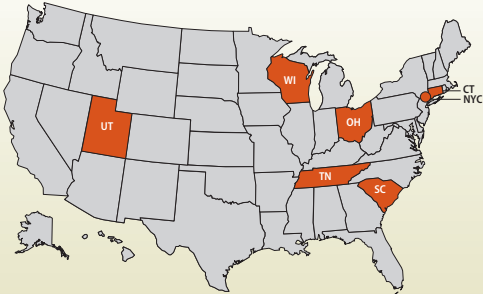


# FoodCORE + U

## Foodborne Diseases Centers for Outbreak Response Enhancement



FoodCORE Centers, 2012

*"It is very rewarding to be a part of the connection between students and the FoodCORE program. FoodCORE closes the gap between academia and the real world by providing students with valuable experiences. Students are graduating with a deeper understanding of foodborne outbreak response as well as credible references and potential job offers."*

– Amy Woron

Molecular Biologist, Tennessee State Public Health Laboratory  
Adjunct Professor, Tennessee State University

It's hard to imagine that simply having students talk with patients about chicken livers, raw milk, and sprouts could help protect our food supply and save lives, but it's true. These students have become integral in identifying the culprits in outbreaks of foodborne illness across the country.

### U niversity partnerships—at the core of FoodCORE

Student interviewers are a vital part of Foodborne Diseases Centers for Outbreak Response Enhancement, or FoodCORE, which is a program of centers that work together to develop better ways to investigate and respond to outbreaks of foodborne diseases. FoodCORE students quickly interview patients who became sick after eating contaminated food. Six out of seven FoodCORE centers hire students from nearby universities and schools of public health and train them to interview patients.

### You ate what?

During the interviews, students ask the patients what foods they ate before they got sick. Students often conduct interviews after regular working hours and on weekends, when patients are easier to reach.



FoodCORE program coordinators have been pleased with the students' contributions. "The students are doing real world public health, helping prevent the spread of disease. They bring a superior level of enthusiasm to their interviews," said Sharon Hurd, FoodCORE-Connecticut Program Coordinator.

Since 2009, more than 64 students from 15 universities have been involved in this program. The program has had many benefits:

- **Public health investigators** have been able to get faster and more complete food histories, which are essential for responding to a foodborne outbreak.
- **Staff at FoodCORE centers** have formed vital working relationships with staff at nearby colleges and universities.
- **Students** gain experiences that prepare them for careers in public health.

Several student interviewers have gone on to work in public health. For example, one student is now FoodCORE-Wisconsin's student team coordinator. Another student, who worked for FoodCORE-New York City's team, joined CDC as an epidemiologist. A student who worked in Utah's FoodCORE center said the experience helped him see face-to-face the people affected by

disease outbreaks:



*"In epidemiology, it's easy to get lost in the numbers and statistics related to the investigation of a disease. In reality, they aren't just numbers, they're people, and those of us in public health have committed our lives to protecting people,"* said Randy Leggett, former FoodCORE-Utah student interviewer. *"I am grateful for the opportunity I had as a FoodCORE student interviewer. The experience taught me about real world enteric disease investigations and reaffirmed my dedication to public health."*

Patients who are interviewed by students might wonder, "Why is this student asking me what I ate?" The answer is simple: That student is helping to protect our food supply and save lives.

