

This guide helps **homeless shelters** or **meal provision sites** build or revise individual plans to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their facility. Facilities are encouraged to make plans that address their unique needs.

The Vermont Department of Health does not have regulatory oversight of facilities. This document was developed in partnership with the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity. Since guidance often changes, please visit www.healthvermont.gov for the most up to date information.

Throughout this document, individuals who are attending the meal program are referred to collectively as “guests.” This may include residents of a shelter or individuals participating in Adult Day programs, among others.

Physical Distancing and Space Considerations

- Have all guests and staff wear masks while not eating.
- Consider basic illness screening (asking if the guest has recently had any COVID-19 symptoms and a temperature check) prior to entering the dining area and offer “grab-and-go” options outside to people who screen out.
- Increase the number of meal services or offer meals in shifts to allow fewer guests in common areas at one time.
- Consider having guests sign up for time slots to limit time standing in line or crowding at spaces to obtain food. Alter schedules to reduce guest mixing and close contact, such as staggering meal and activity times.
- Maintain a log of guests at each mealtime.
- Encourage thorough hand washing for staff and guests. Put hand sanitizer at the dining area entrance.
- Separate tables as far apart as possible, or at least six feet.
- Ideally, have one guest sit at each table at a time to ensure maintenance of social distancing, or prepare for two guests per table, focusing on maintaining existing social relationships and/or roommate pairs. Families/groups with regular close contact could all be seated at one table.
- Offer outdoor seating for mealtimes, if possible,
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signage, to ensure that individuals remain at least six feet apart.
- Consider labelling tables with numbers and assigning seating upon entry, so guests can quickly and easily identify where they should sit.
- Ensure that ventilation systems are operating properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors.

Food Selection

- Consider delivering food directly to seated guests to limit movement.

- Appropriately cover food while it is being transported to guests.
- Consider including "grab-and-go" items to limit the requirement for serving food and enable eating outside the dining area.

Serving-ware and Dinnerware

- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
- Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment, or supplies by staff members.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials (e.g., serving spoons) or limit use of supplies and equipment to a few workers at a time and disinfect between use.
- Avoid shared items, such as menus and condiment bottles. Instead, use disposable or digital menus, single serving condiments, and no-touch trash cans and doors.
- Consider the use of single serving plates and utensils. Alternatively, ensure that dishwashing machines are operating at a sanitization level.

Guests Requiring Assistance

- Schedule meals for guests with extra assistance needs at different times to allow staff to accommodate multiple guests.
- Additional staff personal protective equipment (PPE) and infection control may be necessary when providing close contact support for guests, including:
 - Masks and gloves while assisting the guest,
 - Changing gloves and handwashing after assisting each guest,
 - Gowns and face shields if concern for splashing of food or respiratory droplets,
 - If a guest has cognitive impairment leading to combativeness, a face shield, gown, mask, and gloves are recommended to be worn as a precaution, and
 - Disposable or washable gowns should be changed between assisting each guest.

Cleaning and Waste Management

- Use gloves when handling food waste, removing garbage bags and handling and disposing of trash. [Wash hands](#) after removing gloves.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all high touch areas and tables in between dining services.

References:

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/business-employers/bars-restaurants.html

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/shared-congregate-house/guidance-shared-congregate-housing.html

Direct questions about this guidance to AHS.VDHCovid19PreventionResponse@vermont.gov.