



Menu of State Turtle-Associated Salmonellosis Laws

Introduction

Turtles are often carriers of *salmonella*, which can cause serious salmonellosis infections in humans, particularly among vulnerable populations such as young children and the elderly.¹ In recent years, salmonellosis outbreaks linked to pet turtles have increased throughout the United States.²

Since 1975, the Food and Drug Administration has adopted regulations limiting the sale of small turtles with certain exceptions.³ Some states have exercised their own authority to establish laws that not only limit the sale of turtles but also regulate how turtles are sold, establish authority to test and destroy infected turtles, and limit the places where turtles may be kept. This menu addresses state and territorial laws regarding the sale of turtles, as well as other laws that limit turtle use and distribution.⁴

Laws Banning the Sale of Small Turtles

Small turtles are often sold as pets for young children, who may view the turtles as toys and consequently kiss, lick, or place the turtles in their mouths as they might any other small object.⁵ Thirteen states ban the sale of small turtles.⁶ Some states incorporate the federal standard by reference while others explicitly ban the sale of small turtles below a certain size. Although the federal standard applies to all states, the preemption doctrine allows states to establish more stringent requirements than the federal regulation regarding the sale of turtles.⁷ Preemption issues are complex, but generally, if state requirements are less stringent, the federal law prevails.⁸ Some states select to enact their own laws to ensure that state resources can be used for enforcement or in the event that the federal standard changes.

Turtle Salmonella Outbreaks

In 2012, there were eight multistate outbreaks of turtle-associated salmonellosis in the United States and Puerto Rico. Four hundred seventy-three cases were reported resulting in seventy-eight hospitalizations. Seventy percent of those affected were children under the age of 10.

Want to learn more? Visit [CDC's turtle salmonella web page](#) on the 2012 outbreaks.





Laws Banning Sale of Turtles

Three states, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee, ban the sale of all turtles.²¹

North Carolina law states that “[n]o turtle shall be sold, offered for sale, or bartered by any retail or wholesale establishment in North Carolina.”²² In **South Dakota**, “[a] person may not buy, sell, barter, or trade any species of turtle.”²³ Finally, per **Tennessee** law, “[i]t shall be unlawful for a person to sell, barter, exchange or otherwise transfer any turtle as a pet; or to import or cause to be imported any type of turtle in the State of Tennessee for such purposes.”²⁴

Certified *Salmonella*-Free Laws

Five states require that turtles sold within the jurisdiction be “certified salmonella free.”²⁵

The **District of Columbia** prohibits the sale of turtles and viable turtle eggs unless they can be “certified to be free” from *Salmonella*.²⁶

Similarly, **Louisiana** law states that “[n]o person shall receive a shipment of turtles or turtle eggs into this state through the United States mail, or by any other means, from any other state or foreign country, unless such turtles or turtle eggs are accompanied by . . . [a] health certificate issued by a duly authorized veterinarian certifying that the turtles or turtle eggs are free from *Salmonella Arizona*, and any other species of bacteria which might be harmful to humans or other turtles.”²⁷



New Jersey also requires that turtles four inches or larger are certified *Salmonella* free: “Live turtles of carapace length of four inches or greater shall not be sold or in any way distributed or offered for sale or distribution within the State unless the person or entity seeking to sell or distribute the turtles warrants to the satisfaction of the Department of Health and Senior Services that each shipment of turtles is free from *Salmonella* contamination.”²⁸

Authority to Test and Destroy Infected Turtles

Six states allow the state to test turtles for *Salmonella* and destroy infected turtles or turtle eggs.²⁹ For example, **Connecticut** law specifies that, after a state or local health department examines a turtle tank, “[s]hould a single such examination show the presence of salmonella organisms all turtles in the tank shall be destroyed.”³⁰

The **District of Columbia** allows the director of human services to “at any time take samples of tank water or any other appropriate method of sampling of turtles offered for sale or distribution and, after testing by a method deemed by the Director to be appropriate for the determination of the presence of bacteria, order the humane destruction of any turtle, lots of turtles, or turtle eggs found to be contaminated with bacteria of salmonella and Arizona genera or found to be held in water contaminated with those bacteria.”³¹

Oregon law states that “[t]he Department may take samples of turtles, tankwater or other appropriate samples from turtles sold, distributed or given away and cause laboratory examinations to be made. In the event turtles, so sampled, are found contaminated with Salmonella the Department may order the immediate humane destruction of any or all of the lot of turtles from which the samples were obtained.”³²

