

# **Document 1 - Progress on Ottawa Public Health's Food Safety Programming**

## **Education**

The foundation for ensuring food safety practices in food premises is education. During every inspection, OPH consistently provides food safety education to food premise operators and promotes food handler certification training to mitigate the risk of food-borne illness.

The Ontario Public Health Standards require all health units to ensure the availability of food handler training programs within the health unit.

OPH has heard from businesses that online training is most accessible and appreciated and is shifting resources from in-person food handler training to promotion of online options.

OPH provides additional formal food handler training to owners, operators and staff when their premises exceed four repeat critical deficiencies in any calendar year. This is in an effort to educate, inform and change behaviours that may contribute to food-borne outbreaks.

## **Inspection**

OPH's food safety inspection team is made up of PHIs who routinely inspect food premises to ensure safe food handling practices are used and that the premises operate in compliance with the requirements under the Ontario Public Health Standards, 2008 (OPHS) and Ontario's *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA) regulations. In addition to routine inspections, re-inspections are conducted to follow up on reported deficiencies. In 2014, 2,777 (25%) of routine inspections had critical deficiencies that were corrected during the inspection, and an additional 853 (8%) critical deficiencies were not corrected during the inspection, requiring re-inspection. For non-critical deficiencies, the numbers were 6,322 (56%) and 4,504 (40%). Inspections are also conducted at the request of food premise operators requiring Public Health approval for the sake of meeting licensing requirements.

OPH aims to achieve all inspection targets set out by the OPHS, as well as those related to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's (MOHLTC) Public Health Funding and Accountability Agreement indicator<sup>i</sup> which include reporting on the:

- percentage of high-risk food premises inspected once every 4 months while in operation;
- percentage of moderate-risk food premises inspected once every 6 months while in operation, and;
- percentage of inspections of high-risk food service premises where a certified food handler (CFH) was on site at time of inspection

Each year, the City of Ottawa hosts special events aimed at celebrating both local and visiting cultures, farmers markets, rural and cultural fairs, artists, musicians, and athletes. The sale and consumption of a variety of food is common at special events, which creates an additional workload for OPH staff. In 2014, more than 2,000 inspections were conducted at special events. The number of special events has increased 20% over the past two years without concomitant staffing increases. This growth is forecasted to continue steadily through 2017 when Canada celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. OPH is exploring alternative funding for resources to assist with the increased workload associated with special events, through a one-time funding request to the MOHLTC.

With the ongoing review of the food safety program, and implementation of additional quality assurance tools to review and address repeat deficiencies, the number of enforcement actions has been increasing over time. 94 violation tickets were issued in 2014.

### **Quality Assurance**

The quality assurance (QA) component of the food safety program aims to ensure a standardized and valid approach to the enforcement of the food safety regulations. OPH has provided enhanced enforcement training for PHIs, and has implemented measures to address food premises that receive repeat critical deficiencies.

As part of OPH's continued quality improvement commitment, a temporary QA Supervisor was appointed to focus on developing QA tools to assist the staff to have readily available data and information to best facilitate their inspections and ensure consistent outcomes. Increased monitoring of repeat offences, as well as an updated enforcement policy has enabled OPH to better determine which establishments require enhanced enforcement attention.

OPH is committed to continuing to work with the Ottawa Restaurant Association, the Business Improvement Areas, Chambers of Commerce and partners to recognize good

practices in food premises as well as ensure a clear understanding of the requirements for safe food handling practices and the actions that will be taken for non-compliance.

---

<sup>i</sup> Technical Document: Public Health Accountability Agreement Indicators 2011 – 13 [Internet]. Ontario: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; 2013. Available from: [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/performance/docs/technical\\_document.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/performance/docs/technical_document.pdf)