

December 9, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

AllerTrain by MenuTrinfo is a leading company providing accredited nutrition & food allergy solutions. AllerTrain by MenuTrinfo is dedicated to helping foodservice operators including institutions, restaurants and catering operations protect the lives and health of customers by meeting and exceeding nutritional labeling and food allergy regulations as required by law.

The company offers an entire suite of food allergy courses including AllerTrain™ and AllerTrain Lite™, the only ANSI accredited food allergy & gluten-free training classes in the food service industry.

To understand the vast importance of studying life threatening food allergies in schools, it is important to understand the increased rate at which food allergies have grown in the United States, the severity of food allergic reactions, and the growing public health concern food allergies are becoming.

Researchers estimate that up to 15 million Americans have food allergies. According to a study released in 2013 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, food allergies among children increased approximately 50% between 1997 and 2011, and the number of people with a food allergy is continuing to grow with no clear answer as to why. This potentially life ending disease affects 1 in every 13 children in the U.S. resulting in an economic cost of \$25 billion per year for children's food allergies.

Food allergies are unpredictable in nature, and mild symptoms can quickly become severe without warning. Every 3 minutes a food allergic reaction sends someone to the emergency room, resulting in over 200,000 emergency department visits per year. Additionally, 25% of people's first food allergic reaction happens outside the home. This signifies the intractable importance of employees in eating and drinking establishments to be adequately trained in food allergy awareness and safety protocols, should a person go into anaphylactic shock in their establishment.

Cross contact and cross-contamination are two of the biggest concerns for food allergic individuals dining out in public or in schools. The only way for a person to remain protected from their allergen(s) is to strictly avoid them; even a trace amount of an allergen could result in a severe reaction. In order to accommodate and ultimately protect the health of food allergic diners and students, employees working in the food service industry must understand the proper safety measures and protocol for completely eliminating the potential for cross contact or cross-contamination from occurring in their establishment. Receiving accredited training and passing a test thereafter will prove employee's competency of the course material surrounding food allergies, and hold them to an enhanced standard of safety in their schools and establishments.

By law, under The Americans with Disabilities Act, food allergies and anaphylaxis are considered a disability. Therefore primary schools, secondary schools and Universities alike must make appropriate accommodations for those living with food allergies. On top of severe physical implications, living with life threatening food allergies can have major social, emotional and psychological implications for a child. It is imperative that students feel as secure and confident

as possible eating in their school's cafeterias, without having to worry about their physical health. Public education is a fundamental human right and if this right is infringed upon because of the ignorance of educators whom students put their physical and emotional trust in, this is unjust.

By setting a higher standard for Food Allergen Awareness Training in eating and drinking establishments, and requiring all food service providers, including public venues and schools to receive accredited food allergy safety training, the general public, schools, restaurant owners and operators, and food allergic diners will benefit in the following ways:

- Food allergic individuals will feel confident and safe dining out and going to school if they know the establishments they eat in are willing to accommodate them and are trained in food allergy safety.
- Eating and drinking establishments will minimize their risks by having a food allergy management program for their restaurant, and gain greater customer loyalty.
- Ultimately, the risk of anaphylaxis occurring will be reduced for those living with food allergies if the establishments they frequent are safe.

Betsy Craig, CEO and Laurie Thomecek, MPH, Director of Education, along with the entire AllerTrain by MenuTrinfo team urges the Connecticut Task Force to further study food allergy management in schools and seek mandated food allergy safety training regulations sooner than later.