

FOOD SAFETY SUPERVISOR REQUIREMENTS



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For the past ten years, it has been a legal requirement in Victoria, for all food businesses to have a designated Food Safety Supervisor (FSS). This requirement is slowly being introduced in other states of Australia. While the requirements in each state do differ slightly, the role and responsibilities of the supervisor do not vary greatly. Many people think that the FSS just needs to have the right certificate; however there are some other key attributes that need to be considered when appointing a FSS. When selecting who should be your FSS, you should ensure that the following points are considered.

The FSS should:

- Have the skills and knowledge about food safety in the job that they do.
- Have the ability to supervise food handlers and operations.
- Have the authority to supervise food handlers and ensure that food is being handled safely.
- Have met a minimum competency standard and provide evidence of their skills and knowledge (usually a statement of attainment).

In some states, the FSS must:

- Be named in the businesses food safety program.
- Be replaced within 14 days, if the supervisor leaves.
- Have a statement of attainment relevant to the industry sector in which they are employed. (i.e. a FSS in an aged care facility, will need to have conducted training in the designated unit of competency from the health sector.)

I have seen cases where a business sends the son of the owner because the owner has a low level of English knowledge, or the apprentice chef, because the chef doesn't have time to be away from their kitchen. In both cases, the person designated as the FSS would *not* have the authority to be a FSS. Can you imagine an apprentice chef coming back and trying to tell their head chef that what they are doing is wrong? Or a 16 year old who helps his dad in their family restaurant after school?

Similarly, there are plenty of people who do not have the ability to supervise. They may be shy, or be unable to communicate effectively. In a kitchen, when the decisions of the FSS may end up saving a life, or the longevity of a business, you need to appoint a FSS who will be confident enough to make decisions based on what is right, rather than what they feel comfortable

with. Some decisions may cost the business money, and need to be based on both the skills and knowledge that the FSS has.

When I deliver Food Safety Supervisor training, I tell the students that I feel the most important role of a FSS is to take corrective action when required. Corrective action is the action that you take to fix a problem that has arisen. It could be that a delivery of chicken is received at 10°C, or when you start work you find that the fridge has broken down, or a staff member has not recorded key temperatures that are part of your food safety program. In each of these instances, the corrective action taken would differ, however in each of them, you would want to take what I call a *quick fix* and a *long term fix*. The quick fix, ensures that the initial problem is rectified, and a long term fix, ensures that the problem never happens again.

So when your business is looking at appointing a Food Safety Supervisor, think long and hard about who is appointed. If you are offered the job and you don't think you have either the ability or the authority, this should be communicated to your employer. If you are working in a business where you feel the FSS does not meet these requirements, then once again tell your employer.

That being said, there are many businesses that have multiple FSS. I know one aged care facility that has trained 10 staff to the competency required for a FSS. When they do their rosters, they make sure that at least one person who has had the FSS training is rostered on to each shift. This means that seven days a week, three meals a day, there is at least one trained FSS on staff. If you want free training for a potential FSS, you can access www.primeskills.com.au and register for free online training.

If you need any assistance in training a Food Safety Supervisor, please feel free to contact me or my team. We would be more than happy to help.

Eat well. Eat safe!

Gavin Buckettt

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