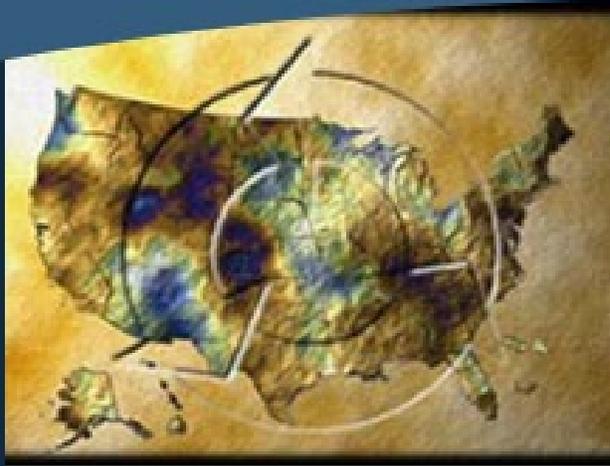


December 2023

PSRC Digest

Updates from FoodSHIELD's Program Standards Resource Center



The Digest—

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Congrats to Iowa DIA P.6

Food Safety Podcasts P.7

FDA Updates

Self-Assessment Verification Audit Workshops

The Self-Assessment Verification Audit (SAVA) Workshop is designed for state, local, territorial, and tribal regulatory agencies enrolled in the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards. The workshop gives participants an in-depth overview of all nine Standards and how they provide a framework for continuous quality improvement for regulatory programs. The course shows participants how to identify gaps during the self-assessment so that they can set goals to enhance their program, increasing the safety and security of the food supply at retail.

FDA will offer three virtual SAVA workshops in 2024:

- February 20 – February 23, 2024 (daily, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET)
- March 26 – March 29, 2024 (daily, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET)
- April 30 – May 3, 2024 (daily, 11:00 AM – 5:00PM ET)

Registration for the February workshop opened November 27, and the course is currently full, with a waitlist. If you registered, a training officer will let you know if you're confirmed for the course. If you didn't make the roster, don't worry, there are other courses available. Registration for the March and April sessions will open soon, and there are two in-person sessions offered during the AFDO and NEHA AECs.

For those of you who make the roster and find out you cannot attend, please reach out so we can move someone up from the waitlist.

If you are looking for additional training options in the Program Standards, you can take the self-paced SAVA courses on [LearnED](#), or reach out to your [Retail Food Specialist](#).



PSRC Additions

Thank you to everyone who shared materials during the past quarter. Below are the new tools and resources uploaded to the PSRC. Please [log in to the Program Standards Resource Center](#) to access them.

Help your fellow retail food programs by uploading tools, policies, or other resources. If you have questions about how to upload or access materials on the PSRC, please contact one of our Retail Food Specialists who provide site support, [Jon Tran](#) or [Alisha Johnson](#).

Standard 5

Document Name	Author	State
BRHD Foodborne Illness Plan_2022FoodShield	Victoria Tourville	Virginia

Standard 7

Document Name	Author	State
Food Advisory Committee Invite	Rike Sterrett	Massachusetts

Standard 8

Document Name	Author	State
Standard 8 Resource Assessment Workbook	Victoria Tourville	Virginia

Standard 9

Document Name	Author	State
BRHD Baseline Risk Factor Study 2022	Victoria Tourville	Virginia

Standard 9 – Tulsa Health Department Risk Factor Study and Standard 9 Workbook

Document Name	Author	State
Standard 9 Methods 23-0929 Branded	Rebekah Patton	Oklahoma
Risk Factor Study References 22-0519	Rebekah Patton	Oklahoma
Risk Factor Study Profiles Explained V2 2023	Rebekah Patton	Oklahoma
Risk Factor Profile – Anonymous	Rebekah Patton	Oklahoma
Standard 9 Report 22-0104-1	Rebekah Patton	Oklahoma

PSRC Additions (continued)

Standard 9 – Intervention Folder, Rockingham County NC Folder

Document Name	Author	State
Establishing Active Managerial Control	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Rockingham County Intervention Strategies from 2021 Risk Factor Study	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Stickers-cool-foods-quickly	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Stickers-cool-foods-quickly-Spanish	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Stickers-cool-foods-quickly-Chinese	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Rockingham County Food Decals 2021	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Rockingham County Food Decals 2021 - Spanish	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Rockingham County Food Decals 2021 - Chinese	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
RCHD Food Decals_2022_v1	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Food Storage Order Walk-in - Spanish	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Food Storage Order Walk-in - English	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Food Storage Order Walk-in - Chinese	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Employee Health Poster – Spanish V2	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Employee Health Poster – English V2	Meg McGuire	North Carolina
Employee Health Poster – Chinese	Meg McGuire	North Carolina

Program Standards in Action

Congratulations to Richmond County

Earlier this year, Richmond County, North Carolina, met all nine Retail Program Standards. Alisha Johnson, a Retail Food Specialist and PSRC administrator, had a chance to speak with Traci Stevens about her county's accomplishment.

