



# Food Safety Issues in CSFP

**Brenda Halbrook, M.S., R.D.**  
**Director, Food Safety Staff**  
**FNS/USDA**

As Presented by Laura Castro, Branch Chief  
Policy Branch, Food Distribution Division  
February 12, 2008  
New Orleans, LA

# Overview

- Impact of Foodborne Illnesses
- FNS Food Safety Resources
- Importance of Reporting
  - Complaints
  - Illnesses
- Holds and Recalls

# Food Safety is Critical

- Food safety and foodborne illness
- Impact
  - 76 million illnesses a year
  - 325,000 hospitalizations
  - 5,000 deaths
- Cost of foodborne illness
  - \$6.5 to \$34.9 Billion

# Food Safety at FNS

- Food Safety Unit
  - November 2004
  - Food safety issues in the USDA nutrition assistance programs
    - Education
    - Holds and Recalls of USDA commodities
    - Guidance
    - Technical Assistance

# Food Safety Unit

## Mission

- Increase the awareness, visibility, and impact of food safety on USDA nutrition assistance programs.
- Assure that FNS programs are represented in the wider federal and state food safety communities.

# FNS Food Safety Role

- Issue food safety alerts
- Monitor food safety complaints
- Provide information on all food holds/recalls
- Coordinate reclamation of food with state agencies when necessary
- Serve as FNS food safety liaison with FSIS and other governmental agencies and private organizations

# Food Safety in ECOS

- Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS)

<https://ecos.usda.gov>

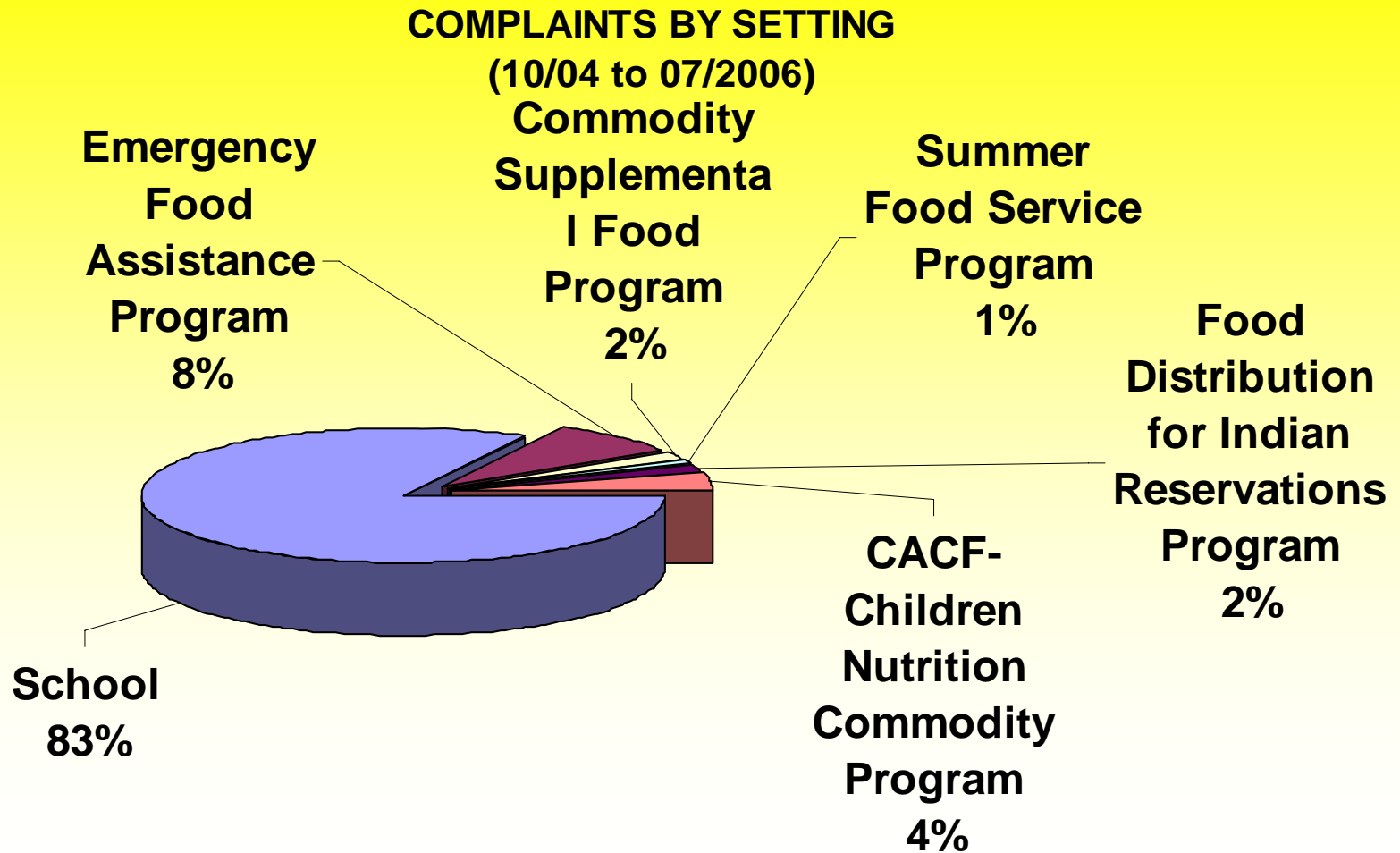
- Rapid Alert System (RAS) – Holds and Recalls on Commodity products
- Alerts on ECOS home page (Ex: Spinach)
- Food Safety Messages – (Ex: September daily messages)