Laws Requiring Warnings, Instructions, or Other Materials

Six states and the District of Columbia require warning labels, health advisories, or other instructions in order to sell turtles.³³ For example, **District of Columbia** law states that a “warning notice shall be posted conspicuously at every display of turtles for retail sale or distribution or where the public may handle turtles”³⁴

Under **Connecticut** law, “[n]o person may sell a live turtle with a carapace length of four inches or greater unless (1) a caution notice is posted by the person selling turtles which warns that the transmission of salmonella disease by turtles is possible; (2) at the time of the sale of the turtle, the seller furnishes the buyer with a copy of the caution notice and information obtained from a veterinarian regarding the proper care and feeding for the species of turtle which is being sold; (3) the buyer signs a form stating that he has read the notice provided if the buyer is less than sixteen years of age, such form shall be signed by a parent or guardian.”³⁵

New York also requires a warning: “The following warning must be posted conspicuously at every display of turtles for retail sale or distribution or where the public may handle turtles, unless the requirement is waived in writing by the State Commissioner of Health: ‘CAUTION: Turtles may transmit bacteria causing disease in humans. It is important to wash your hands thoroughly after handling turtles or material in a turtle bowl; not to allow water or any other substance from a turtle bowl to come in contact with your food or areas where your food is prepared; and to make sure that these precautions are followed by children or others handling turtles.’”³⁶



Similarly, **Pennsylvania** law states that “[i]nstructions designating the proper care and treatment of live turtles and information from [CDC] on human salmonellosis infection associated with reptiles shall accompany each retail sale of any turtle and shall be distributed to the purchaser by the seller thereof at the time of the sale.”³⁷

Laws Specific to Vulnerable Populations

States have also enacted laws that limit turtle exposure for vulnerable populations. This includes children in day care and other facilities and programs, as well as those seeking medical care in health and long-term care facilities.

Laws Pertaining to Children

Fourteen states limit turtle access around children.³⁸ **Arizona** law bans turtles in childcare facilities: "A licensee shall ensure that a staff member . . . [p]rohibits reptiles, such as turtles, iguanas, snakes, and lizards, in the facility."³⁹ **Delaware** law bans turtles from childcare facilities: "Animals such as ferrets, turtles, iguanas, lizards or other reptiles, psittacine birds (birds of the parrot family), or any other animals that are known to be carriers of illnesses shall not be kept at the Center."⁴⁰

In **West Virginia** childcare facilities, "[I]ive animals, including birds and turtles, shall be excluded from food preparation, storage and serving areas, and in-use dining areas."⁴¹ West Virginia law further states that childcare centers "shall not have on the premises ferrets, birds, reptiles, including snakes, lizards and turtles, or any wild or dangerous animals."⁴² Additionally, West Virginia bans turtles in pre-K classrooms: "A WV Pre-K classroom shall not have on the premises ferrets, birds, reptiles, including snakes, lizards and turtles, or any wild or dangerous animals."⁴³

Mississippi law requires confining turtles located in residential child care or child placing agencies: "An animal that is not aggressive, but could pose a threat to the health and safety of children such as, but not limited, to lizards, snakes, and turtles, shall be routinely confined (e.g., a cage or an aquarium) in an appropriate container."⁴⁴

Laws Pertaining to Medical Facilities

Seven states and one territory limit turtle access in medical facilities.⁴⁵ In **Guam**, turtles are excluded from nursing homes: "Live animals, including birds and turtles, shall be excluded from within nursing homes and from adjacent areas under their control except as specifically authorized by the Department."⁴⁶ **Idaho** law prohibits turtles in skilled and intermediate nursing care facilities: "Turtles are not permitted in the facility."⁴⁷ In **Tennessee**, turtles are prohibited in maternity homes: "Turtles shall not be kept as pets because (a) a proper environment is elaborate and difficult to achieve and (b) they are carriers of salmonella."⁴⁸ **Maine** law bans turtles in micropigmentation practitioner facilities: "Live animals, including birds and turtles, shall be excluded from the establishment, and from adjacent areas under the control of the license holder."⁴⁹

Missouri law also excludes turtles from food-preparation areas in long-term care facilities: "Live animals, including birds and turtles shall be excluded from the food storage service and preparation areas."⁵⁰ **Illinois** law excludes turtles from food preparation and

The US Food and Drug Administration's Tips for Consumers

The US Food and Drug Administration's Tips for Consumers

- Keep turtles out of homes with children under age five, elderly persons, and those with weakened immune systems.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching a turtle, its food or housing, or anything else that comes into contact with a turtle or its habitat.
- Watch for symptoms of Salmonella infection, such as diarrhea, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, and headache.

