

Food Delivery by Families in Long Term Care

Situation

Many families deliver food to their loved ones at our LTC homes. Infection Prevention and Control is tasked to provide a best practice approach to safe food handling, storage and disposal of these delivered 'family meals'.

Background

Because of the diversity of food preferences among the residents and the desire to eat at unscheduled times the onsite food services are not able to fully accommodate the full scope of meal requests.

Further, visitor policies have changed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Essential visitors often come to visit loved ones with homemade meals or many families deliver food to our care homes. Each site is working to create a best practice approach to managing food delivered to the sites.

Assessment

In some LTC homes, food is being stored in a designated resident fridge and reheated for residents. Some sites have more than one meal stored per resident at a time. Greeters/Screeners are wiping down the outside of the container with a disinfectant wipe. Sites have previously requested that food is delivered in a disposable container and is therefore not returned to the families.

Recommendation

Infection Prevention and Control guiding principles:

1. There is separation of clean and dirty items
2. Storage:
 - Safe storage (no direct resident access staff only, appropriate temperature control and protection from contamination for example, in a fridge)
 - No cross storage of resident and staff meals – therefore there needs to be a designated fridge for resident meals
 - There is a schedule for fridge cleaning (for example, once per week and as needed)
 - Food is stored in a leak-proof disposable container
 - Food is stored for maximum of 24 hours only
 - Utensils should be stored in a clean, dry space (for example, not by the resident sink)
3. Food Handling:
 - Heat and serve only no food prep (Food is heated once only in a designated microwave)
 - Leftovers are disposed not returned to fridge after service (one way flow)

4. Dishes / cutlery single service items preferred, no ware washing for reuse (special items could be rinsed and sent back home for wash/sanitize)
5. Disposal:
 - Food should be disposed of after one heating and after being in the resident space.
 - Food that is not consumed within 24 hours is disposed.
6. Food is not shared with other residents
7. Residents are assisted to clean their hands prior to eating and after eating meals.

