

# Oklahoma City Area Indian Health Service



Increasing Food  
Safety Through  
Collective  
Partnerships

# What is the Indian Health Service?



- ❧ The federal agency responsible for implementing the health care program for American Indians and Alaska Natives (566 federally recognized Tribes).
- ❧ Health care is just one component of the overall services (e.g., sanitation/facilities construction, environmental health, elderly nutrition, etc.) that are available.
- ❧ **Fact:** American Indians and Alaska Natives are the only ethnic group where members are born with the legal right to paid health care (Treaties).

# 12 IHS Areas



❧ Alaska

❧ Albuquerque

❧ Bemidji

❧ Billings

❧ California

❧ Great Plains

❧ Nashville

❧ Navajo

❧ **Oklahoma City**

❧ Phoenix

❧ Portland

❧ Tucson



# Oklahoma City Area



- ❧ The Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) provides assistance to 32 Direct Service Tribes (e.g., food safety, indoor air quality, general safety, communicable disease outbreak investigations, water, life safety code, etc.)
- ❧ Coverage Area: Oklahoma, Texas & Kansas
- ❧ 10 field staff members (5 Commissioned Officers and 5 civil service)
- ❧ Direct Service vs Compact (Title V) & Contracting (Title I)

# Food Safety Perspective

## -Facility Food Types-



- ❧ Tribal Casinos (78)
- ❧ Elderly Nutrition Centers
- ❧ Head Start Programs
- ❧ Pow Wows
- ❧ Indian Boarding Schools
- ❧ Convenience Stores
- ❧ Juvenile Detention Centers
- ❧ Food Processing – Beginning Stages

# Increasing Food Safety



- ❧ Basic Food Inspections
- ❧ Conducted once every six months or more often if follow-up inspections are warranted



# Increasing Food Safety



- ❧ On-site & Computer Based Food Handlers Training Sessions (issuing of DEHS food handlers card)
- ❧ Complaint Investigations – EVERY complaint that is received by DEHS is investigated.
- ❧ Collaborating with local and state health agencies (e.g. complaint investigations, trainings)



# Increasing Food Safety



- Working closely with Tribal, local, and state leadership (complaints, survey findings, new processes such as food processing, adopting food codes and enforcement).
- The DEHS is **NOT** an enforcement entity for the Tribe. We provide technical assistance and work with managers, food vendors and Tribal leadership to maintain and enhance food safety.



# Increasing Food Safety



- ❧ Building and maintaining partnerships with our Tribes is VITAL in ensuring the highest level of food safety.
- ❧ Services are provided at the pleasure of the Tribe. They can be terminated or limited at any time.
- ❧ In addition, establishing and maintaining partnerships with our local and state health agencies is equally important.
- ❧ Many of the complaints that we receive come from the local county and state health departments.

# Increasing Food Safety



- ❧ Food safety within Tribal operations has dramatically improved over the last two decades, not only within the Oklahoma City Area, but all of the IHS Areas as well.
- ❧ This is a direct result of establishing and maintaining collective partnerships not only with the Tribes the OCAIHS serves, but with our local and state partnerships as well.
- ❧ The DEHS is proactively working to strengthen and expand current partnerships.

# Questions???



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