



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SECTION

### EHS Circular Letter #2008-38

Date: August 19, 2008

To: Directors of Health  
Chief Sanitarians  
Certified Food Service Inspectors

From: Roger Mshar R.S.  
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Re: Updated Guidelines for Reporting and Controlling Ill Food Workers

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As a result of a recent inquiry from a local director of health, this circular letter is intended to provide current regulatory guidance for reporting and controlling ill food workers.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published data, infected food employees are the source of contamination in approximately 25% of the foodborne disease outbreaks with a bacterial or viral cause. Identified risk factors that allow contamination of food by viral, bacterial and parasitic agents shed by infected food workers, include: bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food and poor or nonexistent hand washing procedures.

A key public health intervention and risk factor control identified by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prevent foodborne outbreaks involves implementing employee health controls including the exclusion and reporting of ill food workers.

#### Connecticut Public Health Code (PHC) Reporting and Control Requirements for Ill Food Workers

PHC Section 19-13-B42(r) addresses both exclusion of ill food workers from all food service establishments as well as reporting requirements to the local director of health.

Reporting – In addition to the requirements for reporting and controlling the reportable diseases as described in PHC Section 19a-36-A-1 through 19a-36-A12, PHC Section 19-13-B42(r) specifically requires (in pertinent part) that, “if the management of the food service establishment has reason to suspect that any employee has contracted any disease in a communicable form or has become a carrier of such disease, he shall notify the local director of health immediately.” This requirement is also specified on the Focused Food Service Inspection (FFI) form under item #12 (C), “communicable disease of workers reported to local health director.”

Exclusion and Control – PHC Section 19-13-B42 (r) requires (in pertinent part) that “no person while affected with any disease in a communicable form or while a carrier of such disease...shall work in any area of a food service establishment in any capacity in which there is a likelihood of such person contaminating food, drink or food contact surfaces with pathogenic organisms or transmitting disease to other individuals; and no person known or suspected of being affected with any such disease or condition shall be employed in such an area or capacity...” The requirement is also specified on the FFI form under item#12(B).



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Director of Health's Authority and Responsibility - PHC Section 19-13-B42 (r) further requires (in pertinent part) that "...when the local director of health has reasonable cause to suspect (the) possibility of disease transmission from any food service establishment employee, such director of health shall secure a morbidity history of the suspected employee or make other investigations as may be indicated and take appropriate action ..." Some of the appropriate pertinent actions described further in the regulations include:

- (1) the immediate exclusion of the employee from all food service establishments;
- (2) the immediate closure of the food service establishment concerned until in the opinion of the director of health, no further danger of disease outbreak exists;
- (3) the restriction of the employee's services to some area of the food service establishment where there would be no danger of transmitting disease; and
- (4) adequate medical and laboratory examinations of the employee, or other employees, and of his and their body discharges.

### Guidance for Evaluating and Controlling Ill Food Workers

The majority of ill food workers will most likely be identified as part of a suspected foodborne disease outbreak investigation or as a follow-up on a report of laboratory findings or a medical report of a confirmed case involving a reportable disease.

In addition, local certified food inspectors have been trained and standardized to use the FFI form to evaluate food employee health during each inspection. The evaluation includes an assessment of knowledge of foodborne illness, employee health, and the reporting and exclusion policy for all food workers.

In some cases a food worker may report undiagnosed vomiting and/or diarrhea to the manager. It is the responsibility of the food manager to report the potential food worker illness to the local director of health and to exclude or restrict the ill food worker until cleared by the local director of health. The local director of health is responsible for evaluating the employee's symptoms, any medical diagnosis, laboratory results that are available, and to determine when the food worker may be cleared to return to work. The local director of health may confer with the Department of Public Health (DPH) Epidemiology Program (860-509-7994) and the Food Protection Program (860-509-7297) for assistance in determining proper measures for controlling ill food workers and necessary conditions for returning ill food workers back to work.

Please find attached an updated guideline prepared by the DPH Epidemiology Program to assist in controlling ill food workers. Any questions about the guideline should be directed to the Epidemiology Program.

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