zone
    - Hot Foods < 135°F for 45 minutes
    - Cold Foods > 41°F for 90 minutes
    - Hot foods more often served at the correct temperatures (75%), than cold foods (50%).
    - Only one item did not meet Food Code 2013 requirements

- Suggested Training Priorities
  - High: cold food transport and service, checking food temperatures at receiving, thermometer sanitation
  - Medium High: thermometer calibration
  - Medium: hot food transportation and service, cooking and cooling practices, thermometer to check food temperatures
  - Lowest: adequate cooling methods, recording food temperature at receiving (Fig. 2)

Applications

The USDA’s goal to increase the number of meals served in the SFSP requires increasing staff capacity; targeted food safety training is needed. Based on the findings of this study training should focused on:
- Delivery and service of cold foods; they are particularly vulnerable to higher temperatures
- Monitoring and recording food temperatures at receiving
- Thermometer cleaning, sanitizing, and calibration