



# COVID-19 Guidance for Food Facilities in Allegheny County

## Updated August 3, 2020

Food Facilities are expected to follow the latest guidance, policies and procedures issued by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, Governor Wolf, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD).

On July 17, 2020, Health Department Director Dr. Debra Bogen announced a targeted mitigation order to slow the spread of the coronavirus in Allegheny County. The order rescinded the July 8, 2020 order and took effect at 5 p.m. on July 17. Read the [full order here](#).

The July 15, 2020 order from the Pennsylvania Secretary of the Health is also in effect in Allegheny County. That order can be read [here](#). A guidance document answering a range of frequently asked questions about the County order can be found [here](#). A guide to the state order can be found [here](#).

More information about coronavirus response is available on ACHD's Food Safety Program's website at [www.achd.net/food](http://www.achd.net/food) and in guidance for the restaurant industry from the governor available [here](#).

Under the July 17 order from the Allegheny County Health Department:

- Restaurants and bars **may allow indoor and outdoor dining at a reduced capacity** as described in Food Facility Requirements below.
- On-site dining, whether indoors or outdoors, **must be concluded by 11:00 PM**. Takeout service may continue after 11:00 PM.
- The use of tobacco products in all forms **is prohibited** during both indoors and outdoors dining and also indoors at casinos.
- Gatherings are capped at **50 people outdoors and 25 people indoors**.
  - These numbers include any staff attending to the event.
  - Maximum gathering size is space-dependent. A smaller space may not be able to accommodate the full 25 (indoors) or 50 (outdoors) if there is not sufficient space for parties to be seated at least 6 feet apart.

Following COVID-19 prevention 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 Order](#). All businesses offering in-person services should have a COVID-19 Prevention plan in place.

ACHD's Food Safety Inspectors are conducting comprehensive inspections at food facilities. ACHD's COVID Field Response Team is conducting COVID-19 safety assessments at food facilities and responding to consumer complaints. Information about filing complaints is available on the Food Safety Program's website [www.achd.net/food](http://www.achd.net/food). Information on the COVID Field Response Team, including a link to completed assessments, is available [here](#).

**Food Facilities Requirements:**

- **Post the COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Businesses document** and follow all applicable practices. This document is available in English and Spanish from [Pennsylvania's Covid Resources for Businesses Page](#)
- **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, those who would be unable to remove a mask on their own, children under the age of 2, when a mask would create an unsafe work condition, for communicating with hearing impaired individuals, and when guests are seated at their own tables.
- **Calculate and post** notice of maximum capacity or occupancy for all on-premise dining areas.  
**Businesses are restricted to**
  - 25% of their fire code occupancy for indoor seating
  - 25 people per 1,000 square feet for outdoor dining
  - Parties must be seated at least 6 feet away from each other
  - Total seats cannot exceed the total seats on the health permit, whether indoors or outdoors
  - If tables cannot be removed, they should be marked as closed or unavailable.
- **All guests must be seated at table.** Bar service is prohibited. Customers may not stand or mingle.
- Coffee shops and similar facilities may sell items over the counter but **no counter seating is permitted.** Customers must consume items at a table or take them to go.
- **Allow 6 feet of space between diners of separate parties in outdoor seating areas.** Areas outside the facility's control, such as pedestrians on a sidewalk, must also be taken into consideration to provide distancing between diners and pedestrians.
- **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 according to normal chemicals and concentrations. Disinfectant shall not be applied to food contact surfaces as the chemicals used for disinfecting may lead to chemical contamination of food.
- **Train staff on proper hygienic procedures,** including using a clean mask to cover both nose and mouth, 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 requirements

- Buffet or self-service areas must be monitored at all times.
- Customers at self service areas must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth.
- Change utensils every 30 minutes to keep utensil handles sanitary.
- Use single dispensing equipment or keep cups, lids, straws, creamers, etc. available upon request behind the counter.
- For buffets, provide customers plates, bowls, and flatware at the table as needed. Do not leave cups, plates, bowls, or flatware out for common access as it may become contaminated.
- Provide hand sanitizer for customer use before and 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 according to a regular, documented schedule with increased frequency as required based on volume of use.
- **Remember:** Customers *must* be provided clean plates for each trip to a buffet.

### 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.** Provide a way to keep those waiting appropriately distanced. 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.
- **Offer customers the option of ordering in advance** if possible.
- **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.

#### Long-term considerations are strongly recommended, including:

- **Provide physical barriers in the dining room** in addition to 6-foot distancing between parties.
- **In preparation for safely seating customers at the bar in the future, install partitions** to protect the bartender, glassware, and bar ingredients from exposure to diners' airborne saliva droplets.
- **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 particular duties, such as routine disinfection, customer greeting, toilet room monitoring, and other key roles to specific 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 Requirements:

- All private event spaces and wedding venues with food service must **require event hosts to maintain a list of all guests in attendance** including phone number and expected location 3-14 days after the event.
- **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.
- **Party size is capped at 50 people for an outdoor gathering and 25 people for an indoor gathering.**
  - **These numbers include any staff interacting with the guests** such as servers, greeters, bussers, etc.
  - Maximum gathering size is space-dependent. A smaller space may not be able to accommodate the full 25 (indoors) or 50 (outdoors) if there is not sufficient space for parties to be seated at least 6 feet apart.
  - A venue with multiple event spaces may hold gatherings in each space but must follow these restrictions for each discrete gathering.
  - All guests must be seated at a table while consuming food and/or alcohol.
  - Guests must wear face coverings except when seated at their own table.

It is recommended that caterers **not provide a dance floor or means for dancing** to help promote distancing.

### Farmers' Market Guidance

- **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, up to 2 gallons may be 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 at a permanent sink with running water.
    - Hand washing should occur *at least* once per hour. The type of operation must be taken into consideration: e.g. cooking chicken breasts requires more hand washing than providing beverage samples.
    - Practice proper personal hygiene, including hand washing and glove usage.
    - For example, if one person is working a farmers' market stand for 4 hours, then up to 8 gallons of water per person may be required.
- **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 are given to individuals with medical conditions, those who would be unable to remove a mask on their own, children under the age of 2, when a mask would create an unsafe work condition, for communicating with hearing impaired individuals, and when guests are seated at their own tables.
- **Encourage preorders** to help move customers through the market as efficiently as possible.
- **Disinfect/sanitize high-touch areas** frequently.
- **Outside seating and dining are permitted** but must be incorporated into the available footprint and customer density of no more than 25 people per 1,000 square feet according to outdoor dining requirements. 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 for food facilities and farmers' markets.**
- **If participating in a food truck round-up**, please consider:
  - **Physical distancing of 6 feet** between parties must be followed.
  - **Gatherings are limited to 50 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.**