May 12, 2020

Dear Food Business Owner/Person-In-Charge:

Defiance County General Health District (DCGHD) is closely monitoring Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). DCGHD is taking measures to minimize the impact within our county, and we appreciate the steps you have taken to protect our community. Food Businesses play an important role in our food chain, and we encourage the public to continue supporting these businesses. As restaurants and food establishments begin to allow on-premise dining, it is now more important than ever that food safety and COVID-19 guidelines are followed to protect customers and employees.

The impact of COVID-19 has caused unprecedented challenges for owners. It is important that restaurants and food establishments continue to follow both the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code (Food Code) and standards developed by the Governor’s COVID-19 Restaurant Advisory Group. DCGHD will continue to provide guidance on sector specific guidelines, and will respond to concerns from consumers, employees, and the public. This guidance will be provided during Standard Food Inspections, as well as concern/complaint based inspections.

Business owners are encouraged to stay informed on up to date COVID-19 information by visiting the resources below. Enclosed with this letter is the current sector specific guidance for food businesses regarding COVID-19.

- Sector specific guidance can be found at: [https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/responsiberestartohio](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/responsiberestartohio)
- Food Safety Training at ServSafe: [https://www.servsafe.com/Landing-Pages/Free-Courses](https://www.servsafe.com/Landing-Pages/Free-Courses)
- Ohio Department of Health: [https://coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)
- County Updates, DCGHD: [https://defiancecohealth.org/coronavirus](https://defiancecohealth.org/coronavirus)
- Centers of Disease Control and Prevention: [https://cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

**What to expect when we’re inspecting**
Sanitarians will continue to conduct food inspections according to the Food Code. Please ensure a person-in-charge is at the establishment at all times. During an inspection, ensure employees are prepared to answer questions about food safety, employee illness reporting, cleaning & sanitizing, COVID-19 implementations, etc.

**Resuming Dining**
Outdoor dining can resume May 15, 2020—see enclosures for requirements
Inside dining can resume May 21, 2020—see enclosures for requirements

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4ASKODH (1-833-427-5634). More information can be found at [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov). Specific questions regarding Food Safety can be directed to Defiance County Public Health Sanitarians at 419-784-3818.

Sincerely,

Jamie Gerken
Health Commissioner
Defiance County General Health District
**Mandatory**

**Employees**

- Ensure minimum of six feet between employees, if not possible, utilize barriers if applicable and increase the frequency of surface cleaning, handwashing, sanitizing and monitor compliance.
- Businesses must allow all customers, patrons, visitors, contractors, vendors and similar individuals to use facial coverings, except for specifically documented legal, life, health or safety considerations and limited documented security considerations.
- Businesses must require all employees to wear facial coverings, except for one of the following reasons:
  - Facial coverings in the work setting are prohibited by law or regulation
  - Facial coverings are in violation of documented industry standards
  - Facial coverings are not advisable for health reasons
  - Facial coverings are in violation of the business’s documented safety policies
  - Facial coverings are not required when the employee works alone in an assigned work area
  - There is a functional (practical) reason for an employee not to wear a facial covering in the workplace (Businesses must provide written justification to local health officials, upon request, explaining why an employee is not required to wear a facial covering in the workplace. At minimum, facial coverings (masks) should be cloth/fabric and cover an individual’s nose, mouth, and chin.)
- Employees must perform daily symptom assessment*
- Require employees to stay at home if symptomatic and perform daily symptom assessment requirements before returning to work
- Provide ServSafe, or other approved COVID-19 education, as soon as possible. Add COVID-19 symptoms to the current standard Health Agreement required by the food safety code.
- Require regular handwashing by employees.
- Comply with person in charge certification requirements and manager certification requirements as set forth in OAC 3701-21-25 and OAC 3717-1-024 as applicable.
- Maintain compliance with ODH sanitation and food safety regulations.
- Limit number of employees allowed in break rooms at the same time and practice social distancing. Maximum to be current group size per state guidelines (currently 10).
- Banquet and catering facilities/services must not serve more than 300 guests at one time.

**Recommended Best Practices**

- Encourage 3rd-party delivery staff to wait outside or in non-congested areas practicing social distancing guidelines.
- Encourage 3rd-party delivery staff to wear face coverings.
- Educate on proper use, disposal, and maintenance of face coverings. Enhance education on proper use of gloves, per code.
- Health checks may include temperature assessments, questionnaires, employee self-checks, screening apps or other tools. Update files with log of “health checks”
- Conduct telephone symptom assessment* for employees who were ill and planning to return to work.
- As employee rehiring begins, consider virtual interviewing and on-boarding when possible.
- Reinforce education per current food safety code about when to wash hands. Post health department handwashing posters at sinks and stations. Set times for periodic handwashing.
- Avoid switching tasks when possible to reduce cross contamination concerns. Increase handwashing if changing tasks is necessary.

