

The Importance of the FDA Food Code

Every four years, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) publishes new [editions](#) of the FDA Food Code, a set of best practices designed to reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses from retail food establishments, provide a uniform standard for food safety, and establish a standardized method for conducting food safety regulatory inspections. Between full editions, the FDA may publish Food Code Supplements that update, modify, or clarify provisions of the current FDA Food Code.

Most state and territory food safety regulations are based on the FDA Food Code, which guides state and territorial leaders in formulating jurisdictional-specific food safety regulations. Jurisdictions can adopt the FDA Food Code in [two ways](#): short-form (i.e., adopting the code by reference) and long-form (i.e., adopting the code section-by-section). To help track the states and territories that have implemented different versions of the FDA Food Code, the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative (see below) developed a [Food Code Adoption Map](#).

FDA Food Code: 2022 Updates

The [2022 FDA Food Code](#) has several significant updates, such as revised definitions to “intact meat,” new definitions to “in-shell product” and “tobacco product,” addition of subparts to address food donations, sections amended for clarity, new sections on manufacturer cooking instructions, significant changes to major food allergen notifications, and new requirements for the allowance of pet dogs in outdoor dining spaces. The full summary of changes can be found [here](#).

Why is Adoption of and Compliance with the FDA Food Code Important?

There are [benefits](#) for both governmental entities and the food industry when state, territorial, local, and tribal governments completely adopt the FDA Food Code. Cross-cutting benefits include food safety regulations reflecting the most current science, coordinated and collaborative processes and input from all stakeholders, effective controls to reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses, and a comprehensive approach to food safety. Regulatory benefits include conserving resources through universal inspection tools, more efficient processes for updating laws and regulations, and increased eligibility for federal resources through continual commitment to food safety.

A significant benefit of complete adoption of the 2022 FDA Food Code is the potential for immensely reducing the incidence and burden of foodborne illnesses. [A study](#) in the *Journal of Food Protection* found that states that had adopted specific provisions of the 2013 FDA Food Code had lower average norovirus outbreak rates than states that had not adopted those provisions. These findings support that adoption of the most recent model food code reduces the spread of disease through enhanced oversight.

These changes can also reduce the economic burden associated with foodborne illness. USDA’s Economic Research Service [reports](#) that the 15 most common foodborne pathogens account for 9 million cases of foodborne illness and a \$17.6 billion loss (in 2018 dollars).

[Additional benefits](#) of adopting the 2022 FDA Food Code include better compliance of standards for retail food safety due to their uniformity, elimination of redundant processes for establishing food

safety criteria, and a more standardized approach to inspections and audits of food safety establishments.

State Spotlight: Georgia Department of Public Health

Georgia has 159 counties and all follow the Georgia Department of Public Health's State Foodservice Rules and Regulations, Chapter 511-6-1, operating under a version of the 2013 FDA Food Code. According to Georgia food safety officials, unifying these counties under the same food safety regulations is important because: 1) the FDA Food Code is based on science and emphasizes the importance of controlling the five major risk factors linked to foodborne illness outbreaks, as identified by CDC; 2) operating under the FDA Food Code allows for standardization of training and inspections statewide.

FDA's Resources for 2022 Food Code Adoption

A [recent FDA report](#) showed that only 18 states and two territories had adopted the most recent version of the FDA Food Code, as of 2021. To assist states and territories in adopting the FDA Food Code, FDA has released multiple resources, such as online training module [Decoding the Food Code: Information to Assist the User](#), meant to familiarize government officials and industry representatives with the format and terminology of the FDA Food Code. Additional assistance and training resources can be found [here](#). Regulatory agencies can contact members of FDA's National Retail Food Team with inquiries regarding the 2022 FDA Food Code by emailing retailfoodprotectionteam@fda.hhs.gov or by contacting a [Retail Food Specialist](#) in FDA's Retail Food Protection Branches.

The Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative and Resources

The Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative (Collaborative) serves as an additional resource for state and territorial health officials. The Collaborative brings together representatives from seven member organizations with a role in improving retail food safety in the United States. They leverage their combined strengths and resources to create and share the tools that state, local, and territorial jurisdictions can use to improve food safety. The Collaborative's work on its six objectives is poised to influence or benefit regulatory food safety programs and the food safety culture at restaurants and other retail food establishments.

The Collaborative consists of the following organizations cooperating on a national adoption strategy to increase enrollment, participation, and conformance to the [Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards](#), a framework for creating a highly effective and responsive food regulatory program: Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Conference for Food Protection (CFP), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and National Environmental Health Association (NEHA).

Helpful resources from the Collaborative include a [Food Code Adoption Toolkit](#) that was developed to alleviate the obstacles associated with FDA Food Code adoption as well the [Foodborne Illness Outbreak Resource Library](#), a collection of resources that support foodborne outbreak investigations.