For more tips, visit the [FDA's Consumer Health Information](#) page.

dining areas in community living facilities: "Live animals, including cats, dogs, birds and turtles, shall be excluded from all food preparation and dining areas."⁵¹

Laws Prohibiting Turtles in Food Establishments

Four states prohibit turtles in food establishments.⁵²

Nevada law states that "live animals, including birds and turtles, are not allowed on the premises of a food establishment or on adjacent areas under the control of the holder of the permit for the operation of the food establishment."⁵³ **New York** also prohibits turtles in food establishments, including in mobile food service operations: "Live animals, including birds and turtles, are to be excluded from food service operations."⁵⁴

Tennessee law specifically excludes turtles in bed and breakfast food preparation areas: "No birds or turtles shall be permitted in food preparation areas."⁵⁵ Tennessee law also prohibits turtles in food establishments: "Live animals, including birds and turtles, shall be excluded from within the food service operational premises and from adjacent areas under the control of the permit holder."⁵⁶



Finally, **West Virginia** law states that "[l]ive animals, including birds and turtles, shall be excluded from food preparation, storage, and serving areas and in in-use dining areas"⁵⁷ in "all institutions and schools, care facilities, lodging facilities, recreational facilities, and public restrooms."⁵⁸

Acknowledgments and Disclaimers

This document was developed by Aila Hoss, JD, Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Fellow, and Don Benken, JD, MPH, Senior Public Health Analyst, with the assistance of Matthew Penn, JD, MLIS, Director, with the Public Health Law Program (PHLP) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support. For further technical assistance with this resource list, please contact PHLP at phlawprogram@cdc.gov. PHLP provides technical assistance and public health law resources to advance the use of law as a public health tool. PHLP cannot provide legal advice on any issue and cannot represent any individual or entity in any matter. PHLP recommends seeking the advice of an attorney or other qualified professional with questions regarding the application of law to a specific circumstance. The findings and conclusions in this summary are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC.

This menu includes states laws collected from WestlawNext between March 14, 2014, and April 22, 2014.