Alisha: *Traci—first off, congratulations. This is huge. I am so happy for you and thrilled that you were willing to do an article for the newsletter. I think it will be helpful and encouraging for jurisdictions to hear from you since Richmond County is a small jurisdiction. Would you talk about the things that you think were easier or harder, given Richmond's size, and what advice you have for smaller jurisdictions?*

Traci: Some people have asked us how we met all nine standards even though we are from a small health department. The population of Richmond County is only 42,184, and we have only two full-time staff members working in the Food and Lodging Program. In our experience, the difficulty of meeting each standard varies depending on which one you are working on. For instance, Standard 2 was relatively easy for us as a smaller jurisdiction, but Standard 6 was more challenging because we do not have a large inventory of establishments to draw from. However, we believe that meeting all nine standards is achievable for every jurisdiction, provided that the program is willing to assess their needs and tackle each obstacle one at a time.



Alisha: *What was your strategy to accomplish all nine? How did you prioritize areas to work on?*

Traci: Richmond County has been enrolled in the Voluntary National Retail Program Standards for the past decade, completing two comprehensive self-assessments in the process. In the first five years, our jurisdiction actively engaged in mentorships and collaborated with the network in North Carolina to develop policies and workbooks piloted throughout the state. We also developed strategies to meet each standard, successfully implementing policies within our jurisdiction that met Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9. We began with Standard 1, comparing North Carolina's Food Code to the FDA's. Richmond County does credit the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services for pursuing the adoption of the Food Code. In the same year, we had Standard 5 audited after working with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Food Defense Coordinator to update procedures, protocols, and tabletop exercises. Over the next few years, we worked on two standards per year until our new self-assessment was due. Although we did not meet all the standards, we identified the needs required to be successful in the standards we did not meet. Our director advocated for additional staff to assist with the growing need for mandated work. After completing our second self-assessment, our jurisdiction had already established the policies and procedures necessary for the standards previously met. We started with the standards we knew we would meet easily, such as Standards 3, 5, and 7, and then moved on to our risk factor study. In 2021, the North Carolina Food Protection and Facilities Branch adopted the new Food Code, allowing our jurisdiction to meet Standard 1. We assessed each standard left and found that our jurisdiction met most of the elements within each standard. From there, we worked on one standard at a time, beginning with Standards 2, 4, and 5, leaving only Standards 6 and 8. With the addition of new staff, we trained to the expectations of elements in Standard 4 and Standard 6. Training staff, which is a part of Standard 2, helps achieve Standards 6 and 8, ultimately meeting all nine standards.

Alisha: *You mentioned networks and mentorships. Would you talk a little more about those resources and other tools you used?*

Traci: Richmond County successfully utilized a range of valuable tools and resources to achieve our goals. We participated in the Mentorship program both as a Mentee and a Mentor, which fostered collaborative relationships with other jurisdictions. This enabled us to achieve conformance with the Retail Program Standards by learning from the more experienced jurisdictions. Additionally, we participated in the North Carolina Retail Program Standards Network, which provided a platform for everyone to work together toward achieving the same goal. This network enabled us to share strategies, resources, and templates, which resulted in consistency and saved time by avoiding duplicated work. The FoodSHIELD Program Standards Resource Center proved to be an invaluable resource, as it provided us with policies and templates needed for Standards we did not meet, which were not available in other North Carolina jurisdictions. Lastly, the presence of an excellent FDA Retail Food Specialist in the region was the most significant resource, as they were able to direct us to the right people who could truly help us. This resource for having prompt interpretations is missed. The Retail Specialist built up the confidence for our jurisdiction to resolve to move ahead and know when we met the elements strongly.

Alisha: *Between the network, your specialist, and the Resource Center, you were able to overcome challenges. What challenges did you face?*

Traci: Our jurisdiction has faced numerous challenges, such as insufficient staffing for mandated inspections, budget constraints, overcoming COVID-related obstacles, and inadequate resources for complying with the Voluntary National Retail Program Standards. When working with a small workforce, time becomes crucial in managing staff workload and meeting jurisdictional goals. Staff members had to prioritize mandated tasks first; however, their diligent efforts resulted in a high standard of work, which significantly reduced the time our senior staff members spent evaluating program standards. That said, we also addressed this challenge by reviewing staffing levels within the program standards and determined we needed additional people. In the past decade, we received funding that helped to increase the number of inspectors on our team, allowing our senior staff to focus on reducing the risk factors that contribute to foodborne illnesses and promoting active managerial control over these risk factors. We also dealt with challenges by engaging the entire team while developing and implementing long-term goals, and by using our network in North Carolina established by our Retail Food Specialist, Donna Wanucha. The network helped jurisdictions collaborate and support each other in meeting the Program Standards.

Alisha: *So clearly there were benefits to your department working on the standards. You got funding and additional staff. Would you speak a little more to that?*

Traci: The benefits of working on the standards were finding gaps within our program and implementing change. The Retail Program Standards are designed to bolster operational and environmental prerequisite programs, emphasizing mitigating the risk factors that lead to foodborne illnesses. Richmond County has seen a reduction in out-of-compliance risk factors since enrolling in the Program Standards. Richmond County has gained the knowledge and resources to maintain a strong retail food program. Lastly, the Retail Program Standards provide a common language at national conferences where you can gain great ideas that may benefit your program.

