



The Center of Excellence for
**FOOD SAFETY RESEARCH IN
CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

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School Foodservice Directors' Food Recall Attitudes & Behaviors

Introduction

- More than 31.8 million lunches are served daily in the United States through the National School Lunch Program.
- The foods distributed through this programs account for 15% to 20% of the food served in schools.
- When USDA foods are involved in a food recall, there could be a significant health impact to the children who benefit from these programs.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore school foodservice directors' attitudes and behaviors about food recalls. Specific questions included:

1. What attitudes do school foodservice directors have about food recalls and handling food recalls?
2. What are their levels of confidence in responding to a recall?
3. How many directors are registered for Recalls.gov, FoodSafety.gov, and the USDA/FNS Commodity Alert System?

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Methodology

- The population for this study included school foodservice directors in the United States, the sample consisted of 3,700 school foodservice directors.
- The survey instrument consisted of three sections: attitudes, behaviors, and demographics.
- SurveyMonkey™ was used for online data collection.
- All statistical analysis was completed using SPSS (v. 20.0).

Results

- 567 surveys were usable (17% response rate), of these 467 (84%) were female.
- The size of school districts ranged from 85 to 225,000 students, with 6,108 students on average.
- Most directors had positive attitudes, with approximately 92% of directors strongly agreeing that responding quickly to a food recall is important to protect children.
- Most (80%) directors strongly agreed that it is important to monitor recall notifications, however strongly disagreed when asked how likely it would be for a recalled product to be in their school's inventory.

Results, Continued

- Approximately 89% of directors' were mostly confident or very confident that their district could adequately respond to a food recall.
- 79% indicated their district has appropriate policies/procedures in place to respond to a food recall.
- Few directors utilized food safety recall systems (Recalls.gov or FoodSafety.gov).
 - While 55% regularly or very often utilize these systems, 23% indicated that they seldom or never do.
- Directors stated communication with their state agency, vendor, other districts, and school nutrition staff worked well.
- Directors preferred to know only information pertinent to them and preferred that it be sent directly to them.
- Email notification was stated as being the fastest, with timeliness being stressed.

Application

- This study further illustrates the need for more training for school foodservice directors related to food recalls and product management within the district.
- Federal and state agencies can use the results of this study in developing programs to improve food recall practices.