



Food Service Information for Shelter Operators

Providing food to shelter residents can be challenging as massive quantities of food need to be obtained, prepared, and/or served to displaced persons who may be elderly, homeless, or physically stressed and without prescription medication. Food safety practices must become an integral part of operations in order to prevent gastrointestinal illnesses from becoming rampant in the shelter.

WHERE WILL THE FOOD COME FROM?

Caterer

Efforts should be made to work with one or more permitted food establishments to cater some or all of the food for the facility unless the facility has a permitted and staffed kitchen that is capable of handling the number of meals needed to feed shelter residents.

- ☐ Determine:
 - o If the caterer has a current City of Houston food dealer's permit
 - o If the caterer will be using the shelter's kitchen facilities and will provide its own servers
 - o If the caterer will clean up after food service
 - o The arrangements for any leftover food
 - o The expected time of delivery and the meal period for which it is intended

Food Donations and Food Suppliers

Refer to Receiving Food Supplies and Food Donations*. Prepared food that requires time and temperature control for safety should come from a permitted establishment. Prepackaged non-TCS food can be accepted from the general public.

- ☐ Determine:
 - o Where food should be delivered (separate location from non-food donations)
 - o Who is responsible for receiving and inspecting donated food or food from licensed suppliers. (Health Officers may be able to assist with this function at larger shelters.)
 - o Who is responsible for ensuring the donated food is immediately placed in hot or cold storage, dry food storage, or taken directly to the serving area

Food Operations Located Outside

Food provided to shelter residents and the general public from temporary food booths, tents, or mobile units must meet specific food safety requirements. Refer to Outdoor Food Preparation at Shelters

WHO IS STAFFING THE KITCHEN AND DINING AREAS?

Appoint a Person in Charge (PIC)

- ☐ The PIC should have food service experience including a knowledge of food safety.
 - o Preferably, the PIC is a certified manager through the City of Houston Health Department or has a Texas accredited or ANSI (American National Standards Institute) equivalent of food manager certification.
 - o The PIC needs to be able to oversee and correct the food safety practices of persons with no or

little food safety knowledge.

Maintain an Employee Roster

- ☐ Include workers' names, shifts worked, contact information, and Covid-19 test results, if available.
- ☐ Keep the roster for 14 days and provide to public health staff for review if requested.

Train Cooks, Food Handlers, Servers, and Cleaning Staff

- ☐ If the PIC does not have a regular trained kitchen staff, it is recommended that persons be selected and trained for the following positions:
 - o Captain responsible for receiving and storing incoming food supplies
 - o Handwashing captain to ensure all handwashing stations (kitchen, serving lines, dishwashing areas, and entry to serving/dining areas) are fully stocked and proper handwashing procedures/hand sanitizing procedures are being followed
 - o Chief sanitizer to ensure all food contact surfaces are properly cleaned and sanitized, all dining tables are clean and disinfected after individual use, and serving lines are cleaned and disinfected between meal times
 - o Captain over serving lines to ensure food is kept at the appropriate temperatures and servers are washing hands as needed
- ☐ Equip the captains with the appropriate equipment - sanitizer, sanitizer test strips, food thermometers.

Instill a Food Safety Culture

- ☐ Explain that extra care is needed to avoid contaminating food as many shelter residents have been through much physical stress and thus may be more susceptible to foodborne illness.
- ☐ Put out signs in food preparation and serving areas regarding:
 - o Temperature danger zone
 - o Handwashing
 - o Equipment washing
 - o Food handler practices
 - o Reporting symptoms of illness including the symptoms of COVID-19 and the need to leave the facility as soon as possible after experiencing symptoms
 - o Social distancing
- ☐ For those with no training (10 -15 minutes):
 - o Spend the time to train them properly.
 - o Review food safety basics with them including the 5 main causes behind food making people sick
 - Unsafe food source
 - Poor personal hygiene
 - Improper temperatures
 - Inadequate cooking
 - Contamination
 - o Discuss why sanitation is so important - review proper handwashing, cleaning and sanitizing, safe temperatures, the employee/staff sick policy.

PREPARING A MENU FOR AN ONSITE KITCHEN

Keep It Simple

- ☐ Estimate the number of people to be fed within the next 24 hours.
- ☐ Plan meals in terms of food available.
- ☐ Use perishable foods first.
- ☐ Chose precooked protein over raw.
- ☐ Work with small batches of food at one time to minimize the amount of time food is without refrigeration.
- ☐ Prepare sufficient food to provide second servings if possible but try to avoid leftovers.
- ☐ Select recipes that require few preparation steps (cook then serve; no cooling).

