

Frequently Asked Questions

Food Handler Education or Training Program

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/food-handlers/default.aspx>

1. Who must obtain food handler training?

The Texas Department of State Health Services (TXDSSH), under Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER) §228.33, requires that ‘...all food employees shall successfully complete an accredited food handler training course, within 60 days of employment.’

2. Who is a food employee?

Food employee is an individual working with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food-contact surfaces under TFER §228.2(56)

3. Who is exempt from food handler training?

The following are exempt from food handler training requirement:

- Certified Food Manager
- Food establishment that only serves pre-packaged items

The following are exempt from food handler training as long as they are supervised by a person who has had either food handler training or is a Certified Food Manager:

- Individuals with an Intellectual Disability
- Persons in a rehabilitation or correctional facility that work with food or food related items as part of their rehabilitation
- Persons who aid in activities of daily living (ADLs) (such as but not limited to certified nurse assistants, nurses, etc.)
- Persons who distribute pre-portioned food items in settings such as but not limited to classrooms, daycare, and similar facilities.
- Volunteers, those individuals that work with food or food related items but are not employed by the food establishment

4. Where can I take an accredited food handler program?

An accredited food handler education or training program may be taken at any program listed on the Food Establishments Group website. A link to the website is provided at the top of this page.

5. What is an accredited program?

A food handler education or training program approved by TXDSHS or by American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

6. Can a food handler program be taken on the Internet?

Yes, accredited training providers may offer training on the internet. All internet training providers, along with traditional classroom training providers will be listed on the website listed above.

7. What will I receive to indicate that I've completed training through an accredited program?

A food handler card or certificate issued by an accredited program will vary in size and color. However, all food handler cards or certificates issued are required to have the food handler program name, address and either a TXDSHS Accreditation License Number or ANSI listed on the card or certificate.

8. Does a food handler card or certificate issued by an accredited food handler program receive reciprocity?

Food Handler Cards or certificates issued by an accredited program shall be recognized statewide by regulatory authorities as the valid proof of successful completion of an accredited food handler education or training program under Texas Health and Safety Code §438.046. A registry of TXDSHS accredited programs and ANSI link are also posted on this website link at the top of this page.

Food Handler Cards or certificates issued outside the state of Texas receive reciprocity if the education or training program is an ANSI accredited.

9. The Texas Food Establishment Rules require specific training for bare hand contact of ready-to-eat foods. Do the accredited food handler programs meet this training requirement?

All accredited food handler programs are required to meet the training requirements for bare hand contact of ready-to-eat foods as defined in §228.38(c).

10. My food establishment procedures include bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. What training is required for my food handlers?

All food handlers who contact ready-to-eat food must receive training in the risks associated with this procedure including proper handwashing as specified under §228.38(b), and when to

wash their hands as specified under §228.38(d). The specific requirements are addressed in the Texas Food Establishment Rules, §228.65, Preventing contamination by employees.

11. How long is my food handler card or certificate valid?

The food handler card or certificate is valid up to the expiration date listed on the card or certificate. If the card or certificate does not bare an expiration date, then the card or certificate is valid for two (2) years from date of issuance under 25 TAC §229.178 relating to Accreditation of Food Handler Education or Training Programs

12. How will a food establishment show proof that employees have taken Food handler education or training program?

The food establishment shall maintain on premises a certificate of completion of the food handler training course for each food employee under §228.33 relating to Certified Food Protection Manager and Food Handler Requirements.

The format of this documentation can be hard copy or electronic, but must be onsite, accessible and available upon request by a regulatory authority.

13. What if I lose my food handler card or certificate?

Candidates who have taken an accredited Food Handler Training or Education Program must contact the training provider for instructions on how to obtain a replacement food handler card.