

Janet T. Mills
Governor

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Commissioner



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Health Inspection Program

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To: Department of Education and School Food Service Directors

From: Lisa Silva, Program Manager, Health Inspection Program

Re: Maine School Kitchen Inspection Policy 2022-2023

I am writing in response to the USDA's Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004's mandate that requires two school kitchen inspections be conducted at each of Maine's 581 schools each school year.

The Health Inspection Program currently inspects all school kitchens at least once per school calendar year, which is consistent with our risk-based inspection approach. However, due to the pandemic in school year 2020-2021, on-site inspections were not scheduled for most schools. An alternative method called "virtual inspections" was used where the inspector discusses school kitchen operations and food safety procedures with the food service director and "inspects" via a FaceTime or Zoom call. For the school calendar year 2021-2022, our inspectors utilized either the virtual inspection or the on-site inspection, depending on the discretion of the health inspector. For the school calendar year 2022-2023, we will return to on-site inspections.

Inspection results show that Maine schools perform very well, with few, if any, violations. The failure rate for school inspections is very low. There were no failed inspections for the 2021-2022 and 2020-2021 school years, and one failed inspection for 2019-2020. When a school fails an inspection, a follow up inspection occurs shortly thereafter and within the school year.

School foodservice personnel are well trained in food safety and handling practices. Schools are required to have one Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) on staff (there are some exemptions to this) and foodservice personnel also participate in a food handler's course called *Serving it Safe*. Both the CFPM and food handler courses require passing an exam. CFPMs receive a certification and food handlers receive a certificate. The certification and certificate are valid for five years. In addition, all Maine schools are required to have in place and practice a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Plan (HACCP).

According to the U.S. FDA and based on the practices described above, Maine schools fall into a low food safety risk category that requires only one inspection per year. We believe that performing one inspection per school calendar year in most schools is adequate to ensure food safety in Maine school kitchens.

Please call me at 287-5691 or email me at lisa.silva@maine.gov if you have any questions. Thank you for your good work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa M. Silva".

Lisa Silva
Program Manager
Health Inspection Program
Division of Environmental and Community Health
Maine CDC
Department of Health and Human Services