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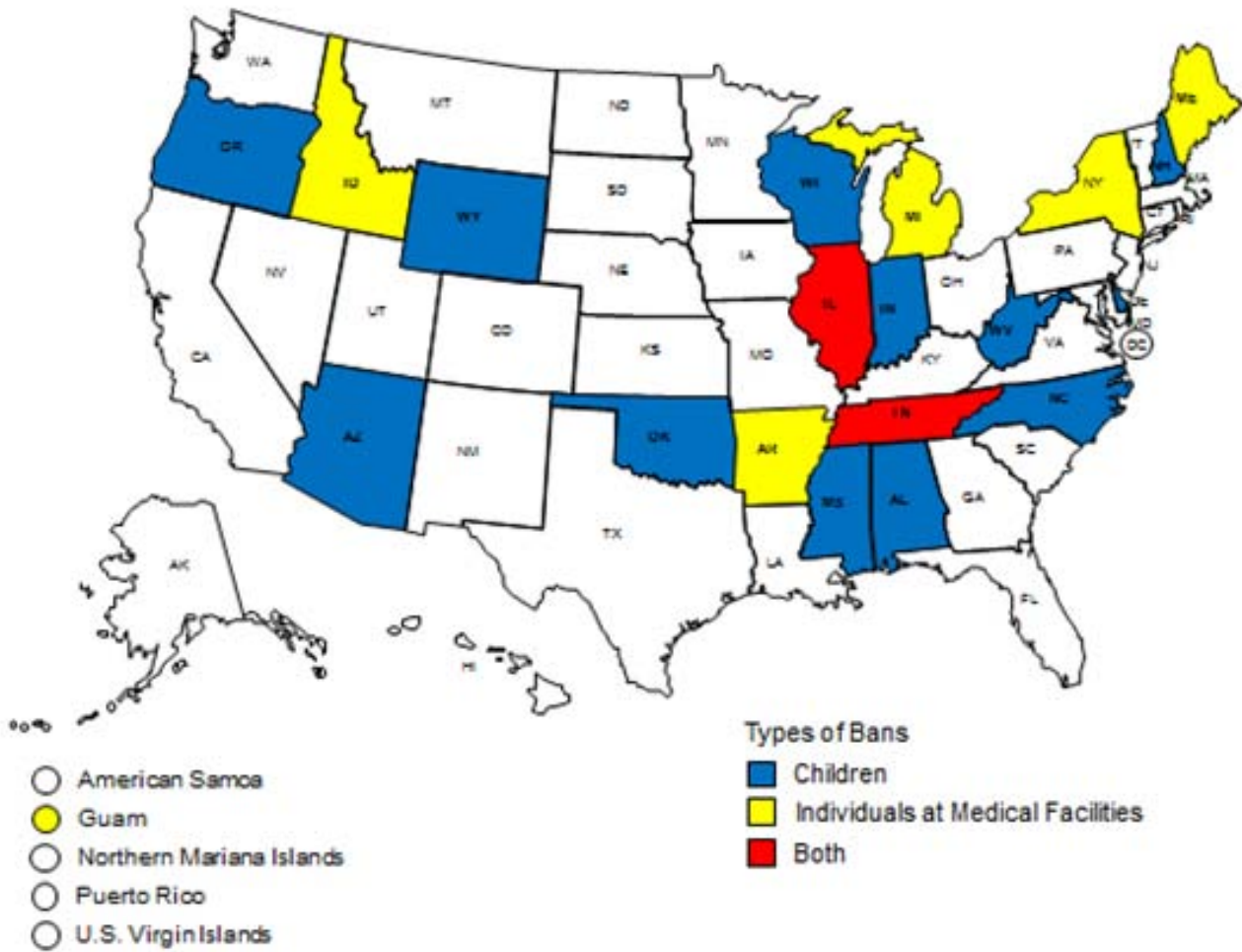
Appendix 1: Table on State Turtle-Associated Salmonellosis Laws

	Small Turtle Bans	Total Ban	Certify <i>Salmonella</i> Free	Authority to Test & Destroy	Warnings & Education	Vulnerable Populations (Children)	Vulnerable Populations (Medical Facilities)	Food Establishments
Totals	13 total federal standard: 2 4 inch: 10 6 inch: 1	3	5	6	7	14	8	4
Alabama						1		
Alaska								
Arizona						1		
Arkansas	6-inch rule						1	
California	4-inch rule			1	1			
Colorado	4-inch rule							
Connecticut	4-inch rule			1	1			
Delaware						1		
District of Columbia			1	1	1			
Florida								
Georgia								
Guam							1	
Hawaii								
Idaho							1	
Illinois	Federal standard					1	1	
Indiana	4-inch rule					1		
Iowa								
Kansas								
Kentucky								
Louisiana			1	1				
Maine							1	
Maryland								
Massachusetts								
Michigan					1			
Minnesota								
Mississippi						1		
Missouri							1	





	Small Turtle Bans	Total Ban	Certify <i>Salmonella</i> Free	Authority to Test & Destroy	Warnings & Education	Vulnerable Populations (Children)	Vulnerable Populations (Medical Facilities)	Food Establishments
Montana	4-inch rule							
Nebraska								
Nevada								1
New Hampshire	4-inch rule					1		
New Jersey	4-inch rule		1					
New Mexico								
New York	4-inch rule			1	1		1	1
North Carolina		1				1		
North Dakota								
Ohio								
Oklahoma						1		
Oregon	4-inch rule			1		1		
Pennsylvania	Federal standard		1		1			
Rhode Island			1					
South Carolina								
South Dakota		1						
Tennessee		1				1	1	1
Texas								
Utah								
Vermont								
Virginia								
Washington	4-inch rule				1			
West Virginia						1		1
Wisconsin						1		
Wyoming						1		