*Per the CDC, symptoms include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell.
**Customers & Guests**

- Ensure a minimum of six feet between parties waiting and when dining - if not possible, utilize barriers or other protective devices
- Post a list of COVID-19 symptoms in a conspicuous place
- Ask customers and guests not to enter if symptomatic
- Provide access to hand washing methods while in the food service establishment, and if possible, place approved hand washing/sanitizing products in high-contact areas
- Food service establishments offering dine-in service must take affirmative steps with customers to achieve safe social distancing guidelines

**Physical Spaces**

- Establish and post maximum dining area capacity using updated COVID-19 compliant floor plans. With maximum party size per state guidelines (currently 10)
- Post a kitchen floor plan, establishing safe social distancing guidelines and following established state health dept guidance for masks and gloves
- Daily cleaning for the entire establishment. Clean and sanitize tabletops, chairs, and menus between seatings. Clean all high touch areas every two hours, and more frequently as needed (e.g. door handles; light switches; phones, pens, touch screens)
- Provide approved hand washing/sanitizing products in common areas
- When appropriate, establish ordering areas and waiting areas with clearly marked safe distancing and separations per individual/social group for both restaurant and bar service
- Remove self-service, table, and common area items (e.g. table tents, vases, lemons, straws, stir sticks, condiments)
- Salad bars and buffets are permitted if served by staff with safe six feet social distancing between parties
- Self-service buffets and product samples are prohibited, but self-service beverage is permitted.
- Private dining and bar seating areas within a foodservice establishment must follow all approved safe social distancing guidelines
- The open congregate areas in restaurants, bars, and banquet and catering facilities that are not necessary for the preparation and service of food or beverages (billiards, card playing, pinball games, video games, arcade games, dancing, entertainment) shall remain closed

**Confirmed Cases**

- Immediately isolate and seek medical care for any individual who develops symptoms while at work
- Contact the local health district about suspected cases or exposures
- Shutdown area for deep sanitation if possible

**Recommended Best Practices**

- Face coverings are recommended at all times, except when eating
- Health questions for symptoms** posted at the entrance
- If possible, identify a dedicated entrance door and exit door. When possible, enable dining room ventilation (e.g. open doors and windows)
- When possible, encourage customers to make dine-in reservations or use drive through, pick-up, call-in, curbside or delivery options
- Encourage at-risk population to utilize alternative options such as using the drive through, pick-up, call-in, curbside, or delivery options

- Utilize barriers in high volume areas
- If possible, stagger workstations so employees avoid standing directly opposite or next to each other. If not possible, increase the frequency of surface cleaning, handwashing, sanitizing, and monitor compliance
- Limit entrance and exit options when possible while still maintaining code regulations
- Enhance weekly deep cleaning checklists. Consider posting communication to indicate table has been cleaned. Utilize disposable menus when possible
- Post health department "best practices" highlighting continuous cleaning and sanitizing of all food equipment and common surfaces
- Continue to emphasize employee education and compliance with hand washing, glove use, employee health, and food handler training
- Consider air filtration improvements within HVAC system
- Encourage and continue to use designated curbside pickup zones for customers

**Work with local health department to identify potentially infected or exposed individuals to help facilitate effective contact tracing/notifications**

**Once testing is readily available, test all suspected infections or exposures**

**Following testing, contact local health department to initiate appropriate care and tracing**

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**Note:** For the CDC, symptoms include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, and new loss of taste or smell.

Revised 5/29
COVID-19 Restaurant & Food Establishment Best Practices

Protecting Against COVID-19

Because Ohioans have stayed home and practiced social distancing, we have slowed the spread of the virus and flattened the curve.

As restaurants and food establishments begin to allow on-premise dining, it is now more important than ever that food safety and COVID-19 guidelines are followed to protect customers and employees.

- Restaurants and food establishments should continue to follow the regulations in the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code and standards developed by the Governor’s Restaurant Advisory Group.
  - Temporary outdoor structures that are utilized for additional seating must comply with the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code including building code compliance, sanitation, solid waste disposal, food and equipment storage, and dogs in outdoor dining areas.

- An elevated cleaning and sanitizing schedule for all surfaces that staff and customers contact should be created and executed.
  - Equipment and surfaces that are touched by individuals who have tested positive or displayed symptoms for COVID-19 should be disinfected. Food contact surfaces must be properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized after disinfection.
  - Restrooms should be routinely cleaned and sanitized, and hand sinks should be stocked with soap and paper towels or hand dryers.

- Employee safety training should continue, highly emphasizing proper handwashing, glove use, and proper hygiene practices.

- Food establishments should use mobile ordering and payments where possible to reduce hand contact.
  - The use of no-touch entrances and exits are suggested, as well as separate entrances and exits where possible.

- Instead of using containers for condiments to be used by multiple customers, restaurants should use single packets or cups.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov
• Local health departments should be consulted for additional guidance.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by taking these precautions.

For additional information call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov
COVID-19 Dine Safe Ohio Order FAQ

Protecting Against COVID-19

On May 14, Amy Acton, M.D., MPH signed the Director’s Dine Safe Ohio Order that reopens restaurants and bars to dine-in service with exceptions. On June 5, Dr. Acton signed the Amended Dine Safe Order. The following are frequently asked questions that apply to both dine-in and outdoor dining at restaurants, bars, and banquet and catering facilities.

