

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Restaurant Protocols

1. Why are face shields being required for wait staff or other employees when servicing customers at tables?

All wait staff and employees are at higher exposure to respiratory droplets produced from customers not wearing a cloth face covering and who are also within six feet of the wait staff or employee.

2. What is the benefit of wearing a face shield?

Face shields, like plexiglass, help to reduce the risk of respiratory droplets, produced by customers not wearing a face covering, landing on the employee's face, eyes, and face covering. Cloth face coverings protect others from the wearer's droplets; face shields help protect the wearer from other's droplets.

3. What is a face shield?

Face shields are a layer of clear plastic, often fastened at the forehead, that provide barrier protection to the wearer's facial area. They are not a substitute for face coverings. They should cover the forehead, extend below the chin, and wrap around the side of the face. Face shields are available in both disposable and reusable options.

4. Can face shields be reused?

A face shield should not be shared between employees and should be cleaned and disinfected (reprocessed) when they are visibly soiled and at least daily (after every shift) prior to reuse. They should be stored in a transparent plastic container and labeled with the employee name to prevent accidental sharing between employees.

5. What does the reprocessing process require?

Reusable face shields are to be used and disinfected per manufacturer's guidance. Additional information may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/non-us-settings/emergency-considerations-ppe.html>.

6. Can goggles be used instead of a face shield?

No. Face shields provide an added and larger area of protection for the employee from the respiratory droplets of others.

7. Are face shields required for cleaning staff?

Employees assigned to cleaning multi-use utensils are to be provided with face covering and protective glasses or face shields to protect their eyes, nose and mouth from contamination due to splash. Reusable protective equipment such as face shields and glasses are to be properly disinfected between uses.

8. Is wearing a cloth face covering a requirement or a recommendation?

Cloth face coverings are required for all employees when engaging with each other and customers or guests. It is also required when going out in public. Those who have health issues that prevent them from wearing cloth face coverings are exempt, as are those under the age of 2.

9. When is a food facility operator required to notify Public Health of employees that are confirmed or suspected of being COVID-19 positive?

The food facility operator is required to notify Public Health when three (3) or more cases of confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 among employees occur within the span of 14 days. Public Health may be notified by calling (888) 397-3993 or (213) 240-7821.

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10. Does a food facility need to post all pages of the “Protocol for Restaurant Opening for On-Site Dining: Appendix I” or just the first page?

The food facility operator is required to implement the “Protocol” and post the entire document at the front of the entrance where it is visible for customers or patrons to view as they enter.

11. There are several “Health Orders” that have been issued. How do I know which one I need to adhere to?

The Department of Public Health is adopting a staged approach, supported by science and public health expertise, to expand business operations. As such, it is important to visit the Public Health website frequently for the most recent Health Officer Orders, regular updates and the most recent guidance. These can be found at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/>.

12. What is the link to obtain HOO information?

The Health Officer Order can be found at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/>.

13. Can a food facility leave salt and pepper shakers on tables?

Salt and pepper shakers should not be available on the table before the next party is seated at a table unless it has been cleaned and sanitized prior to their seating. One-time use condiments are highly recommended.

14. What type of material can be used for barriers?

Barriers must be made of impermeable, cleanable, and durable materials that can be frequently cleaned.

15. Can a banquet hall open for business?

A banquet hall is not authorized to hold any events or other gatherings at the facility. However, if the banquet hall currently holds a restaurant permit, the banquet facility can use this space to offer only sit-down, meals in an outside dining area, if available, and must adhere to *Appendix I: Protocol for Restaurants Opening for On-Site Dining* (revised Order issued: July 1, 2020). Banquet halls and restaurants may continue to offer and are encouraged to provide takeout and delivery service to the extent possible.

16. What if a restaurant employee is unable to wear a face covering due to a health condition, is the employee exempt from this requirement?

Every effort should be made to reassign a food employee with a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering to duties where they do not come in contact with the public or uncovered food or beverages. If no face covering or mask is tolerated, food employees that are serving customers in an outdoor dining area are required to wear a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge that is form fitting under the chin and should undergo more rigorous symptom screening such as mandatory temperature checks.

17. Can a board game coffee shop operate and allow customers to sit and play board games (such as Monopoly, chess, checkers, etc.)?

