



COVID-19 Green Phase Guidance for Food Facilities in Allegheny County

Allegheny County went into the green phase of the governor’s “Process to Reopen Pennsylvania” on June 5, 2020. While this is welcome news for our local eateries, resuming in-person dining increases the responsibility restaurants have for the safety of their guests. When people gather, there is the potential for the spread of the coronavirus.

Restaurants will be expected to follow the latest guidance, policies and procedures issued by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the governor, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD).

The green phase means that:

- **Restaurants and bars may resume indoor and outdoor dining at a reduced capacity as described below.**
- **Gatherings up to 250 people are permitted within occupancy restrictions.**
- **Caterers may resume on-site catering functions, such as food setup, buffet or table service, and bar service within restrictions on dining protocols as outlined below.**
- **Businesses that have been operating at 50% capacity under the RED and YELLOW phases may increase to 75% capacity.**

More information is available on ACHD’s Food Safety Division’s website at www.achd.net/food and in guidance from the governor available [here](#).

Following these steps can help keep your customers healthy and coming back to see you on a regular basis. Failure to follow these steps could increase the risk of an outbreak of COVID-19 associated with your facility, which could force your business to close for deep cleaning and disinfection in accordance with the [Secretary of Health’s Workplace Safety Orders](#).

ACHD’s Food Safety Program inspectors are conducting COVID-19 safety assessments at restaurants, grocery stores and convenience stores and responding to consumer complaints.

Information about filing complaints is available on the Food Safety Program’s website www.achd.net/food.

All businesses offering in-person services should have a COVID-19 Prevention plan in place. The Allegheny County Health Department will not be reviewing individual COVID-19 Prevention plans or reopening plans for specific restaurants.

Food facilities must:

- **Post the COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Businesses document** and follow all applicable practices. This document is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- **Exclude sick employees from working.** This step is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19.
- **Face coverings (masks or face shields) are required to be worn by employees and guests at all times.** Exceptions are given to individuals with medical conditions and when guests are seated at their own tables.
- **Calculate and post notice of maximum capacity or occupancy for all on-premise dining areas. The most restrictive method must be used.**
 - Method 1 - To determine the **maximum seating capacity:**
 - Space tables and chairs for separate parties 6 feet apart, including at family-style tables.
 - Physical barriers between tables and chairs in the dining room may be used where 6-foot physical spacing is not possible. Barriers should be at least 60" tall when measuring from the floor. Restaurants using barriers must still restrict their seating capacity to 50%.
 - 6-foot spacing requirement also applies to outside seating.
 - Depending on your dining room, tables and chairs may need to be removed or booths may need to be closed.
 - Be sure to allow for a clear pathway to move around the dining room.
 - Method 2 - To determine the **maximum Fire Code Occupancy based on square footage:**
 - 50% of the established occupancy (75% for life-sustaining businesses previously open) calculated in accordance with the PA UCC (2015 IBC) and the local municipality. A copy of the occupancy permit must be posted with the maximum calculated allowed occupancy; *or*
 - In the absence of fire occupancy information, calculate 24 people per 1,000 square feet of customer space, not including restrooms.
- **Parties of no more than 10 people can be seated together, unless they are a family from the same household.**
- **Bar service is required to:**
 - Comply with 6-foot spacing or provide physical barriers between parties
 - Parties of 4 people maximum may sit at the bar together
 - No standing at the bar area
- **Bar service guidance is also applied to counter service.**
- **Allow 6 feet of space between diners in outdoor seating areas. Areas outside the facility's control, such as pedestrians on a sidewalk, must also be taken into consideration.**
- **Restroom availability for customers must be provided** when seating is provided, whether indoors or outdoors. Consider marking pathways to help diners find restrooms quickly.
- **Provide physical guides to ensure customers remain at least 6 feet apart** in lines or waiting for seating. Floor markers or signage may be used.
- **Self-service beverage and food stations, such as buffets, may be open to customers.** Please see below for recommendations.
- **Reusable and refillable containers, such as growlers and coffee mugs, are permitted to be filled by food establishments.** Ensure containers were cleaned, sanitized, and visually inspected before refilling.

- **Clean and disinfect:**
 - **Tables and chairs after use by each person/group.** Tables and chairs should be smooth, easily cleanable and nonabsorbent.
 - **High-touch areas**, including door handles, electronic menus, tables, ATMs, or other areas that have a similar frequency of being touched.
 - **Restrooms** should be cleaned and disinfected based on frequency of use, a minimum of once per hour.
- **Increase cleaning and sanitation in the back of the house.** Food contact surfaces should be sanitized. Disinfectant shall not be applied to food contact surfaces.
- **Train staff on proper hygienic procedures**, including mask usage, hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching one's face.
- **Limit the number of employees in shared spaces at any one time.** Staff should be staggered in their use of break rooms, locker rooms, or other areas. Stagger staff work areas where possible to provide at least 6 feet between staff on duty.
- **Limit the sharing of equipment between employees.** Where possible, staff should be assigned individual trays, knives, etc. Equipment should be cleaned and sanitized or disinfected as appropriate between users.
- **Verify that dish machines (ware washers) are working properly.** Dishes should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized at the correct temperatures and with the correct concentration of chemicals. Regular checks are required. Documenting these checks is encouraged.
- **Follow food safety practices at all times.** Maintain proper sanitary practices to protect your staff and guests' health.