# Commodity Food Safety Complaints

- Importance of reporting complaints in ECOS
  - Makes FNS aware of issues
  - May not be isolated to your operation
  - Contributes to other data for trends analysis
  - Ultimately leads to improved food safety measures
    - Example: Changes in product specifications.



# Number / Proportion of Food Safety Complaints by Setting (10/2004 – 07/2006)



Range 1% – 83%

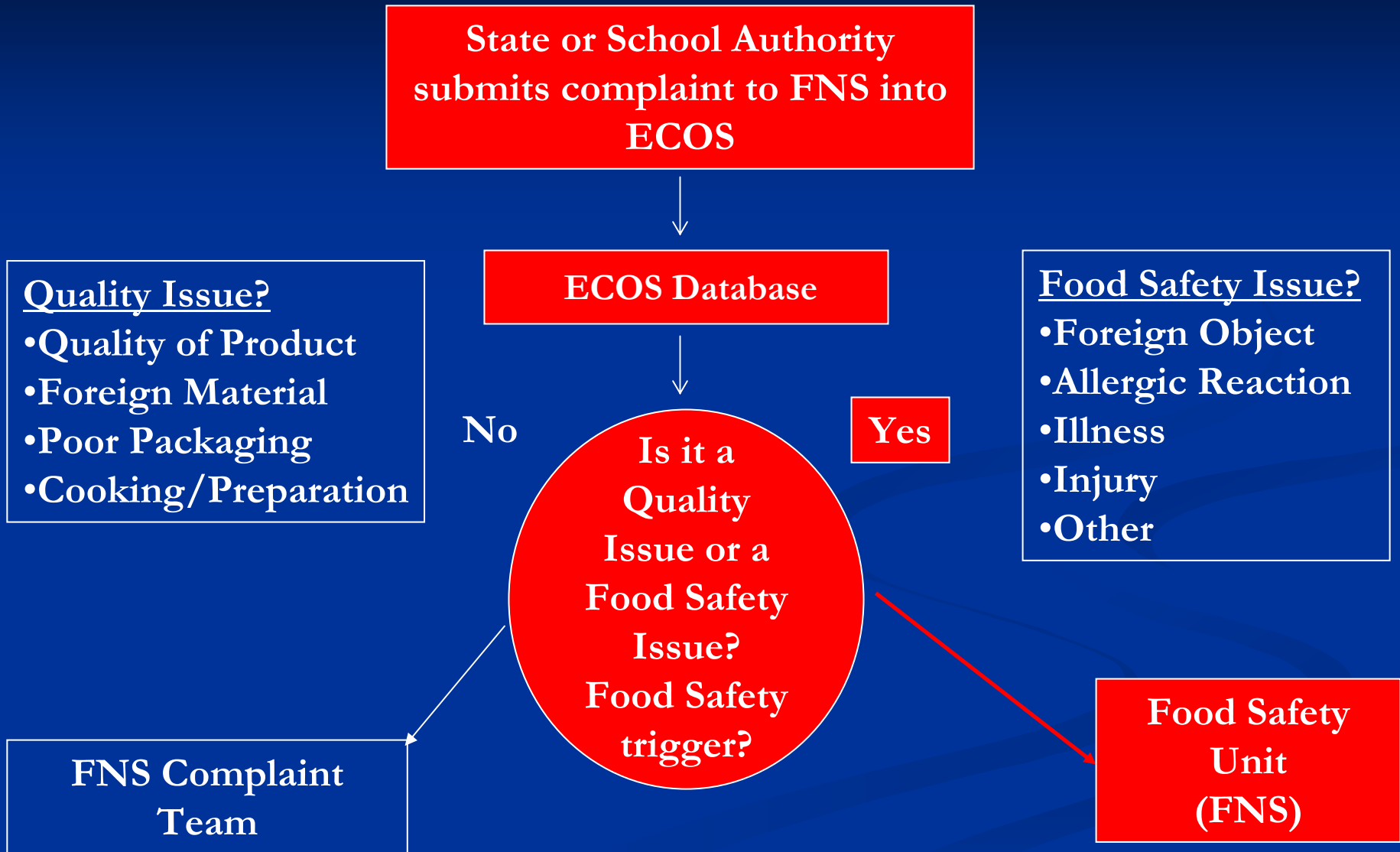
School – 83%

Summer Food Service Program – 1%

# Food Safety Complaints

- ECOS triggers for food safety
  - Foreign material
  - Illness
  - Injury
  - Allergic Reaction
  - Food Safety concern
  - All “Other”

