



Health Department
Environmental Health Services Division
Environmental Public Health Program

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FAQs: “Free Hot Soup” & The Importance of Safe Food Handling Practices

Updated 11/16/18 to reflect new developments and respond to additional questions and comments received.

Why is the Health Department trying to shut down “Free Hot Soup” and prevent its members from serving those experiencing homelessness?

This is simply not the case. The Health Department has no problem with members of “Free Hot Soup” serving food in public parks, providing they obtain the proper permits. There are several other charitable organizations who have the proper permits and serve food in these very same parks.

Why did the Health Department pour bleach on food for the homeless?

While the use of bleach may be alarming, it is a common practice used by public health departments throughout the country when responding to direct threats to public health from potentially contaminated food. The inspector at one location was told food would be re-served after being placed in trash bags, therefore the inspector had to use bleach to ensure the food in question would not be served.

In response to residents’ concerns, **The Health Department has reviewed its food disposal practices during inspections. In the future, inspectors will no longer use bleach in these types of situations.**

Why does the Kansas City Health Department require permits when serving food to the public?

The Health Department believes everyone, including those experiencing homelessness, deserve the reassurance of food safety practices. Every year about 48 million cases of foodborne illness occur and approximately 3,000 people die. The vast majority of these illnesses and deaths could be prevented with proper training and basic safe food

handling practices, which is why we require individuals and organizations serving food to the public to have proper food handling training and permits. **EVERYONE deserves food that is safely prepared and served – whether you're having dinner in a local shelter or a 5-star restaurant.**

Do people need to pay for these permits?

The Department of Health is committed to helping any person or organization dedicated to serving food to those in need. **In addition to the free classes that are regularly offered, Health Department staff will conduct additional free classes for groups upon request. Online classes are also available. While these cost \$25, the Health Department will issue a voucher waiving the fee for individuals working with organizations serving those in need.** Call 816-513-6315 to register and receive a voucher for the class.

Why regulate food for the homeless, when they sometimes eat discarded food anyway?

In desperation, someone experiencing homelessness may resort to eating food that is unsafe. While that is an unfortunate reality, we believe that anyone wishing to help those in need should do what they can to make sure the food they provide is prepared safely. That doesn't change based on an individual's housing status. Individuals experiencing homelessness also often lack access to medical care, a nearby bathroom, a bed to rest in, or a change of clothes – all things that individuals experiencing food poisoning would hope to have.

How do I obtain a permit to serve food?

The Health Department offers FREE food handlers' cards and food service permits for individuals and organizations serving those in need. To determine what type of permit your group needs, contact our office at 816-513-6315.

Currently, we have partnered with 43 groups and organizations to obtain the required permits to safely serve food to those in need. And in recent weeks, that list has been growing.

How do I obtain food safety training and education for myself, group, or organization?

The Health Department provides food handling safety classes online and in-person.

ONLINE CLASSES: Online classes are available 24/7, in multiple languages. The Health Department will issue a voucher waiving the fee for individuals working with

organizations serving those in need. Find out more here: <http://kcmo.gov/health/food-handler-and-manager-training/online-food-handler-training/>

IN-PERSON CLASSES: FREE In-person classes are held regularly in English and Spanish at the Health Department (2400 Troost Ave, Suite 3200). A list of upcoming classes is listed below. To register and find out more visit our website: <http://kcmo.gov/health/food-handler-and-manager-training>

Food Handler Class

11/27/18	1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
12/11/18	9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
12/18/18	1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Food Manager Class for Group Leaders

12/6/18	9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
12/20/18	9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

How can I help in feeding those experiencing homelessness?

The Health Department encourages anyone who wants to offer direct help to those in need to partner with local permitted groups and organizations that follow food safety standards.

The Department has worked successfully with 43 groups and organizations that have completed training to serve food safely to the public. We've linked to as many of those groups as possible below:

Avondale United Methodist Church 4582
[Benilde Hall](#) 100077
[Bishop Sullivan Center](#) 108806
Bread of Life Food Pantry 103673
[Central Presbyterian Church Food Pantry](#) 107277
[Children's Memorial Lutheran Church](#) 108267
[City Union Mission](#) 104000
[City Union Mission Family Center](#) 2428
[City Union Mission Youth Dept](#) 109156
[Community Assistance Council](#) 108439
Community Fellowship Church of Jesus Christ 106815
[Guadalupe Center Kitchen](#) 100163
[Harvesters](#) 104240
[Hope City Deli](#) 107674
[Hope Faith Ministries](#) 105169
[Independence Boulevard Christian Church](#) 100016

