

CURRENT FOOD HANDLING PRACTICES OF SCHOOL NUTRITION'S LUNCHES POST-DELIVERY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NSDSL'S EAST ZONE

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Background: NSDSL's reputation is built providing safe meals to students. One of the objectives of the NSDSL caterers manual is to ensure the soundness and wholesomeness of the food prepared ("National Schools Dietary Services Limited: Manual for Caterers" 2007). NSDSL has implemented food systems to assure the safety of the meals from the delivery of raw materials to kitchens to the delivery of the meals to schools.

Objective: To determine: **(1)** what are the current food handling practices of SNP lunches post-delivery in primary schools. **(2)** To identify the food contamination risks involved with current food handling practices.

Design: A cross sectional observational study was used to collect data on the current food handling practices at primary schools in the NSDSL's east zone that receive lunches. Schools were randomly selected for the study. Statistical software SPSS version 20 was used to select the schools. Data was tabulated and analyzed using SPSS version 20 to assess the frequency and percentage of the prevalence.

Results: The study showed there were food contamination risks involved with the current food handling practices at primary schools in NSDSL's east zone. These risks were identified at delivery, holding and distribution.

Conclusion: Based on the findings there should be the development of a model to guide schools in the safe handling of SNP lunches after delivery to primary schools. The training of school personnel in safe food handling practices is important in minimizing these risks. Temperature and holding times must be monitored at times of delivery. Schools personnel need to understand the important role the insulated totes play in minimizing the growth of biological pathogens and exposure of meals to chemical or physical contaminants. Guidelines should be established for the receiving and distributing areas. Personal hygiene and hand washing campaigns should also be encouraged at schools.