

Guidelines for Food Distribution: Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19

April 15, 2020

ORDER BY GOVERNOR – REQUIRED BY LAW

Governor Jay Inslee issued a [“Stay Home - Stay Healthy” order in Washington state](#) on March 23, 2020. The order will last for a minimum of two weeks. The order requires every Washingtonian to stay at home, except for specific situations. The exceptions include people going to work at an [essential business](#). Food distribution is considered an essential business.

The Governor directs businesses that can operate using telework to continue to do so. For businesses where individuals cannot work from home, the Governor’s Office has provided [guidance on what businesses are essential](#). Many employers in the Healthcare Sector should follow [specific guidance](#) from the Washington State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This Guidance provides additional information to the community to support adherence to the Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order issued by Governor Jay Inslee on March 23, 2020.

This Guidance applies to food distribution programs including; donated food distribution organizations, food pantries, food banks, and mobile meal trucks.

Recommended guidelines to minimize COVID-19

Align food distribution with the following COVID-19 prevention measures:

1. Consider temporarily assigning employees and volunteers at high risk for coronavirus to duties that don’t involve close contact with the public. Offer flexible leave policies to these employees. People at high risk include people who are over age 60, have underlying health conditions, or pregnant.
2. Ensure that employees and volunteers limit close contact (stay 6 feet apart).

TIPS:

- ✓ Appoint a staff person who will ensure that people standing in any lines or meeting in rooms stay 6 feet apart, inside and outside.
 - ✓ In areas of high-volume traffic, utilize spacing tools for checks and lines. For example, put tape on the floor to keep people adequately spaced.
3. Conduct daily checks for symptoms of illness and ensure employees and volunteers stay home when they are sick. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19: cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or a new loss of taste or smell. This list is not all possible symptoms.

4. Ensure that employees and volunteers practice good hygiene:
 - ✓ Employees and volunteers should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds upon first arriving to work, after using the restroom, before and after eating and frequently throughout the day.
 - ✓ Advise employees and volunteers to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
 - ✓ Make sure staff have easy access to proper hand washing, sanitation, and cleaning.

5. Frequently clean and sanitize food contact and food preparation surfaces.

TIPS:

- ✓ Use soap and warm water to scrub surfaces, rinsing with clean water, then using an effective sanitizing solution approved for food contact surfaces with a contact time of at least 30 seconds (i.e., one teaspoon of unscented household bleach in a gallon of cool water)
 - ✓ Ensure dishwasher and/or three-compartment sinks are used properly and have the appropriate level of sanitizer for final rinse (50-100 PPM chlorine-based sanitizer, follow product label for other approved sanitizers).
6. Follow environmental cleaning guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (e.g., clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or more frequently).

TIPS

- ✓ For non-food contact surfaces and non-food preparation surfaces such as cash machine key pads, counter tops, dining tables door knobs, electronics, faucet handles, and menus utilize a [disinfectant](#) which is listed as effective against coronavirus.
7. Appoint a lead employee to ensure compliance with this guidance.

Identification and notification

Set an expectation that employees take the following steps if they become sick with COVID-19.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, and shortness of breath are the most common), you should:

- Stay home.
- Identify co-workers with whom you had prolonged close contact (within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more). Notify them that they may have been exposed so that they can watch carefully for symptoms. Close contacts should also stay home for 14 days following their last contact with the

- person who is sick.
- Follow public health guidance [on what to do if you are sick](#).

People with these symptoms may have COVID-19: cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or a new loss of taste or smell. This list is not all possible symptoms.

Direct all employees to [Washington State Department of Health's patient materials](#) for additional information for those who have [confirmed or suspected COVID-19](#) or who [may have been exposed](#).

Paid leave

Sick leave policies should be flexible and consistent with public health guidance to protect employees at higher risk for COVID-19. Inform employees of these policies.

Health care provider notes are not necessary

Do not require a health care provider's note (or a note from Public Health – Seattle & King County) for employees who are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 to validate their illness or to return to work. Health care providers may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation. Writing notes takes them away from providing care to patients.

Employers do not need to report positive COVID-19 cases to a health department

Most employers should not report employees who have COVID-19 to Public Health – Seattle & King County. Public Health will receive reports from healthcare providers or directly from the employee. NOTE: Employers in healthcare and social service settings (e.g., senior living communities, homeless shelters, child care programs) should [report to Public Health](#).

Employers should protect the privacy of employees' protected health information

Employers should not share private health information.

Enforcement

In King County, public health COVID-19 prevention guidance has been well-accepted. We believe the public will accept these new actions in the same way to protect our community's health.

The Governor's Stay Home - Stay Healthy Order is enforceable by law. King County will not be actively searching for violations, our focus is on helping people understand the importance social distancing and sanitation, rather than citations.

If you have specific questions or reports related to this Guidance, please email coronavirus@kingcounty.gov.

Additional recommendations:

- [WSDA COVID-19 Prevention Practices for Food Pantries](#)
- [King County COVID-19 sanitation and hygiene posters \(downloadable PDF\)](#)
- [U.S Food and Drug Administration Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [King County Health Care for the Homeless Resources for COVID-19](#)