Best Practices for Businesses to Reopen
RESTAURANTS AND BARS

OPEN FOR RESTAURANTS AND BARS

- Develop a plan or checklist for reopening consistent with CDC, FDA, and National Restaurant Association guidance that includes:
  - Staff training
  - Leave policies, absenteeism plans, and employee screenings
  - Facial covering requirements for patrons and staff
  - Physical facility evaluation for any damage or issues caused by vacancy. Follow CDC and Maryland Department of the Environment guidance on reopening buildings, including checking mechanical, air, and water/ice systems. Ensure all water lines are flushed, including equipment water lines and connections, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
  - Social distancing protocols and procedures for staff, vendors, and patrons, with special consideration for entrances and exits, queues, bottlenecks, facility layouts, and safe capacity limits
  - Communications and signage
  - Routine and frequent environmental cleaning and disinfecting, especially for high-touch surfaces, in accordance with CDC recommendations
  - Develop a plan for vendors to bring products safely into the business by arranging for deliveries when there are the fewest customers and employees.

- Establish procedures for third-party food delivery businesses to safely pick up orders while adhering to COVID-19 prevention precautions. Communicate these procedures directly with each business and/or with signage.

- Determine the capacity of both indoor (Max of 75%) and outdoor dining. An “indoor area” means all space in a structure or a building with a ceiling that is enclosed on all sides by any combination of permanent or temporary walls, windows or doorways, whether opened or closed, or other physical barriers extending from floor to ceiling.

- Check with your local health department for any additional requirements in your jurisdiction, or if you have questions, especially if modifying operations (such as adding outdoor dining).

OPEN FOR MASKS ON MARYLAND

- Face coverings are required for all employees and guests, including children older than five years of age, when indoors. When outdoors, face coverings are required if unable to consistently maintain at least six feet of distance from other non-household individuals and are advisable under all conditions. For exceptions to this requirement, please see latest Executive Order.

- Customers with disabilities who are unable to wear a face covering must be provided with an opportunity to receive the same goods and services as customers without disabilities. For more information, please see the Face Coverings FAQ.

- Removal of masks is appropriate when customers are consuming food and beverage.

- While the definition of a face covering in Executive Order 20-07-29-01 includes a face shield, MDH strongly recommends using a face shield only when also wearing a cloth face covering for anyone who can wear a cloth face covering. For people who are unable to wear a cloth face covering, a face shield by itself is better than no protection when physical distancing is not possible.

OPEN FOR EMPLOYEES

- Employes should be trained in and understand current COVID-19 health and workplace guidelines, such as hand hygiene and cleaning protocols, along with proper PPE use and disposal.

- Implement a daily screening process for workers, which includes CDC or MDH recommended health questions, and consider temperature testing.

- Direct sick workers to follow CDC and state guidelines regarding home isolation for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections and returning to work.

- Encourage employees to maintain social distancing, including during breaks, and modify procedures to avoid staff congregation.

- Employees should wear gloves when removing food service items and wash their hands immediately afterwards.

- Wait and order stations should be wiped down after each use and those tools and equipment that are shared should be sanitized prior to giving to another employee and at the beginning and end of each shift.

For more information go to open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness
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OPEN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Establish a 6-foot marking system to visually demonstrate the recommended social distancing at all locations where customers and staff congregate.
- Modify floor plans to ensure patrons are seated at least 6 feet away from each other, except for households or a group seated together. For facilities with booth seating, the social distance of 6 feet must be maintained by closing every other booth.
- Designate and signpost the direction of foot traffic in main circulation paths. Consider one-way circulation routes.
- Minimize congregating in common areas through signage, floor markings, barriers, and employee communications. Restrict access to areas where social distancing and social gathering requirements cannot be followed.
- Customers need to be seated at the bar or at a table to be served and must comply with the appropriate social distancing guideline of at least 6 feet. Standing is not permitted.
- Use a reservation system wherever possible to avoid crowding. Use phone apps, texting, or signs to let patrons know when their table or carryout order is ready. Avoid the use of pagers.
- Prepare guidance on facility capacity, how customers queue in and outside of the facility, and curbside pickup. Be mindful of creating situations that might cause lines and crowds.
- Post signage advising customers to not enter the establishment if they are sick or symptomatic. Provide a phone number or website for alternative purchasing methods, such as carryout or delivery, which should be encouraged.

OPEN FOR CLEANLINESS AND COMFORT

- If possible, set aside special hours for vulnerable or at-risk customers.
- No more than six people may be seated at a table, except for members of the same household.
- Frequently clean and disinfect facilities per CDC guidelines, particularly high touch areas, and every table after each use. Use cleaners appropriate for food contact surfaces that still meet the EPA criteria for use against COVID-19.
- When removing soft goods from the table, place in a tote to await laundry service and launder the soft goods in the warmest water possible.
- The use of buffets or similar serving format shall not be used at this time.
- For customer comfort, place table settings after the party is seated, provide condiments in either single use containers or disinfected manufactured packaging. Use menu boards, disposable menus, or mobile ordering apps. If a facility uses regular menus, they must be cleaned and sanitized between each customer’s use.
- Multi-use amenities and unnecessary items such as magazines, coupons, menus and brochures should be removed from areas open to the public.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees and customers, particularly at key patron and employee entrances and contact areas where guests are likely to congregate.
- Where possible, implement and encourage touchless payment.
- Provide disposable hand towels and trash bins in restrooms, so that customers can exit the restrooms without touching doors handles with clean bare hands.

OPEN FOR COMMUNICATIONS

- Communicate commitment to cleanliness by posting compliance adherence with the CDC’s guidelines.
- Show customers care by having signage that details social distancing protocol and COVID-19 prevention.
- Communicate with employees and guests on the measures taken for their comfort and on the shared responsibility to monitor their health and stay home if not feeling well.
- Communicate to guests in advance or during the reservation process about any changes to their dining experience, including procedures for seating, serving, ordering, paying and wearing face coverings.
- Prior to the guest’s visit, if possible, explain processes in place for their comfort, which includes social distancing, and increased hygiene practices per the CDC and MDH guidance and that you are open for business.
- Contact your local health department if you are concerned about transmission of COVID-19 in your facility.

All Executive Orders still in effect must be complied with. See most up to date orders here: governor.maryland.gov/covid-19-pandemic-orders-and-guidance.