

Fight BAC!™

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The Partnership for Food Safety Education is an ambitious public-private partnership created to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness by educating Americans about safe food handling practices. The partnership combines the resources of the federal government, food industry, and consumer organizations to conduct a broad-based food safety education campaign designed to reach men, women, and children of all ages.

The partnership was formed as a direct response to a 1996 independent panel report "Putting the Food Handling Issue on the Table: The Pressing Need for Food Safety Education" that specifically called for a public-private partnership to educate the public about safe food handling and preparation. The partnership was initiated in 1996 and officially launched with a Memorandum of Understanding signed on May 12, 1997 by Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, and Education Secretary Richard Riley, together with six food trade associations and three consumer/public health organizations.

The partnership is committed to making safe food handling meaningful to consumers through communications that are positive and upbeat. It utilizes multiple information channels, the mass media, public service announcements, the internet, point-of-purchase materials, and school and community outreach efforts to bring Americans face-to-face with the problem of foodborne illness and to motivate them to take action.

The partnership is funded by the contributions of food industry trade associations with technical assistance and in-kind support provided by government agencies and consumer organizations. It has enlisted a national network of public health, nutrition, food science, education and special constituency groups to leverage the campaign and greatly extend its reach.

At the Washington kickoff ceremony, on October 24, 1997 Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala joined with

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the other members of the Partnership for Food Safety Education to unveil the new character "BAC", which is the cornerstone of the public education campaign. The goal of the Fight BAC!™ campaign is to educate consumers on the problem of foodborne illness and motivate them to take basic sanitation and food handling steps that will reduce their risk of foodborne illness.

The Partnership for Food Safety Education launched the Fight BAC!™ campaign in conjunction with President Clinton's Food Safety Initiative, which is designed to assure the safety of food from the farm to the table.

The Fight BAC!™ campaign includes a 30-second television public service announcement (PSA) featuring a frustrated "BAC" trying unsuccessfully to spread contamination throughout the kitchen. The television spot highlights four basic safe food handling steps and tells viewers "if you want to stay healthy, you've gotta Fight BAC!™"

The four key principles for preparing and keeping food safe are:

- 1) wash hands and surfaces often;
- 2) prevent cross-contamination;
- 3) cook foods to proper temperatures; and
- 4) refrigerate promptly.

With these food safety principles as the focus, another campaign element is the food safety graphic which brings the four steps to life. The symbol was extensively tested with consumers and is designed for use in a wide variety of materials, from posters to point-of-purchase materials to refrigerator magnets. The campaign also features a web site – www.fightbac.org – where consumers, health professionals, educators and the media can learn the latest news about preventing foodborne illness.

More than 50 national, state and local organizations from the public health, government, consumer and industry sectors are supporting the Fight BAC!™ campaign and disseminate educational materials. These participants maximize the campaign's national outreach and provide important links into thousands of communities nationwide.

The Partnership for Food Safety Education is currently funded by the following industry organizations: The American Egg Board, American Meat Institute, Food Marketing Institute, International Food Safety Council/National Restaurant Association, National Broiler Council, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Private Label Manufactures

Association, Produce Marketing Association, The Soap and Detergent Association and the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association.

Since the Partnership for Food Safety Education was launched, a number of materials have been developed. Press kits, supermarket kits and community action kits are available that contain extensive backgrounders and fact sheets on food safety, the challenge of fighting foodborne illness, and the need for public education on safe food handling. In addition, each kit has reproducible artwork in various formats on the Fight BAC!™ campaign. All graphics are available at no cost if they are used for educational purposes. A royalty-based licensing agreement to use the graphics and the Fight BAC!™ character for marketing purposes is also available to commercial entities.

To help extend the food safety messages and encourage media coverage, USDA and FDA purchased full-sized costumes of the BAC character. Several organizations has borrowed this costume for workshops and presentations. A less expensive and more practical hand puppet, is available as an attention-getter for food safety presentations.

Since November 1997, a 30-second television public service announcement has aired on 150 television stations a total of 3,188 times, creating nearly 160 million viewer impressions. A new radio public service announcement is also being widely used.

