Assisted Living Facility Food Code Highlights

FACILITY AND FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Application of the Food Code to Assisted Living Facilities

The food service operation at an Assisted Living facility must meet the requirements of the Minnesota Food Code. Serving food safely and preventing foodborne illnesses from happening is critical, especially when the population being served is considered a highly susceptible population. These individuals are at greater risk of becoming ill and developing life-threatening complications. This document highlights some of the key Food Code requirements and provides links to additional resources.

Minnesota Food Code, Minnesota Rules Chapter 4626 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4626/).

Definition of Highly Susceptible Population

The Minnesota Food Code defines a highly susceptible population as persons who are more likely than others in the general population to experience foodborne disease because they are:

- Immunocompromised, preschool-age children, or older adults,

AND

- They obtain food at a facility that provides services such as:
- Custodial care facility
- Health care facility
- Nutritional services
- Socialization services (e.g., senior center)

Food safety requirements are more stringent when serving highly susceptible populations.

Highly Susceptible Populations fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/highsuspopfs.pdf).

Oversight of safe food handling

Certified Food Protection Manager

Each facility is required to have at least one individual that is a State of Minnesota Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM). This credential can be obtained by taking an approved food safety course, passing the exam, and then applying for the credential from the Minnesota Department of Health.

The CFPM does not need to be always on site when food is being prepared and served but

they must provide training for and oversight of the people performing food preparation activities.

Minnesota Certified Food Protection Manager fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/cfpm/mncfpmfs.pdf)

Minnesota Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) web page (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/cfpm/index.html)

Person in charge (PIC)

A person in charge (PIC) must be designated during all hours of operation. The PIC is responsible for ensuring safe food handling practices are always being followed.

Person in Charge fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/picfs.pdf).

Employee health and hygiene

Exclude ill employees

Employees who have been ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea cannot work in a food establishment for at least 24 hours after their symptoms end.

Employees with certain symptoms or diagnosed illnesses must report this information to the PIC. Some illnesses must be reported to the Minnesota Department of Health. All employee reports of diarrhea, vomiting, or reportable illnesses must be recorded in an employee illness log.

Illness Reporting for Food Establishments fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/foodsafety/dwi/empillfs.pdf).

Employee Illness Log (https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/foodsafety/dwi/empillog.pdf).

Employee Illness Decision Guide (https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/foodsafety/dwi/decisionguide.pdf).

Handwashing

Handwashing is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses, which can cause foodborne illness.

Ensure your kitchen handwashing sink is set up before food preparation begins. Make the sink easily accessible to all employees and use it only for handwashing. Handwashing sinks need to be supplied with running water, soap, single-use towels and a trash container.

Wash hands often. It is important to wash your hands before working with food, clean equipment, and utensils; after smoking, eating or drinking, or using toilet facilities; or any time hands become contaminated.

The correct procedure for washing hands includes these steps:

1. Wet your hands
2. Apply soap
3. Rub your hands together for 10 to 15 seconds
4. Rinse your hands
5. Dry your hands
6. Keep hands clean

The entire handwashing process must last at least 20 seconds. Using gloves, wet-wipes or hand antiseptics are not substitutes for handwashing

Employee Personal Hygiene fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/emplyhygnfs.pdf)

Handwashing for Employees fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/handwashfs.pdf)

Preventing bare hand contact

Employees must not touch ready-to-eat food with bare hands. Bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food is never allowed for employees who are serving a highly susceptible population.

Prevent bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food by wearing disposable gloves or using utensils, deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, or other dispensing equipment.

Preventing Contamination from Hands fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/nohandcontfs.pdf)

Ready-to-Eat (RTE) Food

Ready-to-eat (RTE) food is food that can be eaten without additional preparation to achieve food safety. Examples of RTE food include:

- Previously raw animal food that has been fully cooked to time and temperature requirements as specified in the food code, such as a cooked chicken breast
- Raw fruits and vegetables that have been washed, such as a lettuce salad
- Fruits and vegetables that have been cooked for hot holding such as mashed potatoes or creamed corn
- Plant-based food for which further washing, cooking, or other processing is not required for food safety, and from which rinds, peels, husks, or shells, if naturally present, have been removed, such as peeled orange segments or shelled walnuts

- Seasonings and ingredients derived from plants, such as spices, salt, and sugar
- Bakery items such as bread, cakes, pies, fillings, or icing for which further cooking is not required for food safety

Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food (TCS)

Time/temperature control for safety food (TCS) are food items that require time and/or temperature control to safely limit the growth of harmful bacteria or the formation of toxins.

TCS foods include:

- Food from animal origin such as eggs, milk, meat, poultry, or fish that is raw or cooked
- Plant-based food that has been cooked such as rice, potatoes, or pasta
- Raw seed sprouts
- Certain raw cut fruit and vegetable items, specifically melons, cut leafy greens, cut tomatoes, and mixtures of cut tomatoes
- Garlic-in-oil mixtures

These are not TCS foods:

- A hard-boiled egg that has been air-cooled in its shell (not cooled in water)
- A pasteurized egg with an intact (unbroken) shell
- Food in unopened, hermetically sealed package that has been commercially processed to be shelf-stable, such as a can of soup
- A food that due to the interaction of its water activity and pH is designated as non-TCS. These are typically dry products such as soda crackers; or acidic products such as lemon juice or ketchup.

Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/tcsfoodfs.pdf)

Temperature Danger Zone

The temperature danger zone is the temperature range at which disease-causing bacteria grow best in TCS food. The temperature danger zone is between 41°F and 135°F.

TCS food must pass through the temperature danger zone as quickly as possible when cooking, reheating, and cooling food.

Keep hot food hot and cold food cold. Always use a thermometer to check food temperatures.

Time and temperature control requirements

Cooking time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food

Cook raw food of animal origin according to the internal temperature and time requirements. The table below shows minimum requirements for some common raw animal food.

Food	Internal temperature and time
Poultry Wild animals Stuffed fish, meat, pasta or poultry Stuffing containing fish, meat or poultry	165°F held for 15 seconds
Chopped or ground meat, fish, and game animals Birds classified as ratites (ostrich, emu) Injected or tenderized meats Eggs for hot holding	158°F (immediate) OR 155°F held for 15 seconds OR 150°F held for 1 minute OR 145°F held for 3 minutes
Fish Whole muscle meat Game animals Eggs for immediate service	145°F held for 15 seconds

Time and Temperature Control fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/timetempfs.pdf)

Cold and hot holding food

Holding food at improper temperatures is a common cause of foodborne illness.

- Cold TCS food must be maintained at 41°F or below in mechanical refrigeration.
- TCS food being held hot, such as in a steam table, must be maintained at 135°F or above.
- Frozen food must remain frozen.

Cooling food properly

Food that is prepared or heated must be cooled rapidly to prevent bacteria from multiplying or forming toxins.

- TCS food must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours and completely cooled to 41°F or below within 6 hours.
- TCS food prepared from ingredients at room temperature must be cooled to 41°F or below within 4 hours

Use a combination of these methods to rapidly cool food:

- Place food in shallow pans
- Separate food into smaller or thinner portions
- Place containers of food in an ice water bath and stir frequently
- Use metal containers while cooling
- Add ice as an ingredient at the end of the cooking process
- Use rapid cooling equipment, such as blast chillers
- Use cleaned and sanitized ice wands
- Use other effective methods

Cooling Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food (TCS) fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/coolingtcsfs.pdf)

Date marking foods

Mark food containers to show when TCS food was prepared or opened, or when food must be used or discarded by.

Food must be date marked if it meets **ALL** the following criteria:

- Ready-to-eat TCS food
- Refrigerated
- Held in the establishment for longer than 24 hours

Ready-to-eat TCS food can be kept in the refrigerator for up to seven days. Freezing food stops the date marking clock but does not reset it. Always store date marked ready-to-eat TCS food at 41°F or below, including during thawing.

Serve, or discard all refrigerated ready-to-eat TCS food within seven days. Do not exceed the use-by date placed on the original container by a food manufacturer.

Date Marking fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/datemarkingfs.pdf).

Major food allergens

Food allergies can result life threatening complications. Eight major foods account for 90 percent of all food allergies. They are:

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts (such as almonds, pecans, and walnuts)
- Crustacean shellfish (such as crab, lobster, and shrimp)
- Fish (such as salmon, tuna, and halibut)
- Eggs
- Milk
- Soy
- Wheat

The Person in Charge must:

- Be able to describe foods identified as major food allergens
- Know the symptoms caused by the major food allergens
- Ensure employees are training in food safety, including food allergy awareness.

Major Food Allergens fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/majfoodallfs.pdf).

Preventing cross-contamination

Cross-contamination is the physical movement or transfer of harmful bacteria or viruses from one person, object, or place to another. Preventing cross-contamination is a key factor in preventing foodborne illness.

- Wash hands while working with food.
- In the refrigerator, store raw meat, poultry, fish, and raw unpasteurized eggs below ready-to-eat food.
- Use hot, soapy water and paper towels or clean wiping cloths to wipe up kitchen surfaces or spills, then sanitize the surfaces with an approved sanitizer solution.
- Use separate cutting boards for fresh produce and for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Store damp wiping cloths in an approved sanitizer at the required strength.
- Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw food.
- Sauce that is used to marinate raw meat, poultry, or seafood should never be used on cooked foods, unless it is boiled just before using.

Cleaning and sanitizing

Dishes, equipment, and utensils must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized manually in a 3-compartment sink or a mechanical dishwasher. Steps for proper washing and sanitizing are:

1. **Wash** in hot, soapy water.
2. **Rinse** in clean water.
3. **Sanitize** in approved chemicals for the contact time specified on the label **or** in hot water that is 171°F for at least 30 seconds.
4. **Air dry** before putting items away.

Use approved chemical sanitizers such as chlorine bleach, quaternary ammonium, or iodine. Always follow label instructions. Use the required sanitizer solution strength and contact time. Use a test kit to verify the sanitizer concentration. Concentrations below minimum levels will not sanitize effectively, while sanitizer concentrations above maximum levels can leave toxic residues.

Cleaning and Sanitizing fact sheet (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/cleansanfs.pdf).

Resources

Minnesota Food Code Rule, Chapter 4626 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4626/)

Minnesota Department of Health Food Business Safety (www.health.state.mn.us/foodbizsafety)

Minnesota Department of Health
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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4500.