No. The current Health Officer Order prohibits entertainment operations. The restaurant may provide food services, including on-site outdoor dining but must not make games available.

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18. Will barriers be needed for outdoor dining and how are these approved?

If seating is on the sidewalk – an impermeable and cleanable barrier that is at least 6 feet high should be provided to protect diners from pedestrians walking by if 6 feet physical distancing is not possible. Local zoning officials should be consulted if tables will be placed on sidewalks or in parking lot areas. Otherwise, seating outdoors should have at least 6 feet of spatial separation between each dining table (the 6 feet distance should be measured from customer position). Barriers must be made of impermeable, cleanable, and durable materials that can be frequently cleaned and sanitized.

19. What is the distance requirement between tables for outdoor dining areas?

Outdoor seating is subject to adhering to the 6 feet physical distancing requirements between groups of customers.

20. Can the customers self serve their own yogurt and toppings at a yogurt place?

No. Self-service machines, such as frozen yogurt machines and toppings shall be dispensed by a food employee and cleaned and sanitized frequently.

21. Can there be live music and a DJ at an outdoor dine-in restaurant?

Currently, the Health Officer orders the continued closure of live performance theatres, concert venues, and all events and gatherings. The “*Protocol for Restaurants Opening for On-Site Dining: Appendix I*” was not intended for concert, performance, or entertainment venues that have on-site food operation.

22. I am a food employee at a restaurant, what should I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

When a food employee has tested positive for COVID-19, the employee must stay home and follow Public Health instructions for [self-isolation](#). The employer must have a protocol in place to have the employee isolate at home and require the immediate self-quarantine of all employees that have had close contact or workplace exposure to the case(s).

23. What are the changes to the new Health Officer Order for restaurants, bars, brewpubs, craft distilleries, breweries and wineries?

The Health Officer orders the continued closure of bars, breweries, tasting rooms, craft distilleries, and wineries that possess a valid low risk restaurant public health permit issued by the County of Los Angeles. Beginning July 1, 2020, all restaurants including indoor malls or shopping center food court seating areas must discontinue indoor, in-person onsite dining until further notice. Restaurants may continue to offer sit-down, meals in an outside dining area which are prepared on site as allowed by the Health Officer Order.

24. Now that indoor, in-person dining rooms are closed, we want to make sure our guests are comfortable in the heat. Can we have patio misters and would that be acceptable in a COVID-19 world?

Yes, patio misters are allowed and can be used.

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25. Can restaurants use barriers for outdoor onsite dining spaces, if a 6 feet physical distancing is not possible to increase seating capacity?

Yes. The use of barriers may be allowed if a 6 feet social/physical distancing is not possible or when used to increase the amount of tables/seats between customers at the outdoor dining area. Outdoor dining areas are not subject to the occupancy limit. Local zoning officials should be consulted if tables will be placed on sidewalks and parking lots. Barriers must provide at least a six-foot high barrier (or higher where taller seats are used) from the floor.

26. With the current Health Officer requirements for in-person dining to only allow it outside, how are outside dining areas defined?

Outdoor dining is defined as the use of an adjacent, outside area with no more than one solid wall for in-person eating and drinking activities that occur within the establishment. Outdoor dining areas may extend onto sidewalks and parking lots. If outdoor dining areas are on the sidewalk – an impermeable and cleanable barrier that is at least 6 feet high should be provided to protect diners from pedestrians if 6 feet social/physical distancing is not possible. Local zoning officials should be consulted if tables will be placed on sidewalks or in parking lot areas. Due to the open air environment, outdoor dining may dramatically reduce the spread of person-to-person exposure to COVID-19.

Outdoor dining areas do not include the following:

- An enclosure with a full canopy that does not allow for proper airflow
- Indoor dining areas with the windows propped open

27. Are we required to still have the restrooms available to drive-thru customers even though there is no indoor dining or take-out service through the dining room?

Yes. While noting that your restaurant may have the main entry doors locked, if your facility offered customer restrooms prior to COVID-19, restrooms must continue to remain available to customers. If your restaurant offers food through 3rd party delivery services (e.g., Door Dash, Grubhub, etc.), drivers picking up food should have access to restrooms (if normally open to customers) to wash their hands prior to picking up food for delivery.