

Alesia was recently hired as foodservice director for an assisted living senior-care facility. Her first task was to take a close look at the foodservice practices at the facility.

First, Alesia noticed that residents were fed in a common dining room. Each caregiver was assigned to feed two residents. During the hectic lunch hour, Alesia witnessed caregivers taking residents to the restroom; wiping spilled food from residents; cleaning chairs, tables, and floors; and cleaning up vomit. The caregiver's primary concern was the safety of each resident, as well as overseeing residents' nutritional needs and daily food intake. However, in their haste to return to the care of a resident, caregivers often failed to wash their hands correctly.

Next, Alesia spent time in the kitchen to watch meals being prepared by the cooks and prep workers. She noted that they carefully portioned food and checked and rechecked each resident's individual dietary needs against the doctor's prescribed meal type. However, she did not see final temperatures being taken before the food was portioned onto trays and loaded onto hot- and cold-holding carts. Each plate, dish, cup, or glass was covered with plastic wrap or a cover. Alesia noted that the food handlers and caretakers did wear disposable gloves. However, they did not always wash their hands prior to putting on new gloves when changing tasks.

Alesia knew that even with the demands of their jobs, most of these employees genuinely cared about the well-being of each resident. She also recognized that their practices must reflect the best practices in food safety when it comes to preparation, handling, service, and personal hygiene.

- ① What areas do you see as critical and requiring immediate attention?
- ② What practices require the retraining of current staff members?
- ③ What practices would you add to the orientation of new foodservice staff members who will work in this operation?

Answers: Take Care To Give Care

① These areas are critical and require immediate attention:

- Caregivers must wash their hands every time they assist a resident in a restroom. They should also do it any time they touch anything that may contaminate their hands. Failing to wash hands creates an opportunity to spread pathogens. This is of particular concern in a senior-care facility, because the elderly are more susceptible to foodborne illness.
- Food handlers must check temperatures of all TCS food as a normal part of the cooking process.
- Food handlers and caregivers must wash their hands before putting on gloves when changing tasks.

② These practices require the retraining of current staff members:

- Staff members require additional training or retraining on handwashing, glove use, and thermometer use.

③ These practices should be added to the orientation of new foodservice staff members who will work in this operation:

- New staff members must be trained on all areas of personal hygiene, including handwashing and glove use.
- New staff members must be taught the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the operation, particularly as they apply to personal hygiene and food safety. These SOPs should be clearly posted and available to the staff.
- Kitchen staff should be trained to calibrate thermometers, check the temperatures of all TCS food, and to record temperatures in temperature logs.