Kansas Legislators’ Opinions about Food Safety Regulation of Hunger Relief Organizations

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Background

• Food insecurity—not having enough food
  – Commonly called “hunger”
• 14.9% of U.S. households are food insecure
  – Kansas has 14.5%

Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplemental data.
Background (continued)

• Consumer perceptions
  – Feeding the hungry is good.
  – Food from home is safe.
• Dumpster Dive Café
  – Serves food “freecycled” from dumpsters.

Source: Kickstarter.com
Outbreaks have occurred at soup kitchens
  - Chattanooga, TN 2010—10 people to the ER, 26 diagnosed with food poisoning.
  - Denver 2012—60 people to the hospital.

Source: Stephen Mitchell, The Denver Post
Source: Staff, WRCB TV
Background (continued)

• Hunger Organizations—
groups providing food to
food insecure people.

• Examples:
  – Food banks
  – Soup kitchens
  – Food pantries

• A 2012 Kansas law change exempted soup kitchens,
food pantries, etc., from food safety licensing.

• Food banks are still licensed (“wholesale”).
Problem Statement

Given the volume and complexity of foods managed and handled by hunger relief organizations, it is imperative that food safety regulations are appropriate and effective. The opinions of legislators who create the laws that impact food safety regulation of hunger relief organizations are not well documented.

Source: thecoloradoobserver.com
Methodology

• Food Donation Regulation Survey
  – Self-assessment of food safety knowledge.
  – Awareness of food donation associated foodborne illness outbreaks.
  – Level of agreement with three statements.

• Data collection
  – On-line survey (Survey Monkey)
  – Response Rate 11/57 (19.3%)

• Analysis
  – Nominal data—reported frequencies
Study Population

• Kansas Legislators: House and Senate Health Committees and Agriculture Committees
Results

- Knowledgeable?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure

- Aware of outbreaks?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
Results (continued)

- **Meet basic food safety requirements?**
- **Should food safety inspections of food donations occur?**
- **Should tax $$ fund food safety inspections of food donations?**

![Bar Chart]

- **Strongly Agree**
- **Agree**
- **Neutral**
- **Disagree**
- **Strongly Disagree**
Results (continued)

Respondent comments:

• “do know about the ‘good samaritan’ state law [sic].”
• “State inspectors are more interested in ‘finding’ problems and preserving their positions than safety.”
• “soup kitchens and food pantries should follow basic food safety measures.”
Conclusions

• Give a person a fish…
  – And you will need a Seafood HACCP plan
  – And a license

• Don’t survey legislators during an election.
Conclusions

• Strong majority of Kansas State Legislators support safe food donations.
• No consensus among these legislators about the role of food safety regulators regarding food donations.
• No consensus among these legislators about how to fund food safety activities regarding food donations.
• The Legislators appear to lack of knowledge about the issue.
• There may be some sentiment that food safety is not the primary concern of food safety inspectors.
Recommendations

• KDA should consider outreach to legislators to educate them about food safety risks associated with food donations.
• KDA should consider discussions with legislators to explore funding mechanisms.
• AFDO should consider a Position Statement supporting food safety regulatory activities of establishments handling food donations.
• CDC should consider adding “Hunger relief organization” as “location of exposure” on CDC NORS form CDC 52.13.
References


References (continued)


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Questions?

Source: www.crumbineaward.com