

COVID-19 Reopening Food Service Specific Considerations

Prior to Resuming Operations:

1. Identify gating criteria and establish metrics and benchmarks to determine when and how to expand functions and adjust restrictions and mitigation measures
2. Make sure employee health policies are in place, updated, communicated to employees, and easily understood. Consider employee temperature screening if necessary as well as flexible leave policies to encourage sick staff to stay home.
3. Evaluate your operating procedures for sanitizing and disinfecting. The frequency of cleaning and sanitizing should be increased when operational in all employee and public areas with an emphasis on high traffic areas and frequent contact surfaces. Make sure workers have proper training, equipment, and access to products according to EPA's registry of disinfectants.
 - Cleaning agents should be reviewed to ensure they meet EPA guidelines, are approved for use and are effective against COVID-19 and other viruses.
4. All employees should receive training on COVID-19 safety and sanitation protocols, including self-protection measures like hand washing and how to wear masks properly.
5. Conduct environmental health and safety inspection and related maintenance activities. This is especially important for buildings that were closed and have been unoccupied. This may include inspecting the HVAC system and replacing filters, discarding any expired products (food, cleaning products, etc.), inspecting the fire and CO systems, identifying any leaks or mold growth, inspecting for presence of pests including rodents, etc. Also treat the water system and/or flush water lines by opening faucets and allowing water to run free for several minutes as stagnant water in pipes can lead to water quality issues. Pour water down any floor drains to keep sewage gas from coming into facility.
6. Develop a comprehensive COVID-19 prevention plan and specific procedures that identify and incorporate the needs of the facility. Consider the items listed in the following section when developing plans and procedures.
7. Determine a protocol for responding to staff or customer with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection. Be as detailed as possible.
8. Develop a routine evaluation and monitoring schedule to assess progress and address any concerns or challenges
9. Consider customer health screening procedures if feasible. This may be as basic as posting a sign at point of entries discouraging anyone with COVID-19 symptoms from entering the premises.
10. Reconfigure smoking areas to ensure and enforce physical distancing. Consider using floor markings or signs.
11. COVID-19 cannot be transmitted through food. Practice safe food preparation practices to avoid foodborne illness.
 - Follow the 4 key steps to food safety: Always — Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.
 - Observe established food safety practices for time/temp control, preventing cross-contamination, hand washing, exclude sick workers, storage of food, etc.

Specific Mitigation Measures Once Food Service Has Resumed:

- Strict physical distancing of customers (> 6 feet between people)
 - consider limiting the amount of time each customer spends in the facility
 - limit the number of customers to maintain physical distancing based off occupancy rates ($\leq 50\%$)
 - limit table size to members of the same household or 5 or less persons

- reconfigure table layout so that customers seated in chairs at separate tables are at least 6 feet apart or install physical barrier or wall such as a temporary clear plastic barrier around table/booth settings
- develop and implement a process to ensure physical distancing in waiting areas, pickup stations or payment counters. This might include floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, etc.
- if feasible, consider managing the flow of customers by having a designated entrance and separate exit
- Consider installing temporary clear plastic barriers host stands, registers, other points of interface with customers
- Use a chalkboard menu or disposable menus. If reusable menus are the only option, they should be sanitized between guests
- Discontinue buffets, salad bars, and beverage stations. If buffets remain open:
 - have a sneeze guard in place
 - maintain physical distancing by only allowing one person at a time through buffet
 - change, wash and sanitize serving utensils frequently
 - an attendant should monitor the buffet (wearing a face mask and gloves)
 - the attendant should bring a plate and serving utensils to all patrons at their table for single use self-service
- Use a pick-up window for food if available
- All servers and attendants should wear a face mask and gloves
- All hosts/greeters, cashiers, and anyone with direct interface with customers should wear a face mask
- Assign specific tasks to chefs and food handlers, and establish food prep and cook stations to maintain physical distancing. Workstations should be staggered so that employees are not standing directly opposite or adjacent to one another
- Limit the number of employees allowed in break rooms at one time
- For larger staff, use communication boards or digital messaging to convey pre-shift information (like specials)
- Customers should wear face masks anytime they are not seated at the table (when entering or exiting, using the restroom)
- Install hand sanitizers at the point of entry and near each table setting for customers
- Ensure extra napkins and facial tissues are available for customers
- Increase outdoor air ventilation as much as possible and improve HVAC filtration to MERV-13 or the highest level achievable
- Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and promote everyday protective measures like hand washing, physical distancing or wearing face masks and to discourage sick customers from entering the premises
- Cleaning and disinfecting plan – standard table cleaning after each customer finishes and deep cleaning after closing
 - All condiments and items remaining on the table should be single use or sanitized between guests
 - Avoid all food contact services when using disinfectants
- If possible, consider keeping a daily log of customers with phone/email contact information and in time. This will be used to facilitate contact tracing that might need to occur
- Use technology solutions, like online ordering, texting wait lists and contactless payment options if possible to reduce person-to-person interaction

- Isolate symptomatic and confirmed COVID-19 employees and patrons from premises for 14 days, or until they provide a negative test result.

References and Resource:

- Johns Hopkins University, Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19, https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2020/reopening-guidance-governors.pdf
- FDA, <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/best-practices-retail-food-stores-restaurants-and-food-pick-updelivery-services-during-covid-19>
- FDA, Exposed Workers, <https://www.fda.gov/media/137338/download>
- FDA, Best Practices for Re-Opening, <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/best-practices-re-opening-retail-food-establishments-during-covid-19-pandemic>
- FDA, face masks in food and ag sector, <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/use-respirators-facemasks-and-cloth-face-coverings-food-and-agriculture-sector-during-coronavirus>
- National Restaurant Association, <https://restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/business/COVID19-Reopen-Guidance.pdf>
- CDC, Reopening Cleaning and Disinfecting, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- ASHRAE, Position Document on Infectious Aerosols, https://www.ashrae.org/file%20library/about/position%20documents/pd_infectiousaerosols_2020.pdf
- NPAIHB, Food Service Standard and Inspection Form
- WA state Phase 2 Restaurant and Tavern Reopening, <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/Phase2-RestaurantIndustryRe-OpenProposal.pdf>