The Partnership for Food Safety Education’s BAC Down! initiative seeks to increase awareness among consumers of the importance of keeping home refrigerator temperatures at 40°F or below and of using a thermometer to monitor refrigerator temperature.

**Why BAC Down?**

The revised *Listeria monocytogenes* risk assessment (September 2003; http://www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/lmr2-toc.html), issued by the FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition and the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, indicates that the predicted number of cases of Listeriosis would be reduced by more than 70% if all home refrigerator temperatures did not exceed 41°F. It went on to state that no other single measure approaches this level of effectiveness in reducing cases of Listeriosis, the illness caused by a pathogen associated with improperly chilled foods.

Findings from the March 2005 Partnership for Food Safety Education consumer survey on refrigeration validate the need for stepped-up public education on the topic of refrigerator temperature:

- only 20% of consumers say they actually use a refrigerator thermometer;
- just 30% have heard they should use a refrigerator thermometer;
- most (73%) adults agree it is likely they would get sick if they were to eat foods stored in a refrigerator that was not kept cold enough.

**Reaching Consumers: How it works**

As a non-profit, the Partnership relies on many organizations, and the media, to get these messages to consumers. This initiative, like others developed as part the Partnership’s Fight BAC!® campaign emphasizing Cook, Clean, Chill and Separate, will incorporate consumer-tested messages and materials. They will be creatively and broadly disseminated through:

- **Partnership members** – see attached list. Members represent food industry organizations, government agencies, non-profit and consumer organizations.
- **Partnership member networks** —including government agencies, public health officials, grass roots food safety advocates and healthcare professionals.
- **Private corporations** – including retailers, thermometer manufacturers and other interested private companies.
- **USDA, FDA and CDC** food safety education activities and communications vehicles.
- **State Agencies** - The Partnership facilitates the work of state agencies and other organizations by identifying opportunities to further educate consumers on safe food handling and by investing in the initial message and materials development. The Massachusetts Partnership for Food Safety Education, with help from the US Food and Drug Administration regional representatives, MA Department of Education, MA Department of Public Health, MA Office of Elder Affairs, MA Food Association, Big Y Supermarkets, MA Environmental Health Association and the local Extension Nutrition Education Program will implement a state pilot BAC Down project leveraging the Partnership’s investment in messaging and consumer materials. The MA state pilot will be documented and shared with other states through the national Partnership.
- **Media coverage** advancing the safe food handling messages through the successful FightBAC!® campaign and through collaborative efforts with others.

-- more --
Members of the Partnership for Food Safety Education use their organizational resources and members to help educate consumers on food safety recommendations. These Partnership members include:

- American Dietetic Association
- American Egg Board
- American Meat Institute
- Association of Food and Drug Officials
- Consumer Federation of America
- Food Marketing Institute
- Food Temperature Indicator Association
- Grocery Manufacturers of America
- Institute of Food Technologists
- International Food Information Council Foundation
- International Fresh-cut Produce Association
- National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
- National Chicken Council
- National Fisheries Institute
- National Food Processors Association
- National Pork Board
- National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation
- National Turkey Federation
- NSF International
- Produce Marketing Association
- School Nutrition Association
- The Soap and Detergent Association
- United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association

Federal Government Liaisons:
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

International Affiliate: Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education

The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) provided generous financial support to fund this initiative. In addition, many FMI retail members will incorporate the messages into ongoing consumer outreach and consumer publicity. A complete list of FMI retail members can be found at www.fmi.org. FMI wishes to acknowledge several corporations that made contributions to this initiative including:

- NSF International
- CDN/Component Design Northwest, Inc.
- Chaney Instruments
- Cooper-Atkins Corporation
- Weiss Instruments, Inc.
- Miljoco Corporation

Miljoco Corporation of Warren, MI also provided a generous in-kind contribution to the Partnership.

How can others get involved?
Media are encouraged to include CHILL and other food safety messages in food-related features. Contact Shelley Feist, the Partnership’s Executive Director (sfeist@fightbac.org or 202-220-0651) or Maureen Varnon, agency for the Partnership (mvarnon@porternovelli.com or 202-973-3604) for more information.

In addition, the Partnership seeks sponsors to help reach consumers with these important food safety recommendations. Contact the Partnership’s Executive Director, Shelley Feist at sfeist@fightbac.org or visit www.fightbac.org to learn more about how you can participate.