

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Wellesley Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Department Receives U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Retail Flexible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant

March 14, 2023 (Wellesley, MA) –The Wellesley Health Department has received a grant to advance conformity with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards). According to the FDA, the Retail Standards are intended to reinforce proper sanitation (good retail practices) while focusing on factors that cause and contribute to foodborne illness.

While adherence to the Retail Program Standards is not required by the Massachusetts State Department of Public Health or the FDA, compliance to the Standards can offer a holistic approach to retail food safety with the primary objective of minimizing the incidence of foodborne illness. According to Vivian Zeng, Senior Environmental Health Specialist with the Health Department, “This grant will enhance our food program’s effectiveness. It will offer resources for high-level training and the standardization of policies and procedures. Our goal is to increase efficiency during inspections that focus on the application of science-based foodborne illness risk factors.”

Grant funds will be used to:

- Complete a Self-Assessment of All Nine Standards (SA9). A SA9 includes a rigorous self-assessment of Wellesley’s adherence to the FDA’s Nine Retail Program Standards, identifying Department strengths and areas for improvement. Upon completion, the Health Department will identify which standard(s) to fully develop and implement based on capacity and need.
- Train staff to support completion of a SA9 and implement selected Retail Standards. The Environmental Health Division will be connected to a mentor health department that has completed a SA9 and is currently engaged in implementation. Wellesley has been matched with the Southern Nevada Health District, who will provide in-person and virtual guidance.

Completing a SA9 requires a true commitment to food service excellence, as the process can be labor intensive. However, according to Leonard Izzo, Director of the Health Department, the process will be well worth the effort. “The FDA notes that the Retail Program Standards encourage regulatory agencies to improve and build upon existing programs,” said Izzo. “The FDA also suggests the Retail Standards can provide a framework designed to accommodate both traditional and emerging approaches to food safety. Upon completion, Wellesley is well-situated to be a leader in setting food safety priorities.”

The Wellesley Health department assesses and addresses the needs of our community in order to protect and improve the health and quality of life for all residents and our work force. For more information visit our webpages <https://www.wellesleyma.gov/193/Health>

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