



# Improve Your Food Program - It's as Easy as P...T...V



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Learn how local public health agencies are implementing the PTV methodology and seeing measurable improvement in their food protection programs

## Study Background and Purpose

There are challenges to building retail food protection programs that effectively promote active managerial control (AMC) of foodborne illness risk factors by food service operators. Of primary concern is that many health inspectors are trained in how to inspect for code compliance rather than how to identify risky food handling practices and behaviors - especially if those are not observable at the time of the inspection.

In 2014-2015, Horizon Public Health (HPH), MN in partnership with Olmsted County Public Health Services (OCPHS), MN agreed to conduct a study to determine if a PTV assessment that includes discussion allows a sanitarian to find more foodborne-illness risk factors than the 'traditional' inspection. OCPHS conducted a similar study between 2001 and 2004, and was interested in determining if the results could be replicated by a smaller agency (OCPHS has 7 sanitarian staff; HPH has 2 sanitarian staff).



### Inspection

- ✓ review of facility and equipment
- ✓ observations of food worker behavior

vs.

### Assessment

- Includes the traditional inspection components, plus:
- ✓ discussion with the person-in-charge on food safety procedures
  - ✓ discussion with employees to confirm procedures
  - ✓ documentation of food flows



## Study Methods

The development of OCPHS' risk-based assessment to evaluate and improve an operator's level of AMC is based upon the "Duties of a Certified Food Manager" (CFM) in the Minnesota food code. In order to effectively manage foodborne illness risk factors, CFM duties require the following:

- Policies/procedures
- Training
- Verification

**PTV = A system for risk control**

OCPHS staff provided multi-day training and PTV assessment guidance documents to HPH. 30 complex menu facilities were randomly chosen for the pilot study. During each food safety assessment, HPH retail food staff evaluated the level of P, T and V for each risk factor and assigned a rating based upon how well the systems for that risk factor were being managed.

HPH received approval from their health board to conduct 'scheduled' assessments for this pilot study, since their local ordinance required inspections to be 'unannounced'. HPH staff used a modified OCPHS PTV assessment form which captured:

- A PTV rating of active, basic, or needs improvement for each risk factor
- Notes on what type of procedures, training and verification elements were in place for each risk factor
- If a condition/violation noted on the report was found by discussion or observation
- Comments from the operator and/or sanitarian on what worked or didn't work well during the pilot assessment

Pre- and post-pilot surveys were sent to all medium and high risk retail food licensees to gather feedback regarding:

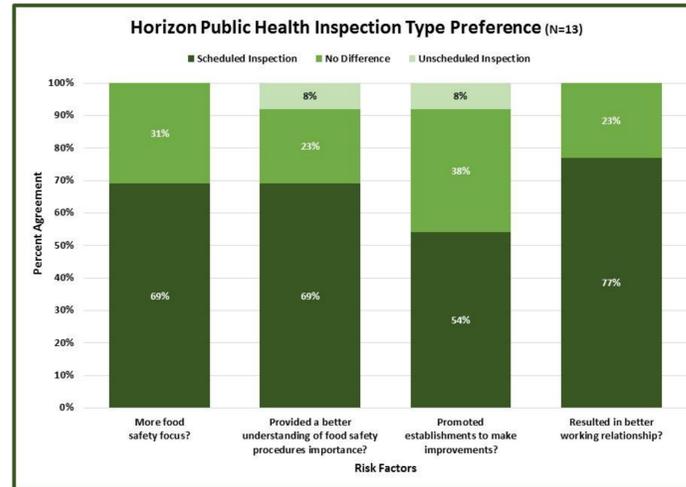
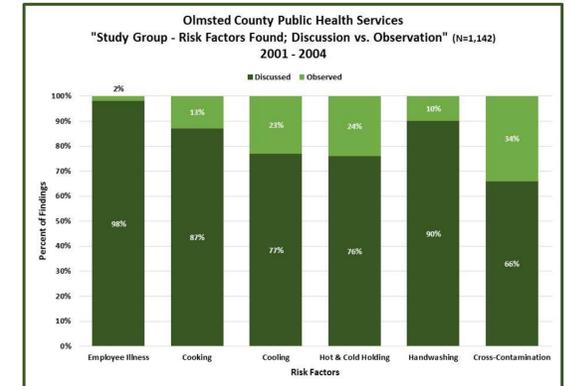
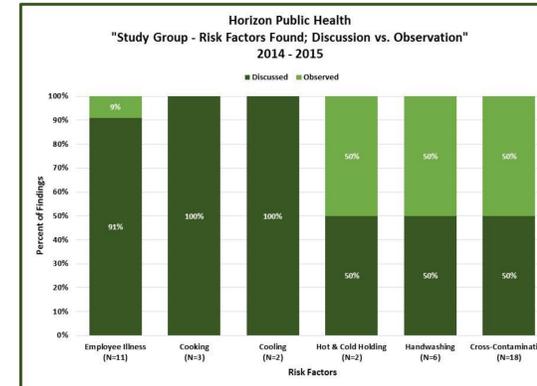
- The pros and cons of scheduled vs. unscheduled inspections
- The level of food safety information provided during the assessments
- Service/working relationship satisfaction

