

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
VICTORIA HOCHMAN and DONNA GREENE, Directors of Communications

CONTACT: CAREN HALBFINGER

(914) 813-5013

(914) 813-5000 (After Hours)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT AWARDED FOOD DEFENSE GRANT FROM FDA

Food service workers and managers to receive training on intentional contamination

The Westchester County Health Department has been awarded \$40,000 by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to develop two food defense training components that will be added to food service courses in Westchester County and may be used as a model throughout the country. These training sessions will educate restaurateurs about the potential for bioterrorism at food service operations and how they can reduce the risk at their establishments. Westchester County was one of only two counties nationwide to be awarded the competitive grant, along with Riverside, Calif.

“Although most state and local health departments require that food service workers complete some coursework in safe food handling, training typically focuses on preventing unintentional food-borne illness,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Westchester County Commissioner of Health. “Little, if any, focus is now given to preventing intentional food-borne illness or food defense. That’s why these lessons are so valuable and Westchester County is proud to be at the forefront in developing them.”

As part of its public health protection program, the Health Department developed its own Food Service Manager’s course back in 1985. The completion of this or a similar course is required for operators of all restaurants and food service establishments, except for operations with minimal or no food preparation on-site.

Through the FDA funding, two food defense training sessions of different lengths will be developed for incorporation into the current courses offered. Both sessions will include digital images of actual conditions found at restaurants that provide an opportunity for intentional food contamination. These images

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will be juxtaposed with images from other restaurants where these risks have been eliminated or minimized.

The Health Department expects to have the lessons up and running as a component of its Food Managers' classes in late 2010.

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