

## Frequently Asked Questions Food Handler Training in Illinois

*The following answers are based on Public Act 098-0566 and proposed rules that are in the review process. Answers are subject to change. The Illinois Department of Public Health is responsible for the development, implementation, and enforcement of the Food Handler Regulation Enforcement Act. This is not an ISBE or USDA mandate.*

### **Who is considered a food handler?**

"Food employee" or "food handler" means an individual working with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food-contact surfaces. "Food employee" or "food handler" does not include unpaid volunteers in a food establishment, whether permanent or temporary.

### **Who is required to have food handler training?**

Any food handler working in Illinois, unless that person has a valid Illinois Food Service Sanitation Manager Certification (FSSMC) or unpaid volunteer. If someone working in a facility is not a food handler on a regular basis, but fills in as a food handler when needed, they must have food handler training.

### **Who is NOT required to have food handler training?**

Anyone working in a facility who is not a food handler by definition, unpaid volunteers or any food handler who has a valid Illinois Food Service Sanitation Manager Certification (FSSMC). Also, in the proposed rules, temporary food establishments also will be exempt from the food handler training requirement.

## **Food Handlers Working in a Non-restaurant**

### **What is a non-restaurant?**

Non-restaurants are facilities, such as nursing homes, licensed day care homes and facilities, hospitals, schools, long-term care facilities and retail food stores.

### **What is the timeline for implementation?**

All food handlers working in non-restaurants shall have training completed by July 1, 2016. **Enforcement will be limited to notification and education from July 1-December 31, 2016.**

### **What type of training is offered for non-restaurants?**

Any food handler training course that has been registered and approved by the Department is acceptable for food handlers in non-restaurants.

### **How is the training administered?**

Training can be on-line, computer, classroom, live trainers, remote trainers and by certified food service sanitation managers.

### **Will everyone receiving food handler training receive a certificate?**

Not every food handler training course will issue a certificate, but proof of training must be available in the facility upon inspector request. ISBE will email child nutrition program staff their pass or fail results.

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**How long is the certificate valid?**

Those working in non-restaurants are not required to take another food handler training, UNLESS they go to work for another employer or if they work in nursing homes, licensed day care homes and facilities, hospitals, schools or long-term care facilities. Food handlers working in those facilities must receive training every three years. *Food handler training for those working in non-restaurants is **not** transferable between employers.*

**Will the state issue food handler certifications?**

No, the state will not issue food handler certifications. The state will continue to issue the Food Service Sanitation Manager Certification (FSSMC).

**Will my food handler certificate be valid throughout Illinois?**

No, non-restaurant training is not transferable between employers.

**Is the employer responsible for paying for food handler training?**

No, an employer is not responsible for paying for food handler training, since it is the property of the certificate holder.

**Common Questions Regarding Food Handler Training**

**Is there a set fee for the course?**

No, the act states there has to be at least one food handler training option available for \$15.00 or less and there are multiple ANSI approved programs available online at that price. ISBE does not charge a fee for their workshops.

**Will volunteers be required to have food handler training?**

No, only paid food employees will need to have food handler training.

**If a “non-restaurant” food worker takes the same ANSI certified training as a “restaurant” food worker, does the “non-restaurant” food worker have to take the training again (even if still within the three-year valid time) if they go to work for a “restaurant”?**

The food handler would not need to take the training again as long as the individual has their own ANSI certificate that they can use to work in a restaurant and the facility the individual is going to does not have an internal training program.

**Will places not permitted by local health departments, such as churches and clubs (Lions, Elks, Masonic lodges), require food handler training?**

Yes, they would require food handler training for their employees. Most clubs should already be permitted by local health departments, since they have kitchens and serve the public. Volunteers are exempt from the training requirement.

If a church is just doing temporary events, they would not need food handler training, as temporaries are exempt from having food handler training in the proposed rules.

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**If a food service establishment is not inspected by the local health department, do they still need food handler training?**

Yes, if the establishment falls under the Illinois Food Code and meets the definition of a restaurant or non-restaurant, any employee meeting the definition of a food handler would need food handler training.

**Any ideas on how to verify the hundreds and hundreds of food handlers? I am assuming that will be the local health department's responsibility.**

The Department will be addressing enforcement in the Illinois Food Code update and in its work groups. **Enforcement is limited to education and notification until January 1, 2015 for restaurants and January 1, 2017 for non-restaurants.** It will be up to the inspectors to verify food handler training, as they do now with FSSMC verification. Guidance will be coming from the Department on how to verify food handler training.

**Do the mentally disabled working in a facility, restaurant or non-restaurant need to have food handler training?**

Any food handler employed in a restaurant or non-restaurant must have training. There are several options for training (classroom, hands-on, DVDs, online) that can be used and the assessment can be taken multiple times, in most cases. We are proposing that, assessments can also be in the form of demonstration of knowledge, for those that are unable to take a written exam. Food handlers that are not paid employees would be considered volunteers and do not need training.

**Can someone with food handler training take the place of a FSSMC when there is a gap in coverage throughout the day?**

No, a food handler cannot take the place of a FSSMC. The Illinois Food Code still requires the FSSMC certification based on your facility's risk type.

**Do delivery driver's need food handling training?**

If the delivery driver does not have any food handling interaction (e.g., cutting the pizza before boxing) and only serves as a delivery driver (taking the box from A to B), then the driver would not need food handling training. If any type of delivery driver (e.g., pizza, school lunch, caterer) conducts any type of food handling (e.g., cutting, packaging) or is responsible for temperature control and cross-contamination, the driver would need to complete the food handling training.

**Are there training requirements set by my local county health department, beyond the state's requirements?**

No, the regulation of food handler training is considered to be an exclusive function of the state and local regulation is prohibited.

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