

ME Mentorship Participants

Portland Public Health Division (ME)

Background

State: Maine

LHD Population Size Served: 62,214

Number of Retail Food Establishments Inspected: ~500

Retail Program Standards Met/Working On: 4, 6, 7, Self-Assessment

Enrolled in the Retail Program Standards: 2013

The mission of the Public Health Division of the City of Portland is to improve the health of individuals, families and the community through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats.

The size of the jurisdiction varies by public health program activity. The geographic boundaries of Portland define the jurisdiction for food service inspections. This includes four islands, 52.6 square miles, 66,214 permanent residents, a daytime population of approximately 125,000 and over 3 million visitors each year.

They inspect mobile and stationary food service establishments, such as restaurants, school cafeterias, food trucks, and pushcarts. We also inspect temporary food service establishments, such as vendors at fairs, festivals and other temporary events. Currently, there are 500 restaurants, 30 pushcarts and 10 food trucks. Approximately, 300 temporary food service establishment licenses are issued, annually.

The State of Maine Department Health and Human Services delegates its authority to the City of Portland through a Memorandum of Agreement. The City of Portland also has a municipal food ordinance that can be more stringent, but not less than the state law.

The Public Health Division has approximately 90 staff. The Food Service Inspections program has 1.5 FTE. There is a full-time Health Inspector and a part-time Health Inspector, who is also the Program Manager.

Role in Mentorship Program

Portland participated in the NACCHO Retail Program Standards Mentorship Program as a mentee in third cohort and was mentored by Vineland Health Department (NJ).

Lessons Learned/Tips

The final findings are yet to be seen. We've only sown the seeds and will see the fruits of our labors in the years to come. Our mentor and other health departments were very generous with their time and materials. I've shared what I've learned with the State of Maine and they have benefited too. This opportunity has enhanced the relationship between our local and state health departments. Collectively, we have much clearer standard operating procedures and outreach materials compared to before starting the mentorship program. For example, the Maine Food Code described the need of a variance, but provided no formal process for businesses to apply. We collected examples from around the nation and molded a new document and process with the State of Maine to meet the need. This will benefit our community in many ways, including consistent enforcement activities to protect the public's health.

Contact

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Link: <http://portlandmaine.gov/594/Food-Safety-Food-Service-Inspections>