

## Impact Statement Template

**Title:** Candler and Evans County Participants Provide Safe Food

**Photo:** [Can upload two JPGs and caption each]

**Geographic Scope:**   \_\_County \_\_X\_Multi-County \_\_District/Dept \_\_College \_\_University \_\_State  
                                  \_\_Muti-State/Regional \_\_National \_\_International

**County:** Candler/Evans

**Location or Facility:** (if applicable)   4-H Center\_\_\_\_\_ REC\_\_\_\_\_ UGA Campus\_\_X\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Unit/Department/Group:** University of Georgia Extension Southeast District Family and Consumer Sciences

**Summary:** (In a sentence or two, summarize the statement.)

Through completing the ServSafe Food Handler or Manager Courses, food handlers are better equipped to serve safe food to residents of Candler, Evans, and surrounding counties.

**Situation:** (What is the issue? Who cares and why?)

More than 250 foodborne diseases present a significant public health challenge. In the U.S., per year, foodborne disease results in an estimated 48 million persons with gastrointestinal foodborne illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths (2010). Estimates for Georgia are 2.5 million cases per year at a cost of \$4.7 billion (2010). Transfer of viral and bacterial infections through foodservice operations is of high concern, and while the financial burden of foodborne illness is costly, the repercussions of loss of reputation, employee morale, and consumer trust weigh heavily on establishments as well. The FDA's periodic retail food safety risk factor studies document the need for improved food safety practices by workers; compliance with personal hygiene controls, temperature control and practices to prevent contamination and cross-contamination should be higher in most foodservice settings (FDA 2014). Candler County is home to 43 inspected food service establishments of which 10 serve primarily high-risk populations (2 personal care homes and 8 child care facilities). Evans County has 33 inspected food service establishments, of which 7 serve primarily high-risk populations (3 personal care homes and 4 child care facilities). Both the Georgia Departments of Health and Agriculture require food safety-certified managers for foodservice and retail food stores, and many of these business owners cannot afford to close their establishments for multiple days to travel to a class in a larger city.

**Response:** (What has been done? Summarize your program, project or response to the issue.)

In response to the need for local food protection manager certification classes, the Candler/ Evans County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent has offered 6 ServSafe Manager Courses both in Metter and Claxton in one year, advertising in multiple counties to allow individuals to complete the course and obtain certification to maintain compliance. The 2-day ServSafe Manager Course is a rigorous class followed by a standardized test, which participants must successfully make a 70% or higher to obtain certification. The course was offered in Candler County at the Georgia Grown Innovation Center (GGIC), which serves as a hub for agriculture-related businesses, many of which are also food

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manufacturers, who must have their ServSafe Manager Certification as per regulations with the Georgia Department of Agriculture. By offering the classes here, participants are exposed to the resources offered in Candler County through the GGIC, in addition to the added benefit of not having to travel far to complete the course. In Evans County, the need was presented for a course offered in Spanish. A growing number of primarily Spanish-speaking food handlers and restaurant owners in the area posed as a challenge to the Department of Public Health, as these individuals needed to have the food protection manager certification to maintain compliance, but there were no classes being offered or materials provided in any language other than English. The Candler/Evans County Extension agent took the initiative to utilize a fellow registered bilingual ServSafe Instructor/Proctor from Gwinnett County who could teach the course and proctor the exam in Spanish. This accommodation was crucial to the success of Spanish-speaking individuals who are equally held responsible for preventing foodborne illness as other establishment managers and owners. The agent has continued to make food safety education a priority, delivering the ServSafe Food Handler course to Metter High School Culinary Arts students, as well as to individuals at a local establishment. While the ServSafe Food Handler course is not required for compliance in most cases, it is recommended employees participate in the class to gain a basic understanding of food safety principles and demonstrates an investment in staff from a manager or business owner.

**Results/Impact:** (How has your response affected the users/stakeholders involved with this issue?)

Out of 6 classes, 48 participants received their ServSafe Manager Certification, which allows them to meet the regulatory requirements for compliance with the Department of Public Health and the Georgia Department of Agriculture, totaling 96 hours of instruction within the last year. Passing the exam demonstrates a competency of food handlers in the areas of: management of food safety practices, hygiene and health, safe receipt, storage, transport and disposal of food, safe preparation and cooking of food, safe service and display of food, cleanliness and sanitation, and facilities and equipment. Class participants quoted that they learned correct cooking times, holding temperatures, how to keep and maintain a safe kitchen, and one said that the course “gave me great insight on how to properly set up and operate a commercial kitchen”. Offering the ServSafe Manager and Food Handler courses have brought local value by keeping food industry professionals from having to drive to maintain their certifications with savings of an estimated \$285 in gas, class fees, time, etc. Local offerings also allow food businesses to sustain compliance with regulatory authorities, and promote the prevention of foodborne illness in Candler and Evans counties.

**Program Function(s):**  Instruction  Research  Extension

**Program Area(s):**  ANR  FACS  4-H  Support  Admin