

RESTROOM HANDWASHING FACILITIES IN PROXIMITY TO SCHOOL CAFETERIAS

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Introduction

- Hand contamination is often associated with pathogenic transfer and subsequent widespread infections (Lee & Greig, 2010).
- Effective handwashing is paramount to a school's health and food safety program and key to preventing illnesses.
- Simple barriers such as broken faucets or lack of hand washing supplies may inhibit hand hygiene (Master, Longe, & Dickson, 1997).
- The design of handwashing and drying equipment, such as manually-operated devices, may contribute to the spread of illnesses among children (Bright, Boone, & Gerba, 2010).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess a national sample of handwashing facilities near school cafeterias.

Methodology

- Six researchers observed 60 male and female bathroom facilities located in 34 school districts.
- Researchers documented the number of hand sinks, functioning soap and sanitizer dispensers, and hand drying devices.
- Soap and sanitizer dispensers with and without available product were documented, including functioning automatic vs. manually-operated air dryers and faucets.
- Running water temperatures at hand sinks were gathered at 10- and 60-second intervals.
- Visible cues and signage for handwashing were noted.
- Restroom entryways were assessed if hand contact for entry or exit was required (e.g. handles, knobs, or push plates).

Results

- One functioning hand sink and soap dispenser was observed in all facilities.
- Most (n=55) soap dispensers contained product, while five did not.
- Only three facilities provided hand sanitizer.
- Most sinks (n=44) had manually-operated faucets.
- Ten second water temperature reading: 56°F to 112°F (M = 80.8 °F ± 14.4 °F)
- Sixty second water temperature reading: 57°F to 135°F (M = 88.4 °F ± 19.2 °F)
- Paper towels were available in 46 bathrooms and air dryers in nine. Three bathrooms had no form of hand drying available.
- Handwashing signs were observed in only 16 bathrooms.

Conclusions

- Opportunities exist to improve conditions in school restroom facilities to encourage handwashing.
- Directors and school personnel can use these findings to evaluate their facilities and develop possible interventions.