Alisha: *After the benefits roll in, it's easy to show why one should work on the Standards, but sometimes it's hard to get buy-in from elected officials and senior leaders early on. How did you do that?*

Traci: The standards enable our jurisdiction to concentrate on areas that require enhancement. To gain support from elected officials, senior leaders, and the community, the Environmental Health Director of Richmond County presented the Voluntary National Retail Program Standards to bring value and positive change to the organization. The success stories of other jurisdictions that have implemented the program were showcased to underscore its effectiveness in benefiting both the jurisdictions and their employees. During our self-assessment, we identified areas for improvement within our program. We have since had the chance to report on the progress made to the Board of Health and Human Resources on an annual basis. Additionally, Risk Factor Studies were conducted in 2015 and 2020 to measure risk factors in the retail food community. Our website offers numerous interventions, and these are prominently displayed in our restaurants. County officials have even seen our printed job aids firsthand when they entered food establishments.

Alisha: *Wow. Phenomenal. So now that you have done it—you've knocked out all nine; what's next for you guys? How has this experience changed your public health journey?*



Traci: It is time to conduct another comprehensive assessment of our program. In 2024, our self-assessment will be due again, where we will get to start all over. Our goal is to continue to maintain and meet all nine standards. This experience has altered our trajectory in the field of public health, as we have shifted our dedication towards delivering a high-quality service rather than prioritizing the volume of work accomplished. Along the way, our regulatory authority has had the opportunity to collaborate with many devoted and committed public health specialists. The journey has been a source of inspiration for our staff, affirming their impact and contribution to protecting public health. The credibility afforded in meeting the Retail Programs Standards helps the standing of our program in our community, at the state level, among network colleagues, and just like we are doing here, provides an opportunity to share the story and encourage others. Any jurisdiction can have these achievements, too.

Alisha: *I love so much of what you just said. Altering your delivery to high-quality service over volume of work, collaboration, and the fact that your staff can feel their impact on public health—excellent—and really shifting toward outcome-driven metrics. I so appreciate your willingness to share your accomplishment with us. Again congratulations, and excellent work.*



Congratulations to Richmond County!

Traci Stevens, REHS
Traci.Stevens@richmondnc.com

Congratulations to the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing for meeting all nine standards as well in 2023!

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Service
Food and Drug Administration**

Certificate of Achievement

Presented to

Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing

For outstanding commitment to retail food safety and the continuous improvement of the retail food regulatory program as demonstrated by meeting

All Nine Standards

Of the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

Mike Nordos
Mike Nordos R.S.
Retail Food Specialist

Laurie Farmer
Laurie Farmer
Director, Office of State Cooperative Programs



The Back Page

We'd love to post information about conferences and trainings, Program Standards accomplishments, and requests for auditors and materials. If you have something to share, please reach out to your Specialist or [the site administrators](#).

ORASpeaks Podcast:

The ORASpeaks podcast features stories and perspectives from FDA's frontline employees protecting public health. The latest episode is entitled "What is SAVA?" Collaborations between the FDA, other agencies, and state, local, territorial, and tribal partners are key to promoting public health. Listen about the latest collaboration that birthed an on-demand course series geared towards conducting self-assessment and verification audits (SAVA) of the FDA Retail Food Programs Standards. Guests: Steve Natrass (FDA), Deirdra Holloway (FDA), Anna Floyd (NEHA) and Jason Reagan (GNR Public Health). (Episode Date: 8-22-23). <https://www.fda.gov/media/171698/download>

Food Safety Matters Podcast:

Ep. 151: Behavioral Science of Food Safety in Small-Scale Retail Foodservice - This episode of Food Safety Matters, we are joined by an FDA official, a county-level environmental health regulator, and a retail food industry association representative to discuss the research and application of behavioral science with food employees and regulatory agencies to reduce foodborne illness risk factors at smaller retail foodservice businesses. <https://www.food-safety.com/articles/8781-ep-151-pierce-morales-and-quam-behavioral-science-of-food-safety-in-small-scale-retail-foodservice>

Ep. 154: 30th Anniversary and Ongoing Implementation of FDA's Food Code - This episode of Food Safety Matters features a discussion about the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Food Code in light of its 30th anniversary. We are joined by two retail food safety regulators from FDA and two environmental health specialists with experience in Food Code adoption and implementation. <https://www.food-safety.com/articles/8900-ep-154-guzzle-ham-lewis-pierce-30th-anniversary-and-ongoing-implementation-of-fdas-food-code>

Reader's Note: The FDA does not review materials posted on the Program Standards Resource Center or endorse any products or services discussed in the newsletter. The intent of the PSRC Digest is to share information and highlight work done by state, local, territorial, and tribal entities; it is not for marketing purposes.