# Path of a Quality or Food Safety Complaint



# Path of a Food Safety Complaint

Food Safety Unit  
(FNS)

- Quality Issue
  - Potential to become a food safety issue?

Inquiry,  
Action and  
Analysis

- Food Safety Issue
  - Foreign Object?
  - Allergic Reaction?
  - Illness?
  - Injury?
  - Other?

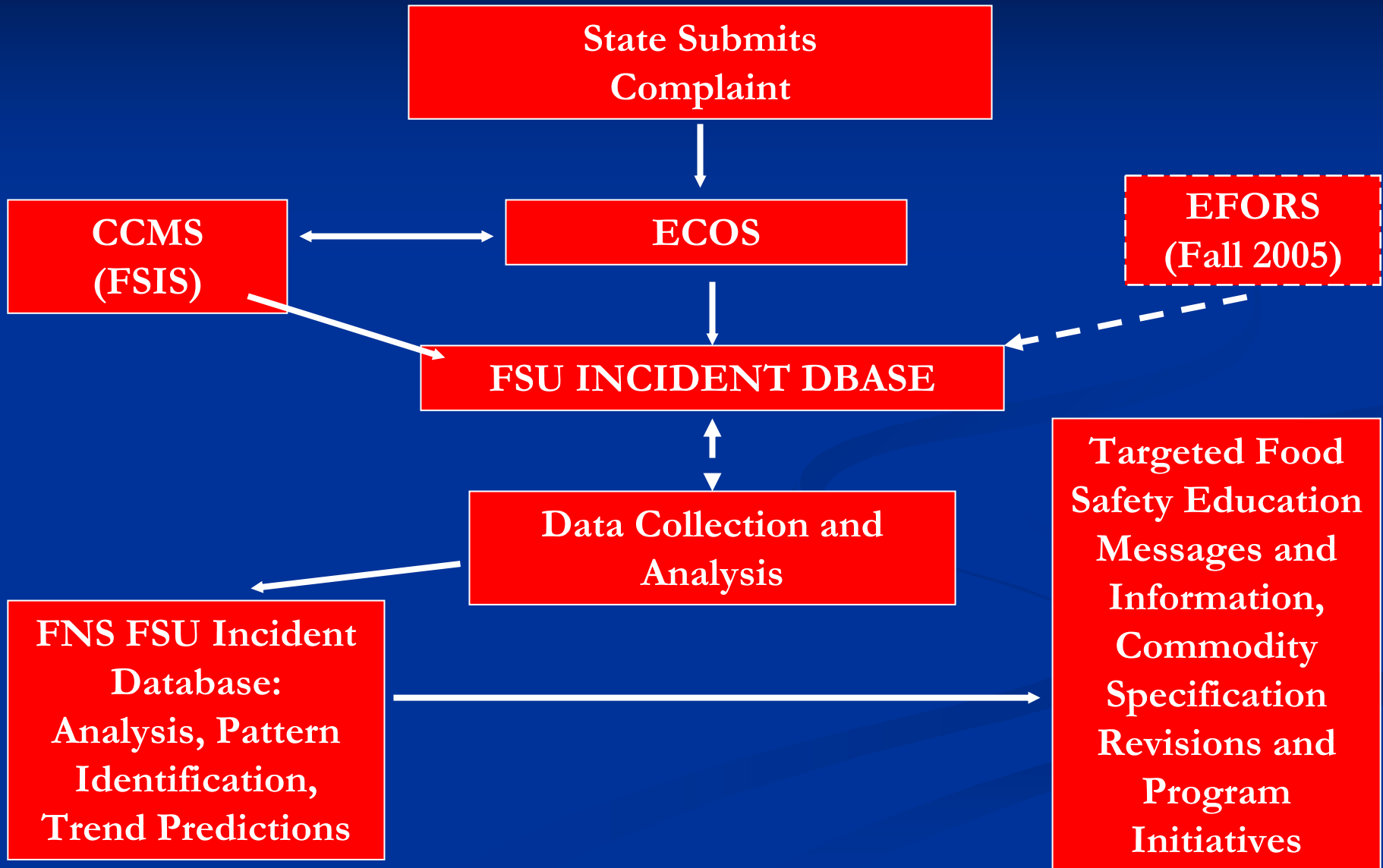
FNS Complaint Team

Report of food safety sent to  
either FDA or FSIS

FDA  
Regulated  
Commodity

FSIS  
Regulated  
Commodity

# ECOS Complaint Information (Data) Flow



# Commodity Food Safety Complaints

- Things to consider when reporting:
  - Identification of the product
    - Establishment numbers (meat and poultry)
    - Brands and Lot numbers (other than meats)
  - Foreign Materials
    - Dimensions!!
    - Details
  - Illnesses (if applicable)