Appendix 3: Map of State Turtle Laws Targeting Vulnerable Populations



1. *Turtle-Associated Salmonellosis in Humans—United States, 2006—2007*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (July 6, 2007 / 56(26);649–52), available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5626a1.htm>.
2. *Eight Multistate Outbreaks of Human Salmonella Infections Linked to Small Turtles* (Final Update), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (Oct. 18, 2013) <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/small-turtles-03-12/>.
3. 40 Fed. Reg. 22543 (May 23, 1975).
4. CDC’s Public Health Law Program (PHLP) collected state and territorial provisions that referenced turtles between March 14, 2014, and April 22, 2014, using WestlawNext, a legal research database.
5. Julie R. Harris, Karen P. Neil, Casey Barton Behravesh, Mark J. Sotir, Frederick J. Angulo FJ, *Recent multistate outbreaks of human Salmonella infections acquired from turtles: a continuing public health challenge*, Clin Infect Dis. (2010/50:554–559; 555).
6. Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington. See Ark. Admin. Code 007.10.25-II; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 17, § 2612.1; Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 35-80-108(1)(j)(I); 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1201-11:25.00; Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 19a-102a(b); Ill. Adm. Code tit. 8, § 25.110(c); 312 Ind. Admin. Code 9-5-7.5; Mont. Code Ann. 87-5-706(1)(f); N.H. Code Admin. R. Agr. 1703.02; N.J. Admin. Code § 8:23-2.1(a); N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10 § 2.58(a); Or. Admin. R. 603-011-0420(1); 35 Pa. Code § 1071; and Wash. Admin. Code 246-100-191(5).
7. See, e.g., *Altria Group v. Good*, 555 U.S. 70 (2008), *Maryland v. Louisiana*, 451 U.S. 725 (1981).
8. *Id.*
9. 21 C.F.R. § 1240.62(b).
10. *Id.* § 1240.62(c).
11. Illinois and Pennsylvania. See Il. Adm. Code tit. 8, § 25.110(c) and 35 Pa. Code § 1071.
12. Il. Adm. Code tit. 8, § 25.110(c).
13. 35 Pa. Code § 1071.
14. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington. See Cal. Code Regs, tit. 17, § 2612.1; Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 35-80-108(1)(j)(I); 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1201-11:25.00; Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 19a-102a(b); 312 Ind. Admin. Code 9-5-7.5; Mont. Code Ann. § 87-5-706(1)(f); N.H. Code Admin. R. Agr. 1703.02; N.J. Admin. Code § 8:23-2.1(a); N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10, § 2.58(a); Or. Admin. R. 603-011-0420(1); and Wash. Admin. Code 246-100-191(5).
15. Cal. Code Regs, tit. 17, § 2612.1.
16. 312 Ind. Admin. Code 9-5-7.5.
17. Or. Admin. R. 603-011-0420(1).
18. Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 35-80-108(1)(j)(I); 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1201-11:25.00.
19. Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 35-80-108(1)(j)(I).
20. Ark. Admin. Code 007.10.25-II.
21. North Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee. See 10A N.C. Admin. Code 41A.0302(b); S.D. Admin. R. 41:07:10:04, and Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1200-14-01-.36.
22. 10A N.C. Admin. Code 41A.0302(b).
23. S.D. Admin. R. 41:07:10:04.
24. Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1200-14-01-.36.