Consider Special Dietary Needs

- ☐ Consult a dietician if possible.
- ☐ Use low-salt and low-sugar guidelines in consideration of people with special dietary restrictions.
- ☐ Be aware that some persons may request food free of specific allergens.
 - o Eight major allergens according to the FDA: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans
- ☐ Determine the need for infant formula and baby food.
- ☐ Consult with medical staff for people on special diets for medical conditions such as diabetes or kidney disease.

PREPARING AND SERVING FOOD

Ensure food workers are following proper food safety and hygiene guidelines. Refer to Basics for Food Workers/Servers and Food Safety for Food Handlers at Shelters.

Food Preparation

- ☐ Restrict non-working, unauthorized persons from food preparation and service areas.
- ☐ Designate area away from the food preparation area where food handlers can eat and store their personal items (jackets, purses).

Serving/Dining Areas

- ☐ Set up handwashing/hand sanitizing stations in serving areas and position shelter staff to promote proper handwashing.
- ☐ Do not permit residents to serve themselves. Erect a barrier between residents and food (sneeze guards, tables, counters).

PREPARING AND SERVING FOOD WHEN COVID-19 IS PRESENT

Food Preparation Areas

- ☐ Ensure all food workers wear disposable gloves and face masks.

- Provide enough clean face masks for each worker and for replacements should the masks become wet.
- ☐ Arrange food preparation areas, tasks, and scheduling to allow 6 feet of distance between food workers, if possible.
- ☐ Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment, or supplies by food workers.

Serving/Dining Areas

- ☐ Ensure shelter staff who monitor handwashing/hand sanitizing stations wear face masks and instruct them to screen all individuals for signs of Covid-19 including temperature monitoring as residents enter the food service/dining area. ([Screening for COVID-19](#))
 - A fever is considered to be a temperature of 100.4° F or greater.
 - Staff and volunteers who have symptoms of COVID-19 should leave the shelter as soon as possible.
 - Residents who have symptoms of COVID-19 should be immediately directed to the COVID-19 isolation area.
 - Close contacts of persons with symptoms of COVID-19 should be closely monitored for symptoms.
- ☐ Install physical barriers between residents and servers where it is difficult to remain at least 6 feet apart (sneeze guards, partitions)
- ☐ Set dining tables 6 feet apart and encourage separation of different households while dining.
- ☐ Arrange for residents to eat in shifts to prevent long lines.
- ☐ Encourage/require residents to wear face masks while in the food lines.
- ☐ Provide floor markings and signage to encourage social distancing while standing in line.
- ☐ Arrange for servers to distribute single-service condiments and tableware/utensils directly to residents.
- ☐ Clean and disinfect tables and serving areas with an [EPA-registered disinfectant for COVID-19](#) between shifts.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING FOOD-CONTACT SURFACES

Handwashing

- ☐ Ensure sinks in the dishwashing area are supplied with hand soap, paper towels, waste receptacles.
- ☐ Post signs promoting proper handwashing.

Manual Dishwashing

- ☐ Wash, rinse, and sanitize with chlorine sanitizing rinse (50-100 ppm) **OR** with Quaternary Ammonium (QA) sanitizing rinse (200 ppm)
 - Determine sanitizer concentration with a chlorine or QA test kit as applicable.
 - Ensure hot and cold water under pressure is provided to all compartments of the 2- or 3-compartment sink.
- ☐ Post sign depicting proper washing, rinsing, and sanitizing procedure including water temperature and contact time.

- ☐ **USE ONLY SINGLE-SERVICE ARTICLES** (disposable plates, utensils, etc.).

Mechanical Dishwashing

- ☐ Ensure the dishwasher provides a:
- o Chlorine sanitizing rinse (50-100 ppm) using a chlorine test kit
- OR**
- Heat sanitizing final rinse/180°F manifold/165°F dish level) using a thermometer or heat-sensitive tape

Possible Contamination with Coronavirus

In the extreme circumstance a food-contact surface is likely to be contaminated with coronavirus, wash, rinse, disinfect with an EPA-approved disinfectant for coronavirus according to the label instructions, rinse again thoroughly, and then sanitize with an approved sanitizer for food-contact surfaces.

Example of Disinfection with (5-6% Sodium Hypochlorite) for Food-Contact Surfaces

Wash with hot, soapy water and rinse before disinfecting.

Purpose	PPM	Dilution	Contact Time	Next Step
Disinfect	1000 ppm	1/3 cup bleach/1 gallon water	1 minute	Wash, rinse thoroughly, then sanitize
Sanitize	100 ppm	1 tbsp bleach/1 gallon water	10 seconds in 55°F water	Air dry

- ☐ Thorough rinsing after disinfecting and before sanitizing is critical to remove chemical residues that could be ingested.

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