

PREPARING FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS TO REOPEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As local and state municipalities allow restaurants to resume dine-in services, these establishments need to think about how they can open while still providing a healthy environment that incorporates social distancing and other disease-preventive controls. Based on the recently published *COVID-19 Reopening Guidance: A Guide for the Restaurant Industry* by the National Restaurant Association, Penn State Extension has developed this fact sheet for small and local operations in Pennsylvania. It is important to note that these establishments must adhere to all state and local regulations and guidance.

BEFORE REOPENING

- » Deep clean the entire facility. Remember to use approved sanitizers on food-contact surfaces. Disinfectants can be used on non-food-contact surfaces. Deep cleaning should not only be completed before opening but also on a set schedule for regular detailed cleaning (weekly or more depending on use).
- » Inspect all food that has been on the premises since the closure was put in place for potential contamination that may lead to a foodborne illness. Check use-by or expiration dates on perishable (TCS, temperature control for safety) foods and dry goods. Discard any food that has passed the manufacturer's use-by date.
- » Arrange seating in dining areas to ensure at least 6 feet of separation between tables. Set a maximum capacity for your dining area based on the square footage and seating arrangement. This capacity will likely be significantly lower than the original capacity.

- » Full-service restaurants with at-table ordering should consider implementing reservation-only or call-ahead seating. Install barriers such as plexiglass shields in front of the register.
- » If wait areas are still in place, implement procedures to separate groups of guests. This could be accomplished by marking spaced standing areas with tape or separating seats. Long benches capable of holding multiple groups of guests may need to be removed.
- » Install hand sanitizing stations near high-touch areas, such as by the register, and in other easy-access locations.
- » Develop a customer flow and mark that pattern with floor signs to ensure space to minimize the potential for close contact between people. This is especially important for the restroom areas where an attendant or signage may be needed to enforce distancing.
- » Develop procedures to enable employees to maintain physical distancing while servicing customers. Train employees and conduct a walk-through prior to opening so that everyone understands and can operate effectively when the operation opens.
- » If and where possible, install electronic order and payment systems to reduce direct interaction.
- » Establish procedures to provide food, condiments and beverages directly to the customer instead of allowing for the use of shared-service options such as salad bars where there is the potential for multiple people, both staff and customers, handling food, utensils or equipment.
- » Reduce menu offerings to improve efficiency and reduce waste.



DURING OPERATIONS

- » Consider implementing disposable table covers, plateware, plasticware, and drinkware for operations with dishwasher capacity issues or define procedures to ensure proper sanitation of eating utensils, plateware, and drinkware.
- » Require patrons to wear a mask or face covering upon entry. Consider providing complimentary masks for those without masks. Offer a hygienic option, such as a small paper bag or an envelope, for guests to store their masks during the meal.
- » Have a host explain the safety rules to customers upon entry or install a posted sign. These rules should include expectations of customers while on the premises, banning of physical contact such as handshaking, flow of traffic, and how an order will be placed and delivered.
- » Limit seating to that required by law or a maximum of four to six people per table.
- » Consider providing disposable menus or implement procedures needed to clean and disinfect menus handled by guests.
- » Between seatings, clean and sanitize tabletops and condiment bottles. Disinfect electronic order and payment touchpads, ink pens, reusable menus, seats, and any other surfaces that customers may have contacted.
- » Replacing refillable condiment bottles and salt, pepper, and sugar dispensers with individual portion-controlled packets. Do not put these single-use items on tables; rather, provide them as requested, discarding if unused.
- » Remove prewrapped condiments, lemons, and other individual items from self-service areas. Single-serve condiments and prewrapped straws can be provided when ordering.
- » Procedures for refilling beverages and garnishes should be reviewed to determine how to limit employee-to-consumer exposure.
- » Actively manage customers to prevent crowded situations in and around the bar, waiting areas, cashier/register, and bathrooms.
- » Clean restrooms frequently (hourly or more often based on the number of patrons). Ensure that soap, disposable hand towels, and hand sanitizer are always available.
- » Only customers should package uneaten food in take-home containers. Employees should not assist customers with packaging served food at the table.
- » Require delivery drivers to wear masks when unloading food. Designate a place for drivers to wait until the order can be reviewed and accepted.

EMPLOYEES

- » Employees should know the symptoms of COVID-19 and be advised to check themselves for signs, notify their supervisor, and stay home if they are sick.
- » Employees should wear masks or face coverings, especially where regulated, such as when interfacing with customers.
- » Employees should maintain physical distance. Arrange the employee break area to accommodate appropriate social distancing.
- » Employees must wash hands frequently.
- » Assign specific tasks to employees. An employee responsible for busing or clearing tables should not handle other tasks. Train employees to follow proper procedures and use personal protective equipment (PPE).

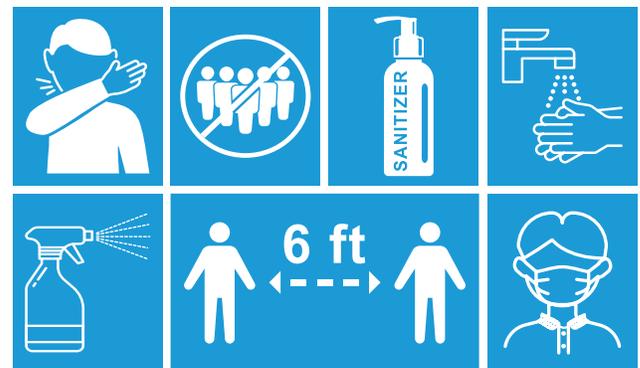
Establishments must adhere to state and local rules and recognize that these rules can change as local conditions change, so it is important to stay current. By enacting stringent rules and adhering to them, food establishments not only create but also ensure a safer environment for their customers and employees.

REFERENCES

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