

# INTRODUCTION

Foodborne illness in the United States is a major cause of personal distress, preventable death, and avoidable economic burden. It is estimated that foodborne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the United States each year.

The Department of Health, which is responsible for overseeing food safety in the District of Columbia, has completed a major revision of its food safety regulations applicable to retail food stores and services, such as restaurants and grocery stores; and food vending operations and institutions, such as nursing homes and child care centers.

These new regulations incorporate the 1999 federal *Food Code*, with amendments that are specific to the District of Columbia. The 1999 federal *Food Code* is the core of the regulations. Why has the District adopted the federal *Food Code*? We have adopted the federal *Food Code* for the following reasons:

- There are over 5,000 food establishments in the District, which contribute significantly to the District's economy;
- The District's retail food service industry is supported by thousands of residents, commuters and visitors each year;
- The adoption of the federal *Food Code* reflects the most current science and offers the best strategies to ensure a safer food supply in the District; and
- The adoption of the federal *Food Code* is a major step in providing the District with one of the best, food-safety programs in the nation.

The Department of Health stands ready to assist you in making a smooth transition to the new District of Columbia Food Code.