



# Putting a Face on Foodborne Illness

## A Discussion for Senior Leaders

### Essential Question

---

Who is responsible for making sure food is safe?

### Objectives

---

After viewing an Alliance constituent story, senior leaders will be able to:

1. Correlate strong, positive food safety culture with consumer and employee trust in the organization/brand through group discussion
2. Reflect on existing organizational culture and food safety culture across the organization using employee feedback
3. Determine a way to integrate food safety culture considerations into their personal decision-making process through personal reflection

### Materials

---

- Alliance video: "Putting a Face on Foodborne Illness: For Senior Leaders"
- Computer, screen/projector, or other method of presenting video
- *Optional*: copy of Food Safety Culture Knowledge & Beliefs Circle completed by employees (see "The Lasting Impact of Foodborne Illness- A Discussion for Frontline Employees")

### Motivated, Educated, and Engaged

---

To promote a strong, positive food safety culture throughout your organization, all employees—from frontline to senior leaders—must be motivated, educated, and engaged. We designed this module to address the **motivated** portion by building personal connections with the real-life consequences of foodborne illness.

### Background Information

---

- **This module is designed to guide senior leaders** in assessing their personal motivations for promoting and protecting positive food safety culture within the organization. To modify for frontline employees, frontline leaders, or other audiences, please find additional resources in the Alliance Toolkit, including tailored discussion questions.
- This module is written for an in-person session. However, the discussion could take place virtually to accommodate senior leaders at different offices or locations.
- We strongly recommend the use of a facilitator to lead this discussion. In addition, if your organization has a food safety coalition (see "Building a Coalition of Food Safety Champions"), consider including 1-2 members of that group to assist with facilitation. Have the facilitator(s) view the video and familiarize themselves with the questions in advance of the group discussion.
- The constituent video features Chrissy and her son, Beck. While still a baby, Beck contracted *Salmonella* from snacks dusted with contaminated leafy greens powder. Thankfully, Beck survived the traumatic infection and hospitalization but not without complications and long-term effects on him and his family. Chrissy shared her story with the Alliance to Stop Foodborne Illness in the hope her voice will help prevent others from going through what her family experienced.

# Putting a Face on Foodborne Illness

## A Discussion for Senior Leaders



### Discussion Questions

The following questions are designed to encourage discussion and synthesis for senior leaders:

1. Who is responsible for making sure food is safe?
2. How did Beck's family's trust in the food industry change because of their experience?
  - a. What could be some of the consequences if we distributed unsafe products? How could our consumers be affected? How could our company and our employees be affected?

### Module

In advance of this discussion, provide a bullet-point agenda of the parts of this module to senior leaders. Identify the purpose of the discussion (*Objectives 1 and 2*) and the desired outcomes (*Objective 3*).

In the context of an existing executive meeting, allocate time (~45 minutes) for the following discussion.

#### Part One: Just One

To begin, share with senior leaders three numbers: 10 million, 420,000, and 1. Share with leaders what the first two numbers represent (they will examine the meanings of the third number later):

- 10 million represents the estimated cost of a single recall to a food company in direct costs, brand damage, and lost sales.\*

*\*This number is based on a 2012 joint study by the Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Food Marketing Institute. Consider using data from your own company's records on the cost of past incidents to make the number more personal.*

- 420,000 represents the estimated number of people globally who die from foodborne illness every year.\*\*

*\*\*This number is based on a 2022 report by the World Health Organization. The CDC estimate for the United States alone is 3,000 deaths every year.*

Now, ask senior leaders to deconstruct the organization's values into a single word they want consumers to think of when they think of the organization. Then, what word do they want employees to think of?

Have each senior leader share the words they've chosen and write them on a board (or in the chat if virtual). Ask senior leaders to consider: How many of the words on the list are related to trust?

Share with leaders the meaning behind the number 1 from the beginning of the module:

- 1 represents how many incidents it takes to dramatically change what word consumers think of when they think of the organization.
- 1 represents the number of times someone has to become seriously ill or see their child, parent, or friend become seriously ill from food for their life—and their trust in the industry—to be forever altered.

Tell senior leaders they will now be hearing the story of one such person.



# Putting a Face on Foodborne Illness

## A Discussion for Senior Leaders

### Discussion Questions

(continued from page 2)

3. What role do you play in keeping our products safe?
  - a. What are the roles of others on your team? At your facility? Across the company?
4. How would you define "food safety culture"? How would you define our company's food safety culture?
  - a. How does our company culture impact our food safety culture? What role do you play in defining both our company culture and our food safety culture?
5. What actions can/do you take to make sure strong, positive food safety culture is a priority across the company every day?

### Part Two: Video Viewing

Watch the video from start to finish. Allow for a few moments of silence after viewing. Have senior leaders share any initial thoughts or reactions they have to the story.

### Part Three: Discussion

Have senior leaders read and discuss Questions #1 and #2. Take a break after these questions to summarize the group's thoughts and ask leaders to share any further insights or questions before moving to the next set of questions.

Have senior leaders read and discuss Questions #3, #4, and #5. If frontline employees at your organization have completed a Food Safety Culture Knowledge and Beliefs Circle (see "[The Lasting Impact of Foodborne Illness, A Discussion for Frontline Employees](#)"), share the results with senior leaders. Alternatively, consider sharing food safety culture survey data or other feedback from employees if available for senior leaders include as part of their discussion.

### Part Four: Action Items

As discussion reaches Question #5 tell senior leaders they will use this question to hone the action items for this discussion.

**Action Item 1:** Determine a way to integrate food safety culture considerations into your personal decision-making process.

For example, a senior leader could include a step where they ask "How might this decision change the one word consumers like Chrissy and Beck think of when they think of our brand?"

If any senior leaders already have food safety culture considerations integrated into their decision-making process, have them share their experience so far. Reflecting on their experience can help them hone their own systems and/or help other senior leaders craft new systems.

**Action Item 2:** Share with your team/direct reports how you have integrated food safety culture into your decision-making process and how they can support this change.

For example, a senior leader may ask their team to incorporate similar steps in their own decision-making process. Or a senior leader may ask administrators to include food safety culture considerations in documenting Standard Operating Procedures.