District of Columbia Department of Health

Background

State: Washington, D.C.
LHD Population Size Served: 680,000
Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected: 6,000
Retail Program Standards Met/Working On: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7
Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards: 2003
NACCHO Mentorship Program Cohort(s): 6, 7

The DC Department of Health’s mission is to promote and protect the health, safety and quality of life of residents, visitors and those doing business in the District of Columbia.

The Food Safety and Hygiene Inspection Services Division (FSHISD) make certain that residents and visitors to the Nation’s Capital consume safe and wholesome food. The Division protects the public health and safety of the residents and visitors in the District by ensuring the safety of the food supply and ensuring the sanitation of non-food health facilities through inspections, enforcement, education and training. The Division administers an inspection program to address risk factors known to contribute to foodborne illness. Staff enforces regulations that reduce the risk of foodborne illness, ensures food products are honestly and accurately represented, promotes public and industry awareness, and the understanding of legal requirements and responsibilities of the food establishments and other non-food health facilities.

The Division currently has 21 Sanitarians (1 as our Plan Review Officer), 2 Supervisory Sanitarians (1 as Interim Program Manager), 1 Food Technologist, and 1 Assistant to Program Manager.

Role in Mentorship Program

The DC Department of Health participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in the sixth and seventh cohort. In the sixth cohort, Fairfax County Health Department (VA) mentored DC on Standard 1, 2, and 4. In the seventh cohort, Fairfax County mentored DC on making progress on Standards 1, 3 and 7.

Lessons Learned/Tips

I learned that it is definitely time-consuming, but worth every second that you put into it. It has made our Program better. I recommend getting your co-workers and superiors involved and make them understand the importance it is and benefits of the Standards.

Meeting with different local health departments that are trying to achieve verification of the Program Standards was very rewarding. To work with our mentors and other mentees that are working on the same Standard or a different one challenged us, but
also empowered us to work together and get that much closer to having Program Standards 1, 2, and 4 verified. Everyone had some great ideas to complete each Standard and also great program SOP’s that improved their health department. I was honored that I was approached about different applications and community outreach we do in DC other departments were looking to do. They were pleased to know that we were getting good feedback from the public from them.

Contact

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