# Illness Complaints

- Things to consider when reporting complaints of illness
  - Is the illness confirmed?
  - Has the local health agency been contacted?
  - Details
    - Why was the commodity suspected to cause illness?
    - Symptoms?
    - Report?

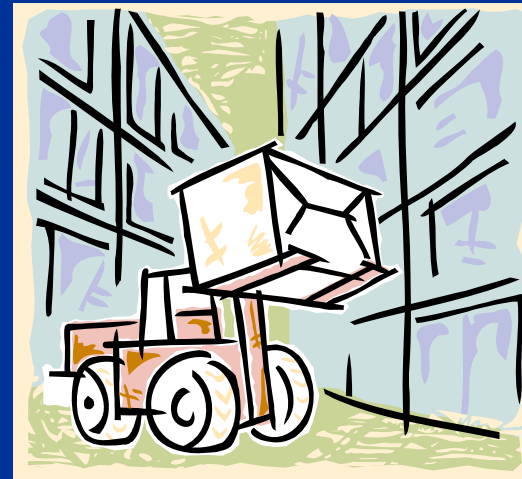
# Hold and Recalls

- Rapid Alert System in ECOS
  - More efficient than before
  - Alerts State contacts affected by commodity holds and recalls
  - Details and instructions provided
  - Allows for reporting online



# Holds and Recalls

- Traceability
- Communication
- Timely reporting



# Traceability

- FNS Identification
  - Contract and Delivery Order Numbers
- Be Prepared!
  - Will you be able to find product during a recall?
  - Do you have a tracking system in place?
  - Can you identify product by the FNS delivery order number?
  - Do you have a plan for securing and removing product from the food chain during a recall?

# Communication

- Can you contact your recipients quickly?
- Do you have a procedure for recipients to report information in the event of a hold or recall?
- FNS Food Safety Unit
  - Regional Office Contacts
  - Headquarters Contacts

# Timely Reporting

- Timely, Accurate Information Leads to:
  - Quicker resolution
  - Fewer Costs (Example: storage)



# Hold & Recall Data

- Used to inform upper managers and respond to Congressional & media inquiries
- Become basis for reimbursement of costs and product replacement

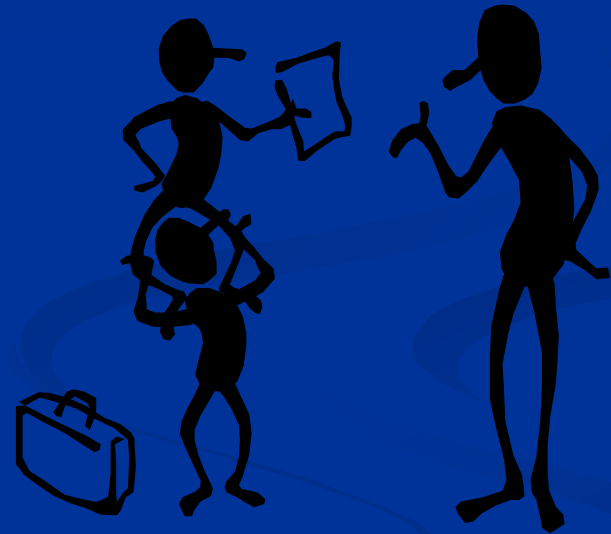


# FNS Resources

- [foodsafety@fns.usda.gov](mailto:foodsafety@fns.usda.gov)
  - Mail box
    - Additional information on complaints
    - Questions
    - Comments
  
- [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/food\\_safety.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/food_safety.htm)
  - Updated FNS Food Safety information
  - Links to other Federal resources (FSIS, FDA)

# Our Food Safety Partners

- States
- Regional Offices
- Other Federal Agencies



# Other USDA Resources

- Meat and Poultry Hotline
  - 1-888-MPHOTLINE
  - [Mph hotline.fsis@usda.gov](mailto:Mph hotline.fsis@usda.gov)
- Be Food Safe
- Thermy
- FightBAC!
- Is It Done Yet?



# NEXT....

- Pass the discussion to Shirley Roberts
- ECOS -- Hold and Recall details