

# **Making the Society of Healthcare Foodservice Management Work for You!**

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## **Basic References for Food Service Directors**

If you are a dietitian, you may be receiving a lot of mail and messages from the Society for Healthcare Foodservice Management (HFM). When you have a crowded in-box, it's often easy to dismiss this as "junk mail," but I encourage you to take a closer look if you haven't already. When I arrived at my new assignment as Chief, NCD at Ft. Belvoir last summer, I started hearing about the resources HFM puts out to help independent food service operators, such as "Successful Operations Guide," with advice on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your food service organization and "Making an Informed Decision," which is a guide for administrators to use when considering outsourcing.

HFM has many other tools to help food service directors ranging from educational videos on such topics as future food service technology and hospitality services, quarterly newsletters that address new trends in food service, improving patient satisfaction, equipment updates, JCAHO issues, etc, and networking opportunities through their annual conference and email list serve. Other helpful tools HFM offers are organizational self-assessment modules on financial management, clinical services, production, catering, supply, etc. You download the modules and answer questions about how your organization operates and then you tally up your answers and find out whether your facility's practices rank among "best practices" on down to one "needing improvement."

## **Beyond the Basics: Benchmarking Programs**

Finally, the most interactive feedback HFM can provide on how your organization compares with other independent hospital food service organizations is through its monthly benchmarking programs for financial management, patient satisfaction, and dining hall satisfaction. There are over 600 facilities that participate in the financial benchmarking program, and over 50 facilities that participate in the patient and dining hall satisfaction programs. The patient and dining hall satisfaction surveys are virtually identical to the MEDCOM satisfaction surveys, so it is very easy to participate in these programs. DeWitt Army Hospital recently obtained feedback from the first quarter's worth of inpatient satisfaction data submitted and found that compared to 14 other civilian facilities with 1-150 inpatients, we had the highest inpatient satisfaction scores!

The financial benchmarking program is the most challenging HFM program to participate in, especially with the government's rules for labor, establishment of selling prices and limitations on catering as well as the limited reimbursement for inpatient and outpatient services. Despite these limitations, the financial benchmarking program is potentially the most rewarding program offered through HFM for identifying areas within our operations that can be improved in comparison with civilian facilities. The reports compare facilities of similar size based on food, labor, and supply costs per patient meal, cost of floor stock per patient day, lost revenue per patient day, net costs per patient day, meals per labor hour for combined patient and dining facility operations, and labor hours per meal for all operations. After participating in the benchmarking program for six months, HFM provides a graphic display charting your operations against the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles results for peers in similar size facilities. In addition, the HFM financial benchmarking program helps identify the amount of foregone revenue associated with military food service operations which can be used to educate administrators on the pros and cons of outsourcing.

### **Additional Internet Resources**

The HFM website, [www.hfm.org](http://www.hfm.org), has more information about its benchmarking programs, as well as its dashboard program which allows you to select certain financial and satisfaction indicators to monitor (cost per patient day, labor costs and FTEs, customer satisfaction, employee morale, etc), online education programs in health and safety, dietary services, and customer service, and links to industry publications and companies that do business with the food service industry.