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## ***Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force meets at FAPC to discuss plan***

***(Stillwater, Okla. – Aug. 4, 2011)*** The Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force met at Oklahoma State University's Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center on July 21 to discuss coordinating a plan should a food emergency be experienced.

"The purpose of the meeting was to put more structure to the task force," said Mike Talkington, DVM and director of laboratory services for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. "The meeting accomplished what it needed to, and I'm going to take all the information and give it to the 10-member coordinating committee of the Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force, which consists of regulatory, industry and federal representatives."

The task force was created to foster communication, cooperation and collaboration of effort related to food safety in Oklahoma spanning the horizon from production, processing, distribution, retail and food service sales, and home consumption of the food supply.

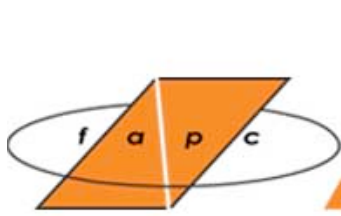
In 2009, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Food and Forestry received a 5-year \$5,000 grant from the Food and Drug Administration to fund the Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force.

Since the inception of the task force, members have met each year to strengthen the relationships between the organizations represented, train for all potential food emergency hazards and identify priorities for the task force. The FAPC has helped facilitate these meetings.

"It was a pleasure serving as the host for the Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force organizational meeting," said Peter Muriana, FAPC food microbiologist. "Although we are not a regulatory branch of the state, we do have our own educational, outreach and research interests in food safety, which works nicely to complement the state's interest in the development of the task force."

During the recent meeting, participants heard from individuals from states that already have developed food safety task forces: Iowa, Tennessee and Indiana.

Presenters included Catherine Strohbahn from Iowa State University, representing the Iowa Food Safety Task Force; Courtney Halbrook from Yum! Brands, representing the Tennessee Food Safety Task Force; and Travis Goodman from the Food and Drug Administration, representing the Indiana Food Safety Task Force.



The Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force members also got to see a food safety task force website demonstration and attend breakout sessions to brainstorm ideas and priorities for the task force.

Talkington said he appreciates the involvement of the members on the Oklahoma Food Safety Task Force, and communication, cooperation and commitment is needed to make it successful.

“It’s going to take communication,” he said. “We won’t know where to go unless we communicate with each other and give feedback. It’s going to take cooperation. We can’t make this work by ourselves; we need to work together. And, it’s going to take commitment. We got to want to do this and be involved. We need to all stay committed.”

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