



Texas Food Handler FAQs - Employees

Who needs a Texas food handler certificate?

In October 2015, the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) issued a new rule requiring all employees that work with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food-contact surfaces to take food handler training and be certified. All employees including kitchen staff, bussers, hostesses, servers, bartenders, bar-backs etc. must have their food handler certification by September 1, 2016.

Employees must take a training course that has been approved by the Texas Department of Health or accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Courses that are ANSI accredited, like ServSafe Food Handler Texas, are not subject to any additional fees required by local jurisdictions.

Am I considered a food handler?

A food handler is defined by the regulation as a food service employee who works with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food contact surfaces. The definition includes most restaurant employees, such as those holding the positions of, but not limited to: wait staff, chefs, head cooks, cooks, bussers, bartenders, hosts and hostesses who handle food and supervisory personnel, such as the general manager or managers.

Employees with a valid manager's food safety certification are compliant with the food handler rule and do not need to obtain a food handler certification in addition to their food safety manager certification.

I am a restaurant manager. Do I need a Texas food handler certificate?

An individual holding a valid Food Protection Manager Certification, such as Texas FoodGuard offered by the Texas Restaurant Association, or ServSafe manager training offered by the National Restaurant Association, does not need a Texas food handler certificate. However, if you are a manager without a Food Protection Manager Certification then yes, you need Texas food handler certification.

Food handler certification is already required in the area where I work. Do I have to get re-certified?

If you work in one of the 60 jurisdictions in Texas that already require food handler certification, and your certification does not expire before September 1, 2016, you do not have to get re-certified. The food handler certificate you have is valid.

Do I have to pay for my Texas food handler course?

Generally, yes. The food handler card is an individual mandate for a person to work in a food establishment. It belongs to the employee and the business is not required to provide or pay for the training.

There are a couple of exceptions (please check with your employer for their policies):

If you currently work in a restaurant and are an hourly employee making at or close to the minimum wage, the employer is responsible for the cost of the training.

The employer is required to pay for the training for employees who receive tips as part of their wages because the cost of the food training program would take them below the tipped minimum wage

I'm a high school student and only work in a restaurant during the summer. Do I still need a card?

Yes. Regardless of the amount of time you work in a food facility you must possess a Texas food handler certificate if you prepare, store or serve food and work in a food facility in Texas

I'm interested in working in the restaurant business but don't have a Texas food handler certificate yet. Does it matter?

.As of September 1, 2016, Texas food handler certificate is mandatory for all employees who prepare, store or serve food, in all jurisdictions across the state.

Having your food handler certificate before you begin your job search is recommended. Already having a certificate may make you more marketable to an employer and it shows a willingness to practice proper food safety techniques.

How do I get a Texas food handler certificate?

Go to ServSafe.com/TXFoodHandler to purchase and take the online training for \$10.20 with coupon code TXMEMBER. Take and pass the assessment with a score of 70 percent or higher. Be sure to print your card and provide a copy to your employer to keep on file.

How long will it take to get a Texas food handler certificate?

The online ServSafe Food Handler Texas course and assessment takes approximately 90 minutes to complete.

Is my Texas food handler certificate good anywhere in the state?

Yes, as long as you take an approved course like ServSafe Food Handler Texas, your food handler certificate is accepted everywhere in Texas.

I already have a food handler card issued by my city/county. Do I need another card?

No. Food handler regulations were already in place in 605 local jurisdictions before the state regulation became effective. Certificates obtained from an approved course are valid.

When do I need to have a Texas food handler certificate?

If you are currently employed in the food service industry and DO NOT have a food handler certificate, you must have your food handler certificate by September 1, 2016.

Employees hired September 1, 2016 or later, have 60 days from the date of hire to obtain their food handler certificate.

What if I get a new job?

Your Texas food handler certificate belongs to you and is transportable and can be taken to a new place of employment. Additional copies of the card can be reprinted at ServSafe.com/TXfoodhandler.

What if I need to take the test in another language?

The ServSafe Food Handler Texas online training and test is available in English and Spanish.

I need to take the training but don't have a computer. What should I do?

Nearly every public library offers access to computers for free and printers for a nominal fee.

How much does it cost?

ServSafe Food Handler Texas training course and test is \$10.20 with coupon code TXMEMBER.

Do I need a credit card to take the test online?

Yes. ServSafe.com/TXFoodHandler accepts all major credit cards.

I paid for the training but can't take it right now. Can I get a refund?

If you've started the course but cannot complete it, you have as many as 60 days after payment to go back and take the course without paying an additional fee. If you've paid but haven't started the training, you have one year to complete the course and test.

How long will the training and test take?

The online course and test are designed to be completed within approximately 90 minutes

What will be covered by the training and test?

The law requires the course to cover topics such as:

foodborne illness
time and temperature as it relates to foodborne illness
personal hygiene and food safety
food contamination prevention
cleaning and sanitizing procedures
temperature control
cross-contamination prevention.

What if I fail? Can I retake the test?

Yes. Online testing is flexible. If you fail the test, you can retake the test immediately. When you retake the online test, there is no additional charge.

I passed the test. Now what?

Once you pass the ServSafe Food Handler Texas training and test, you can immediately print out your certificate. Print one copy for you and one for your employer.

I passed the test but lost my certificate. What do I do?

There is no fee to reproduce a reprint of your ServSafe Food Handler Texas certificate. You will need login information to access your card. Go to servsafe.com/txfoodhandler

How quickly do I get my certificate and card after I pass the test?

Your Texas food handler certificate is available to print immediately after you pass the online test.

Does my Texas food handler certificate expire?

Yes. A Texas food handler certificate is valid for two years upon issuance. Food handlers must retake the course and test and pay the associated fees once their certificate expires.

Who regulates Texas food handler certificates?

Local health departments will regulate compliance with the Texas food handler regulations through the health inspection process.

What will happen if I work in a restaurant without a Texas food handler certificate?

Every county/city health department will determine its own enforcement actions. Contact your local health department to learn more.