[Kansas City Community Kitchen \(Nourish KC\)](#) 104792
[Kansas City Rescue Mission](#) 13380
[Kansas City Rescue Mission Women's Center](#) 106292
[Metropolitan Lutheran Ministry](#) 100064
[Morning Glory Ministries](#) 106074
MT Tabor Missionary Baptist Church 108403
[Operation Breakthrough Food Pantry](#) 107943
[Reconciliation Services](#) 108307
[Reconciliation Services Pantry](#) 108308
[Redemptorist Social Services Center](#) 102197
[ReDiscover](#) 107769
[Restart](#) 2690
[Salvation Army](#) 101165
[Salvation Army Linwood](#) 16643
[Seton Center](#) 107423
[Sheffield Family Life Center](#) 100492
St. James Place Pantry 104207
St. James Place Kitchen 104916
St. Louis Social Services Pantry 100013
Swope Park Imani House 30230
[The Salvation Army](#) 108201
[The Salvation Army Blue Valley](#) 4626
[True Light of the Nazarene](#) 104594
[Thelma's Kitchen](#) 109134
[Uplift Organization](#) 106818
[Vineyard Neighborhood Association Food Pantry](#) 106436
[Welcome Home](#) 108825

Why was Free Hot Soup inspected?

The Health Department performed its inspection in response to multiple complaints regarding Free Hot Soup serving throughout the City. When a complaint is made about any food service operation, the Health Department has a responsibility to investigate these complaints in order to protect and preserve the health of all Kansas City residents and visitors.

Free Hot Soup isn't a "Food Establishment," so why do they need a permit?

The Kansas City Missouri Food Code (Sec. 30-71) states a Food Establishment can be many things:

(i) Such as a restaurant; central preparation facility; catered feeding location; catering operation if the operation provides food directly to a consumer or to a conveyance used to transport people; market; vending (location) operation, if the operation provides

potentially hazardous foods; conveyance used to transport people; institution; or food bank.

“Free Hot Soup” served hot, prepared food at multiple locations to people beyond their friends and family--in other words, the public. Under the law, we consider this to be a “catered feeding location,” and therefore, a food establishment.

What laws/ordinances were broken?

The Kansas City Missouri Food Code (Sec. 30-71, 8-301.11) states “A PERSON may not operate a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT without a valid PERMIT to operate issued by the REGULATORY AUTHORITY. A PERMIT is required to apply for and obtain and pay for a separate FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMIT for each of the types of FOOD ESTABLISHMENT operations listed in subsections (1) through (12)”.

“Free Hot Soup” is considered to be a food establishment, as a “catered feeding location,” therefore requiring that they obtain a permit to serve food. Although Free Hot Soup was in violation of multiple ordinances, the Health Department chose to issue warnings, and did not issue a citation or a summons to appear in court. Future incidents may result in citations.

For individuals, groups, or organizations seeking to obtain a permit to operation, please contact us as 816-513-6315.

“Free Hot Soup” calls their events “family picnics,” so why do they need a permit and proper food safety training?

Free Hot Soup promotes their events on social media platforms and in public meetings, inviting the general public to attend. Because of this promotion and open invitation, they are operating just like any temporary food service event or food establishment within the City, which are all required to have health permits and proper food safety training and to protect the people they serve from foodborne illnesses.

Was “Free Hot Soup” notified of the required health permits to serve food to the public?

Yes. A representative of Free Hot Soup was notified of the requirement for health permits at the September 4th meeting of the North Blue Ridge Neighborhood Association. Furthermore, “Free Hot Soup” had [previously been ordered to stop operating in April of this year](#) by the Cass County Health Department for serving food to the public without the proper permitting at a motel in the City of Belton, Mo. Both Health Departments’ food laws are based on federal regulations set forth by the Food & Drug Administration.

Why were no food temperatures taken at the time of the investigation(s)?

During this inspection, the Health Department was focused on whether or not the group had the necessary permits for operation and whether or not the food was prepared in a permitted kitchen. The Health Department was unable to determine the sanitary conditions of the location in which the food was prepared, the food safety knowledge of those preparing the food, and the cooking, storing, and transportation temperatures of the food prior to arrival at the service location. Due to these factors, the Health Department could not knowingly allow the food to be served to the public.

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