Analysis of the pilot study data was conducted by OCPHS program evaluation staff.

## Results of PTV Pilot Studies

Upon realizing that traditional inspections didn't focus on the behaviors and practices that contribute to foodborne illness (FBI), OCPHS began developing an approach to **assess and improve the operators' level of Active Managerial Control**. This methodology includes:

- An announced food safety assessment (versus the traditional inspection)
- A sit-down discussion about "systems" for controlling foodborne illness risk factors with the operator
- A walk through to verify what we heard during the discussion
- Imbedding education into the process
- Assigning a P, T & V rating for each risk factor
- Establishing a long-term risk control plan for any PTV rating of 'needs improvement'



### Comments from Horizon Operators

- "My eyes were opened to areas that need to be worked on for food safety."
- "The inspector helped me make better decisions in my kitchen and food handling."
- "They [inspectors] are there to help."

### Comments from Olmsted County Operators

- "I found out specific solutions to any conditions that we may have that need to be changed."
- "[I learned about] certain areas that need to be monitored more carefully."
- "Every time I learn something new."

### Comments from Horizon Operators

- "Being able to sit with the inspector and talk openly, I felt I could understand better in a calm environment. Not an environment where they are looking to find only wrong things."
- "[I] was able to talk about ways to improve training to new and old employees."
- "This, by far, was the best and most informational inspection I have had in the 14 years I have been in business! Thanks!"

### Comments from Olmsted County Operators

- "My kitchen staff learned more from our last scheduled inspection than all other inspections combined!"
- "The sit-down portion allows me to understand reasons for things and the ability to ask questions. During the staff portion of the visit, my employees could do the same. After the visit they all said 'wow' that was sure informative."
- "I think the scheduled inspection allows the inspector and myself more time to discuss various concerns that related specifically to my operation."



### Thoughts from the HPH Inspection Staff

- "After our discussion 6 (out of 29) operators decided to expand and rewrite their employee illness policy."
- "Owner/CFM said in 6 years he had never had the chance to be included in an inspection. He liked the ability to ask why we have requested certain things. He said it helps them to know where and what to put a priority on."
- "The manager was very impressed by this process. She encouraged us to continue to conduct PTV assessments."
- "Discussed [risk factors] with operators around developing a better system to verify proper cooking and proper cooling."

## Conclusions

More foodborne illness (FBI) risk factors were identified when discussions about policies/procedures, training and verification were included in Horizon Public Health's inspection process. The FBI risk factors - employee illness, cooking and cooling would essentially not have been identified without discussion. This is similar to the findings of the OCPHS study where a majority of the risk factors present during assessments were identified by discussion versus observation. Some of these risk factors are difficult or even impossible to find by observation alone. The study indicates that the outcome can be attributed to incorporating the use of discussion to better assess FBI risk factor control. The results also show an inverse relationship between the number of low-risk good retail practices/facility conditions cited and the number of foodborne illness risk factors identified.

## Lessons Learned

- The PTV methodology promotes an inspection/assessment that is more focused on foodborne illness risk factors.
- A scheduled PTV assessment prompts operators to make food safety improvements.
- A PTV rating rules/policy is needed to promote interrater reliability for PTV ratings.
- The time needed for a PTV food safety assessment is longer than the time needed for a traditional inspection.
- Timing of the assessment is critical to ensure opportunities for observations and discussions.
- The number of establishments in the pilot study was low. Further study should include a larger number of operations and will require more time.

## Next Steps

- Work to improve AMC in retail food establishments continues via a cooperative agreement with the Food and Drug Administration
- Would like to conduct another pilot project/study
- Programming of the PTV inspection form into an electronic inspection software package that is used by many local health agencies in Minnesota

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