

Supplemental food service recommendations and resources for Meal programs and homeless service providers

COVID-19

August 11, 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide King County meal programs and homeless service providers with recommendations and resources that can help limit the spread of COVID-19. Meal programs and homeless service providers play a critical role in our community. They increase access to food for many vulnerable residents, often serving large numbers of people in short periods of time. Accordingly it is of great importance they take precautions to prevent illness while still maximizing their services.

In June 2020, Washington State adopted the “Safe Start” phased plan for reopening businesses. This approach guides businesses and organizations to re-open or resume operations, with safety precautions in place that focus on reducing the risk of COVID-19. Meal programs and homeless service providers are encouraged to follow the capacity and operational guidelines for restaurants/tavern as outlined by the Washington State Department of Health.

The recommendations and resources offered in this document can provide additional support.

Current phased reopening guidance for food service establishments

- [Phase 2 Restaurant/Tavern Reopening COVID-19 Requirements](#)
- [Criteria for reopening of food establishments: Minimizing the spread of COVID-19](#)

Additional recommendations for meal programs and homeless service providers

Facility flow and layout

- Review and modify your layout to allow for maximum physical distancing.
- Provide protective barrier at entry for staff greeting guests, if needed.
- Use directional signage to control flow of traffic.
- Consider designating a staff person to greet guests as they enter, and manage lines and capacity.
- Provide visual markers indoors and outdoors to encourage 6 ft. distancing in line, such as floor markings.
- Position line of people waiting to receive meals, 6 ft. away from dining tables and chairs, or provide barriers to separate people in line from people dining. Avoid multiple lines.
- Provide hand sanitizer/handwashing upon entry and other key areas throughout the facility to promote hand hygiene

- Consider providing a secure storage area for larger personal belongings (e.g., suitcases, rolling carts, etc.)

Food service styles

- Consider how food will be served for your program.
 - Self-serve style operations such as buffets and salad bars are allowed with restrictions. If your site provides self-service options, please review and implement applicable [dine-in service procedures](#).
 - Cafeteria-style service can be done with adequate barriers and physical distancing between staff and guests being served.
 - Table service can be offered with low contact options. Ensure staff wear face coverings, and minimize the number of staff serving tables.
- Avoid self-service condiments whenever possible. Consider offering single-use condiments instead.
- Consider staggering meal times to avoid overcrowding. Allow enough time for disinfection between groups.
- Consider offering low contact to-go meals for guests that can't be served by indoor dining.

Signage and face coverings

Per the state health department and the Governor's guidance for restaurants, customers must wear a cloth face covering anytime they are not seated (while being seated or leaving, or while going to the restroom) and while they are talking at tables and not eating. As mentioned above, homeless service and meal program providers are encouraged to follow the guidance outlined for restaurants and taverns.

- Ask guests to wear face masks upon entering facility, and anytime they are indoors and not eating.
 - If possible, provide to-go meals for guests who cannot wear a face mask or prefer not to.
 - Consider offering face masks for people who do not have one.
- Provide signage that promotes wearing face masks and social distancing indoors when guests are not seated for their meals.
 - Post signage in high traffic areas (e.g., bathrooms) to avoid overcrowding.
- Post handwashing signs at all hand sinks and hand sanitizer stations.
- Remove outdated signage to reduce confusion,
- Signage to consider posting:
 - Food safety (for the kitchen)
 - Face coverings
 - Social Distancing
 - Hand washing

- Occupancy limits

Ventilation and air flow

- Maximize HVAC systems to bring in as much outside air as possible.
- Open as many doors and windows as possible during meal service to increase air flow.
 - Note: do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a health risk to customers or staff (e.g. risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).

Cleaning and disinfection

- Follow guidance provided in [Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting for Meal Programs and Food Distribution Operations](#).
- Pay special attention to disinfection of frequently touched or shared surfaces
 - Discourage shared items.
 - Provide single service disposable items if possible.
 - Ensure adequate supply of food service utensils and products (e.g., serving spoons, plates, etc.)
 - Limit sharing tools, equipment, supplies by staff.
 - Avoid use of utensils and containers brought by guests.

Food delivery vehicles

- Washing hands and cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces are two of the best ways to defend against spreading the coronavirus.
- Avoid using cleaning products that may damage car interiors. If possible, use chemicals that are safe on surfaces in your vehicle and also effective against *Human Coronaviruses*, such as alcohol-based disinfectant wipes (70% alcohol or higher).
- Focus on **high touch surfaces** for daily cleaning and disinfection.
 - High touch surfaces include the steering wheel, door handles, shift lever, any buttons or touch screens, wiper and turn signal stalks, passenger and driver door armrests, grab handles, and seat adjusters.
- Air out cars whenever possible, ensure folks wear masks when riding together, limit the number of people in one car at a time, and encourage hand sanitizer use when entering vehicles to limit the spread of germs.
- Open windows to promote air flow.
- [Additional guidance](#) is available from the CDC.

Water systems and reopening buildings closed for a long time

If your building has been closed for a period of time, take steps to ensure your water system is safe. More information online at:

- [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)
- [Rodent Prevention and Control for Reopening Buildings during COVID-19](#)
 - Buildings or spaces that have been unoccupied for a period of time may be at risk of rodent infestations. Rats and mice are common pests in King County and the following are some tips to help you reopen your building safely. Even if you continue your pest control services during quarantine, you should still take extra precautions concerning rodents as you move back into your building.
- [Flush Building Water System](#) (WA State Dept. of Health).
- [Review Further Guidance on Reopening After a Building Closure](#) (American Industrial Hygiene Association).

Resources

Employee Safety and Health

- [Symptoms Screening for Staff](#)
- [What Should I Do If a Food Worker is Diagnosed with COVID-19?](#)
- [Workplace and Employer Resources and Recommendations](#)

Signage

- [King County Downloadable Signs and Posters](#)
- [COVID-19 Posters](#) (created by artists around the world)
- [CDC COVID-19 Print Resources](#)

CDC Guidance

- [Considerations for Restaurants and Bars](#)
- [Guidance for Homeless Meal Service Providers](#)
- [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)

State and Local Guidance

- [Safe Start Washington: Business Guidance, County Status, and What's Open](#)
- [King County Safe Start](#)
- [Guidelines for Restaurant and Other Food Businesses](#) (webinar available)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Businesses](#)