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25. District of Columbia, Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. See D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 25-J, § 310.1; La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 3:2358.10; N.J. Admin. Code 8:23-2.1(b); 28 Pa. Code § 27.192; and R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. § 4-4-27.
 26. D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 25-J, § 310.1.
 27. La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 3:2358.10.
 28. N.J. Admin. Code 8:23-2.1(b).
 29. California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Louisiana, New York, and Oregon. See Cal. Code Regs. tit. 17, § 2612.1(b); Conn. Agencies Reg. § 19a-36-A46(3); D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 25-J, § 311.1; La. Admin Code. tit. 7, pt. XXI, § 2321(A)(1); La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 3:2358.12(c); N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10, § 2.58(b); and Or. Admin. R. 603-011-0420(2). The federal ban on the sale of small turtles previously authorized the humane destruction of infected turtles under the supervision of the FDA. The FDA amended this regulation, removing provisions that made infected turtles routinely subject to destruction. Turtles Intrastate and Interstate Requirements, Fed. Reg. 78, 143 (Jul. 25, 2013) *available at* <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-07-25/pdf/FR-2013-07-25.pdf>. Confirmation of the final rule *available at* <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-11-07/pdf/2013-26734.pdf>.
 30. Conn. Agencies Regs. § 19a-36-A46(3).
 31. D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 25-J, § 311.1.
 32. Or. Admin. R. 603-011-0420(2).
 33. California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington. See Cal. Code Reg. tit. 17, § 2612.1 (e), Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 19a-102a(c); D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 25-J, § 310; Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. 287.313; N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10, § 2.58(c); 35 Pa. Stat. § 1077; and Wash. Admin. Code 246-100-191(3).
 34. D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 25-J, § 310.
 35. Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 19a-102a(c). For the caution notice requirements, see Conn. Agencies Regs. § 19a-102a-1 and Conn. Agencies Regs. § 19a-102a-2.
 36. N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10, § 2.58(c).
 37. 35 Pa. Stat. § 1077.
 38. Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. See Ala. Admin. Code r. 660-5-25-.06(6)(h)(8); Ala. Admin. Code r. 660-5-29-.03(7)(b)(3); Ariz. Admin. Code R9-5-513(B)(2); Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 36-1409.01(B)(2); Del. Admin. Code 9 § 101-53.1.4; Del. Admin. Code 9 § 103-40.1.3; Del. Admin. Code 9 § 103-54.1.3; Ill. Admin. Code tit. 89, § 407.300(f); Ill. Admin. Code tit. 89, § 408.30; Ill. Admin. Code tit. 89, § 406.8(g); 470 Ind. Admin. Code 3-4.7-65; Miss. Admin. Code 18-7:1.VII(D)(6)(c); N.H. Code Admin. R. He-C 4002.14(n)(5); N.H. Code Admin. R. He-C 4002.14(n)(6); 15A N.C. Admin. Code 18A.2831(a); 15A N.C. Admin. Code 18A.2831(a); Okla. Admin. Code 340:110-3-44(c)(2)(H); Okla. Admin. Code 340:110-3-86(c)(5); Or. Admin. R. 414-300-0240(2); Or. Admin. R. 414-205-0100(15); Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-04-03-.12(11)(c)(12); Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0250-04-05-.13. App.(J)(1); W. Va. Code R. § 64-21-7.8; W. Va. Code R. § 78-1-18.3; W. Va. Code R. § 126-28-12.10; Wis. Admin. Code S DCF 251.07(7)(d); Wis. Admin. Code S DCF 252.08(4); and Wy Rules and Regulations Fams CCFS Ch. 9 s 4(b)(xx)(F).
 39. Ariz. Admin. Code R9-5-513(B)(2).
 40. Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 36-1409.01(B)(2).
 41. W. Va. Code R. § 64-21-7.8.
 42. *Id.* § 78-1-18.3.

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43. *Id.* § 126-28-12.10.
 44. Miss. Admin. Code 18-7:1.VII(D)(6)(c).
 45. Arkansas, Guam, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, New York, and Tennessee. See Ark. Admin. Code 007.05.10-7(F)(2); Ark. Admin. Code 007.05.17-7(F)(2); 26 Guam Admin. R. & Regs. § 6336(a); Idaho Admin. Code 16.03.02.202(02); Ill. Adm. Code tit. 77, § 370.1460(u); 10-144 Me. Code R. Ch. 211 § 3(C)(2); Mo. Code Regs. Ann. tit. 19, § 30-87.030(9); N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10, § 702.6(a); and Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0250-04-07-.10. App.(J)(1).
 46. 26 Guam Admin. R. & Regs. § 6336(a).
 47. Idaho Admin. Code 16.03.02.202(02).
 48. Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 0250-04-07-.10. App.(J)(1).
 49. 10-144 Me. Code R. Ch. 211 § 3(C)(2).
 50. Mo. Code Regs. Ann. tit. 19, § 30-87.030(9).
 51. Ill. Adm. Code tit. 77, § 370.1460(u).
 52. Nevada, New York, Tennessee, and West Virginia. State laws specifically mentioning food establishments or preparation areas not specific to a vulnerable population such as children or those receiving care at a medical facility. See Nev. Admin. Code 446.625(1); N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10 § 14-1.183; N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10 § 14-1.182; Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1200-23-02-.03(2)(d); Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1200-23-01-.02(10)(p)(3); W. Va. Code R. § 64-18-5.10; and W. Va. Code R. § 64-18-1.
 53. Neb. Admin. Code 446.625(1).
 54. N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 10 § 14-1.183. See *id.* § 14-1.182 for the mobile food services provision.
 55. Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1200-23-02-.03(2)(d).
 56. *Id.* 1200-23-01-.02(10)(p)(3).
 57. W. Va. Code R. § 64-18-5.10.
 58. *Id.* § 64-18-1. This may apply to vulnerable populations, such as children; however, given that “children” was not specifically mentioned, it was categorized in the food establishments section.