

FOOD SAFETY INFOSHEET

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**Outbreak
traced to
catered BBQ
that was held
at incorrect
temperatures**

Over 30 ill with *Clostridium perfringens* at parent-teacher conference in Evanston Ill.



At least 30 people became ill after chicken-based BBQ prepared by Merle's smokehouse was consumed at a parent-teacher event at Haven Middle School in Evanston, Illinois in February.



The BBQ pulled chicken tested positive for *Clostridium perfringens* spores. Improper holding temperatures during transport and at the school were likely factors in this outbreak.

Food was reportedly delivered by Merle's Smokehouse by 3pm. The BBQ dishes then sat out at room temperature throughout the afternoon and evening. The temperature of the food was not taken.

Clostridium perfringens spores often survive cooking but are not a problem until the food is held at an improper temperature. These spores can germinate and multiply to food poisoning levels if food is held between 41°F and 135°F for more than four hours.

What you can do:

If you are providing catered food to a temporary site:

- Ask whether the client has the proper tools to keep foods hot and measure temperatures.
- Remind the client of proper holding temperatures to avoid bacterial growth.

If you are organizing a hot food meal at a temporary event like parent-teacher conferences:

- Have the proper tools available, such as chafing dishes with a heat source, to keep the food above 135°F.
- Use a tip sensitive digital thermometer to measure temperature and monitor throughout the event.

