

New Mexico Family Nutrition Bureau

Social Distancing and Food Safety for COVID-19

This guidance is provided to assist Sponsors and Child Care Providers in complying with the State of New Mexico's Executive Orders on Social Distancing and Mass Gatherings for Meal Distribution Sites:

Do not allow staff or volunteers who have symptoms of coronavirus disease (such as a fever with cough) to come to work / distribution sites / distribution events.

Preferred Meal Distribution methods:

- Drive-through meal distribution – where parents/children remain in their cars
- Take-out meal distribution – with Walk up service to a table or distribution point
- Home delivery of meals, when the agency is equipped to provide this type of service

If at all possible, providers should stagger when people pick up meals, so that a large number of people are not gathered in the same area at the same time.

If this is not feasible, then establish methods of keeping people at least 6 feet apart while helping others, waiting in line or receiving services.

Provide, when possible, alternative methods of providing meal services to individuals who are self-quarantining due to symptoms of coronavirus disease.

Encourage and facilitate good hand hygiene for both meal servers and recipients, as follows:

For pick-up, drive through or home drop-off meal service at which there is no open food (food is prepackaged), providing alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 60% alcohol) for people to use while they wait or are receiving services is recommended.

Take away food containers and bags should never be touched with unwashed hands. Treat the containers as critical high-touch surfaces.

Food delivery should be done with similar precautions, so drivers should frequently sanitize car-door handles, steering wheels and wash or sanitize hands or gloves as soon as possible after touching any public surface.

During home delivery, do not meet face to face. Instead, leave food at their door for them to retrieve.

Meal handlers handling **open food** must have access to handwashing facilities with single-use soap and paper towels. Handwashing facilities to provide single-use soap and single-use paper towels in dispensers.

RESOURCES and Guidance for Food Service Operations during COVID-19 Health Emergency;

Best Practices for Food Service Workers during COVID-19 Health Emergency;

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not readily available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

Keeping food employees and customers safe:

- Employees should stay home if they are sneezing, coughing or have a fever.
- Provide customers with additional napkins or tissues to use when they cough or sneeze.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers and employees to use.
- Be sure to frequently clean and sanitize surfaces that may have been touched by customers or employees throughout the day.
- Ensure dishwasher and/or three-compartment sinks are used properly and contain the appropriate level of sanitizer and/or water temperature for final rinse.
- Ensure sneeze guards are in place where required.

Q and As From USDA

Q: Where should the food industry go for guidance about business operations?

A: Food facilities, like other work establishments, need to follow protocols set by local and state health departments, which may vary depending on the amount of community spread of COVID-19 in a particular area. We encourage coordination with local health officials for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside.

Q: How do I maintain social distancing in my food production/processing facility and food retail establishment where employees typically work within close distances?

A: Workers in the food and agriculture sector fill critical and essential roles within communities. This reality was reinforced by food and agriculture inclusion in a list of [Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers](#) (PDF, 591 KB) published last week by DHS' Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. To prevent spread of COVID-19, CDC is recommending individuals employ social distancing or maintaining approximately 6 feet

from others, when possible. In food production/processing facilities and retail food establishments, an evaluation should be made to identify and implement operational changes that increase employee separation. However, social distancing to the full 6 feet will not be possible in some food facilities.

The risk of an employee transmitting COVID-19 to another is dependent on distance between employees, the duration of the exposure, and the effectiveness of employee hygiene practices and sanitation. When it's impractical for employees in these settings to maintain social distancing, effective hygiene practices should be maintained to reduce the chance of spreading the virus.

IMPORTANT: Maintaining social distancing in the absence of effective hygiene practices may not prevent the spread of this virus. Food facilities should be vigilant in their hygiene practices, including frequent and proper hand-washing and routine cleaning of all surfaces.

Because the intensity of the COVID-19 outbreak may differ according to geographic location, coordination with state and local officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside.

Sick employees should follow the CDC's [What to do if you are sick](#) (PDF, 516 KB) with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Q: Should employees in food production settings wear face coverings to prevent exposure to COVID-19?

A: On Friday, April 3rd, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released an [updated recommendation](#) on the use of cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

CDC is recommending the voluntary use of cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Per the CDC, the purpose of wearing a face covering is to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus from individuals who may be infected, but are not showing symptoms.

Additional information on how to make and wear cloth face coverings is available on the [CDC website](#). CDC recommends that face coverings should:

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops
- include multiple layers of fabric
- allow for breathing without restriction
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

NOTE: The cloth face coverings recommended by CDC are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

Face masks and Personal Protective Equipment are encouraged for workers in accordance with CDC guidelines:

Maintain face coverings in accordance with parameters in FDA's Model Food Code sections 4-801.11 Clean Linens and 4.802.11 Specifications.

Launder reusable face coverings before each daily use.

CDC also has additional information on the use of face coverings, including washing instructions and information on how to make homemade face covers.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

FDA Website for Further information:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>