Do restaurant, bar, and banquet and catering facilities employees have to wear facial coverings?
The order requires employees to wear facial coverings unless they meet one of the exceptions in the Sector-Specific Guidelines for Restaurants and Bars available at https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/responsible-restart-ohio/sector-specific-operating-requirements/sector-specific-operating-requirements. Businesses must provide written justification, upon request, explaining why an employee is not required to wear a facial covering in the workplace.

What types of barriers and dimensions for barriers are recommended for restaurants and bars?
It is recommended that barriers placed between booths or tables be smooth, easily cleanable, non-porous, properly cleaned between dining parties, and comply with building or fire department regulations. Shower curtains may be used if they meet these stipulations and are approved by the building and/or fire department. Barriers made of fabric, cloth, or other porous material are not permitted.

It is recommended that the dimensions of barriers between booths or tables be sufficient to prevent customers from extending/reaching over the booth/seat to interact with other customers.

What should a COVID-19 floor plan include?
A floor plan should include at least the following:

- Entrances and exits
- Configuration of tables, chairs, and booths for dining areas and bars
- Kitchen areas to ensure social distancing
- Barriers to be installed where social distancing cannot be accomplished
- Waiting areas ensuring social distancing
- Flow of customers through the facility
- Designated ordering and waiting areas for carryout and delivery customers
- Locations of hand washing/sanitizer stations.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov
Can multiple customers sit together in a restaurant or at a bar, and can a restaurant offer private dining?
Yes, as long as the size of party does not exceed the 10-person mass gathering limit and they are seated at least 6 feet from other customers or separated by a physical barrier.

Private dining may be offered as long as the size of the party does not exceed the 10-person mass gathering limit.

Who is going to approve COVID-19 trainings?
The Ohio Department of Health is not aware of any agency approving COVID-19 trainings. It is recommended that trainings include COVID-19 guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Can a food facility offer self-service food, drinks, or condiments?
Some self-service items are prohibited. These include, but are not limited to:

- Self-service condiment stations
- Bulk donut cases
- Roller grill stations
- Soft serve ice cream and yogurt machines
- Bulk food dispensers
- Self-service stations that allow customers to help themselves to free product samples.

Salad bars and buffets are permitted if served by staff within 6 feet of social distancing between parties.

Self-service beverages are permitted.

This applies in any setting including restaurants, bars, gas stations, convenience stores, and grocery stores. The order requires table and common area items such as table tents, vases, lemons, straws, and stir sticks be removed. Condiments and condiment bottles should be removed from tables and provided in single packets, cups etc. It is recommended that condiment packets that are served to a customer and not consumed be discarded.

Pre-packaged foods and drinks may still be offered for retail sale.

Are food courts permitted to open, and what are the guidelines they must follow?
Yes. Food courts must follow the Restaurants, Bars, and Banquet & Catering Facilities/Services Guidance.

Are businesses with food service operation permitted to open, and what are the guidelines they must follow?
For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov
Yes. Any business with a food service operation must follow the Restaurants, Bars, and Banquet & Catering Facilities/Services Guidance.

**Does the order prevent grocery stores, farmers markets, and other facilities from selling self-serve fresh produce?**
No. Self-serve produce may be sold since it must be washed prior to consumption.

**Can a food facility offer free samples?**
Yes, but only when the free samples are directly handed to the customer by an employee of the food facility. For example, samples of ice cream may be handed to a customer at an ice cream counter prior to a purchase being made. Food self-service stations, including those that allow customers to help themselves to free product samples, must be discontinued.

**Can a restaurant or bar offer live entertainment, such as music?**
Live entertainment is permitted in restaurants and bars as long as the individuals who are performing maintain social distancing of **at least** 6 feet from all other people including, but not limited to, fellow performers and restaurant and bar patrons and staff.

Disc jockeys are permitted as long as they practice social distancing.

**What other types of entertainment are allowed in restaurants, bars, and banquet and catering facilities?**
Congregate areas in restaurants, bars, and banquet and catering facilities that are not necessary for the preparation and service of food or beverages are permitted. However, businesses must follow all social distancing and sanitation guidelines. This includes the following:

- Billiards
- Card playing
- Pinball games
- Video games
- Arcade games
- Dancing
- Strolling entertainers.

**Are customers and guests permitted to stand or walk around while consuming food or beverage?**
No. Customers and guests must be seated when consuming food, beer, wine, and liquor on the premises of a business.

**Are tabletop lottery and Keno games permitted in restaurants and bars?**
Restaurants and bars should follow the guidance of local health department officials on this.

For more information, visit: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)
For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

OHIO Department of Health

PREVENTION

Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by taking these precautions.

For additional information call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

- Stay home except for work and other needs
- Wear a face covering when going out
- Practice social distancing of at least 6 feet from others
- Shop at non-peak hours
- Wash hands often with water and soap (20 seconds or longer)

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands or after touching surfaces
- Cover your mouth with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- Clean and disinfect "high touch" surfaces often
- Don't work when sick
- Call before visiting your doctor

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov