

ServSafe Food Handler Certification – Available in the Southwind District

SANDY HAGGARD – NUTRITION, FOOD SAFETY, AND HEALTH AGENT

Do you work or volunteer in a food service setting—such as a restaurant, school cafeteria, concession stand, church dinner, childcare center, or residential care facility? If so, you may be required to complete a ServSafe Food Handler certification course. K-State Extension Family and Consumer Science Agents are qualified to offer this training in person throughout the Southwind Extension District.

The four-hour course covers essential food safety practices through presentations and hands-on activities, including proper handwashing techniques and the importance of labeling, demonstrated by identifying unlabeled white powders. At the end of the workshop, participants take a written exam, which is mailed to the National Restaurant Association for scoring. Certificates are posted online within two weeks. The cost is \$20 per adult, which includes the course book and exam bubble sheet.

Some of the topics include appropriate attire, hair coverings, and nail care, avoiding eating or chewing gum in food prep areas, time and temperature control, preventing cross-contamination, cleaning and sanitizing procedures, proper garbage handling, and preparing food safely for individuals with allergies.

Participants will learn to avoid the “temperature danger zone” of 41°F to 135°F, where pathogens thrive. Cold and hot food temperatures—as well as appliance temperatures—must be monitored. Perishable food should not be left at room temperature for more than two hours to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Food preparers should be made aware of any food allergies for those being served. The “Big Nine” food allergies include milk, eggs, fish, soybeans, tree nuts, peanuts, crustacean shellfish, wheat, and sesame. Also, particularly in southeast Kansas, those with the Alpha-Gal Syndrome food allergy may be unable to consume mammal products such as dairy or red meat. Their meals would need to be prepared separately from those of other consumers.

In September, this course was successfully offered in Allen and Neosho counties for hospital cafeteria staff, residential care providers, and food truck operators, and we would be happy to offer this workshop across the Southwind District as the need arises.

To learn more or to host a ServSafe Food Handler certification workshop, contact Sandy Haggard, Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent for the Southwind Extension District (serving Allen, Bourbon, Neosho, and Woodson Counties) at SJHaggard@ksu.edu or 620.365.2242.

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