Ethical Issue in Foodservice Management and Facilities

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Foodservice settings are run and managed by Registered Dietitians (RD) to ensure that the facility is in working order. However, certain ethical issues can occur in foodservice settings. The American Dietetic Association (ADA) and Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) compiled rules relating to ethical issues that may occur at foodservice facilities. These rules are made for professional individuals such as the RD to help guide them in their work and position as managers. The set of ethical rules compiled by the ADA and the CDA is known as the “Code of Ethics for the Profession of Dietetics.”

An ethical issue that can occur at foodservice facilities can include situations where employees are consuming food in food preparation areas. Food should not be consumed while being prepared in kitchen areas as this may cause cross contamination with other food products and potential harm to consumers.

According to the Code of Ethics regarding responsibilities to the public, Principle 3 states that the “dietetics practitioner must consider the health, safety and welfare of the public at all times.” Principle 3 emphasizes that professionals must report any form of inappropriate behavior or actions taking place in the foodservice facility. The inappropriate behavior occurring would be the employees’ consumption of food while in the prep area. It is only ethical for food to be consumed when being inspected for its quality. Aspects that are taken into consideration when measuring quality of food include freshness of food, temperature, delivery time to consumer, taste and presentation of food. Therefore, food should only be consumed for quality reasons and if they are consumed for other reasons, these behaviors must be reported.
In addition to reporting the issue regarding employees consuming food at inappropriate foodservice locations, Principle 14 states that dietetic professionals “assume a life-long responsibility and accountability for personal competence in practice, consistent with accepted professional standards, continually striving to increase professional knowledge and skills to apply them in practice.” Overall, the RD is responsible for keeping employees accountable for their actions when working in the foodservice and therefore, must take preventable action especially if employees are inappropriately consuming food in preparation areas.

Finally, as a result in ensuring employees that they avoid inappropriate behavior such as consuming food in food prep areas, professional dietetics must give feedback to employees. Principle 19 states that the dietetics practitioner must demonstrate respect for the values, rights, knowledge and skills of colleagues and other professionals. For clarification, the principle wants professional practitioners to “provide objective evaluations of performance for individuals such as employees and coworkers, candidates for employment, students, professional association memberships, awards, or scholarships, making all reasonable efforts to avoid bias in professional evaluation of others.” By giving feedback to employees, professional dietetics can not only help improve quality of food being produced from the facility, but provide a comfortable environment for employees through good communication on how to better run the food facility.

Overall, the use of the Code of Ethics is used to help practitioners operate settings such as foodservice facilities as professional managers. Therefore, managers working at professional levels, RD’s working at foodservice settings must adhere to the Code of Ethics when working with other employees.