Self-service beverage and buffet recommendations:

- One employee should oversee the buffet or self-service area at all times.
- Change utensils every 30 minutes to keep utensil handles sanitary.
- Provide customers plates, bowls, and silverware as needed at their table. Do not leave the plates, bowls, and silverware at the buffet for customers to obtain.
- Utilize single dispensing equipment or keep cups, lids, straws, creamers, etc. available upon request behind the counter.
- Provide hand sanitizer for customer use after getting food from the buffet or using a self-service drink station.
- Clean and sanitize all high-touch areas around the buffet or self-service.
- **Remember:** Customers must not bring used plates or bowls back up to the buffet for second helpings.

Further recommendations for food facilities:

- **Post signs advising people experiencing COVID-19 symptoms to stay home.** Ask customers who appear to be ill not to enter. Communicating these expectations clearly will help all of your guests and staff feel more comfortable.
- **Have diners wait outside for their table to be ready.** Use a contactless system (such as a text to their phone) to notify them when their table is ready. If using reservation buzzers, clean and disinfect between uses.
- **Use separate doors for entering and exiting the facility**, if possible. If you do not have a no-touch door, consider providing deli tissue or paper towels to help diners avoid touching the handles.
- **Mark customer pathways** to limit wandering between seats.
- **Limit the number of people at any one table to 10 or fewer** unless they are of the same household.

- **Close areas that are not essential to the preparation and service of food or beverages**, including but not limited to dance floors, arcades, small games of chance, and child play areas.
- **Increase glove usage** when preparing food. Proper handwashing and glove usage must be followed.
- **When providing condiments**, single-use amounts by request are recommended. It is required to disinfect bottles/shakers between users if providing in multi-use quantities.
- **Determine no-contact methods of receiving payment.**
- **Close between seating times** to allow for a thorough cleaning and disinfection of all areas.
- **Launder reusable face coverings daily** or more frequently if they become wet or soiled.
- **Consider how and where customers will store their masks.** Provide a clean bag or post reminders about mask safety and use
- **Do not share menus between customers.** Post a menu board, use an online menu, or use single-use menus. If menus are being reused, then clean and disinfect between each person or party. Reusable menus must be durable and capable of being cleaned.

Long-term considerations are strongly recommended, including:

- **Provide physical barriers in the dining room** in addition to 6-foot distancing between parties.
- **If allowing bar seating, install partitions** to protect the bartender, glassware, and bar ingredients from exposure to diners' airborne saliva droplets.
- **Use a reservation system to control the flow of people.** Avoid large groups arriving or departing simultaneously.
- **Maintain reservation records for at least 30 days.** This will help with contact tracing if there are COVID-19 diagnoses related to your facility.
- **Paper towels are preferred over air dryers in restrooms** as air dryers can increase the spread of droplets throughout the enclosed space.

Staffing recommendations:

- **People who handle dirty dishes shouldn't touch clean dishes** to limit cross contamination and potential spread.
- **Assign disinfecting duties to a specific person or persons** to ensure consistent and safe procedures.
- **When possible, divide employees into teams.** If somebody from one team gets sick, your other teams will not need to self-isolate.

Caterer recommendations:

- All private event spaces and wedding venues with food service **are required to maintain a list of all guests in attendance including location of origin for each guest.**
- **Provide a server for buffet lines** to limit guests from touching a stack of plates and serving utensil handles for each food option.
- **Physical distancing as described above** for table spacing and waiting in lines is still required.
- **Do not provide a dance floor or means for dancing** to help promote distancing. Mask usage by guests is strongly encouraged.
- **Party size remains capped at 250 maximum, and 50% of established room occupancy.**

Farmers' Market Guidance for Green Phase

- **Sampling is limited** to portioned and packaged servings, such as in individual cups. Hand washing requirements below apply.
 - Do not leave samples out on a tray for self-service.
 - Samples are recommended to be portioned and packaged before the market opens.
- **On-site food preparation is limited to:**
 - Cooking ingredients that were initially prepared in a permitted kitchen. When possible, cook food before the market opens and hold it hot for service.
 - Assembly/service/packaging of food prepared at a permitted kitchen
- **Hand washing and water supply requirements** for on-site food preparation and sampling:
 - Have adequate potable water available for regular hand washing
 - For example, a minimum of 1-2 gallons are required for each time a person washes their hands at a portable hand washing station. This is based upon 2-3 gallons per minute of water being the average amount used during hand washing at a permanent sink with running water.
 - Hand washing should occur at least once per hour.
 - Practice proper personal hygiene, including hand washing and glove usage.
 - The type of operation must be taken into consideration. A food stand cooking chicken breasts requires more hand washing than a stand providing beverage samples.
 - For example, if one person is working a farmers' market stand for 4 hours, then 4-8 gallons of water is required per person.
- **Physical distancing of 6 feet must still be practiced** throughout the market and in lines.
- **Face coverings (masks or face shields) are required to be worn by employees and guests at all times.** Exceptions given to individuals with medical conditions.
- **Encourage preorders** to help move customers through the market as efficiently as possible.
- **Disinfect/sanitize high-touch areas** frequently.
- **Outside seating and dining was permitted beginning June 5th.** Parties must be spaced at least 6 feet apart. Tables and seats must be cleaned and disinfected between customer use.

Food Trucks and Mobile Food Facilities Guidance for Green Phase

- Mobile food units **may operate** within a farmers' market.
- Mobile food units **must adhere to all business guidance as stated above.**
- **If participating in a food truck round-up,** please consider:
 - **Physical distancing of 6 feet** between parties must be followed.
 - **Gatherings are limited to 250 people maximum** but may need to be smaller if space does not allow for physical distancing.
 - **Provide physical guides to ensure customers remain at least 6 feet apart** in lines or waiting for seating. Markers or signage may be used.
 - **Round-ups without organizers are discouraged.**