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**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH) ACKNOWLEDGES SEPTEMBER AS
NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION MONTH**

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) recognize September as National Food Safety Education Month. This year's theme, "Don't compromise – Clean and Sanitize" focuses on the important procedures necessary for proper hand washing and showcases its commitment to food safety education and training.

"Floridians are aware of food safety now more than ever before," said Deputy State Health Officer Bonita Sorensen, M.D., M.B.A. "During National Food Safety Education Month, we have the opportunity to educate individuals on proper food safety procedures."

This annual food safety campaign strives to build awareness of the restaurant and food service industry's commitment to serving safe food, heighten awareness about the importance of food safety education, and encourage additional food safety training for all industry employees. The National Food Safety Education campaign also seeks to educate the public on handling and preparing food at home, whether cooking from scratch at home or serving take-out meals and restaurant leftovers.

DOH recommends the following tips to encourage food safety:

- When in doubt, throw it out!
- Wash your hands before preparing or eating food, after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, after handling uncooked food, after playing with a pet, after handling garbage, after tending to someone who is sick or injured, after blowing your nose and after coughing or sneezing
- When defrosting frozen foods, it is best to thaw the food in the refrigerator where it will remain at a safe, constant temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below. If that is not possible, food can be defrosted in the microwave, or by running cold water over the food item.
- When preparing foods, follow the appropriate temperature guidelines for defrosting, cooking and cooling.
- Store leftovers within two hours of cooking

DOH promotes and protects the health and safety of all people in Florida through the delivery of quality public health services and the promotion of health care standards. For more information about DOH programs, please visit the Department of Health's Web site at www.doh.state.fl.us. To obtain materials and information on how to get involved in National Food Safety Education Month, please visit the NRAEF web site at www.nraef.org/nfsem.

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