

COVID-19

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Questions & Answers —Community Emergency Food Providers March 22, 2020—

Direction for responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will be as dynamic as our current situation. The information provided may change day-to-day so please check regularly for the most up to date recommendations.

1. Should we be cancelling our services to encourage social distancing?

We do not recommend suspending social services, including emergency food provider services. We encourage social service organizations to continue providing their important services, and consider adapting them as much as possible to support:

- Social distancing (i.e., having space of 2 meters, or two arm lengths, between individuals)
- Hand washing facilities (providing hand sanitizer to clients and staff)
- Minimum twice daily disinfection of high contact surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, faucet handles, computer keyboards, light switches, etc.). Disinfect using a mixture of 1-part bleach and 9-parts water

Organizations should consider that they may experience greater than normal absenteeism of staff and volunteers. We advise organizations to identify services that may be postponed or discontinued in order to free up staff and volunteer resources to provide essential services. Your services are vital for individuals and families at higher risk of food insecurity at this time.

2. Are there recommended precautions for people accessing your services?

Yes, post signs instructing persons NOT to enter if they have symptoms such as fever, cough, and difficulty breathing ([see the BC Centre for Disease Control Health Professionals Page for signage](#)).

Display [COVID-19 awareness resources](#) at your site. It is important that vulnerable populations, including those experiencing homelessness have access to credible, reliable, timely and up-to-date information.

3. What hygiene precautions can you take at your site?

- Reinforce regular hand washing to all staff, including staff members who prepare food and those eating. Food production staff should wash hands with plain liquid soap and water. Those who are not involved in food production may use proper hand washing or alcohol based hand sanitizers.
- Use good hygienic practices when handling food and use utensils, deli napkins, or dispensing equipment to handle food.

4. What food service precautions can you take at your site?

- Maintain a minimum distance of two meters, or two arm lengths, between individuals
- Do not allow gatherings more than 50 people
- Eliminate buffet-style eating (no tongs or spoons)
- Temporarily closing dining rooms and common spaces
- Use paper plates, disposable cups, and utensils (single service only)
- Package individual meals that patrons can take away

For more information: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/community-settings/food-banks>.

5. How should you manage ill employees and volunteers?

- All food premises should have an updated employee illness policy with reference points on COVID-19, which is communicated with all staff immediately.
- Employees who do not feel well need to be instructed to stay home and not return to work until they are feeling better or have been advised that they are well enough to return.
- Employers and managers should have a service continuity plan: how will your facility run if staff are sick?
 - The [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) can be used to know when to seek healthcare (for staff, volunteers or clients).
 - The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) has good information for Employers & Businesses: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses>

6. Should I wear a mask or gloves at my workplace?

Public health has recommended that the public or those who work in food service, and are feeling well, **do not need to wear masks**. Wearing a mask may cause you to touch your face more often. You may choose to wear disposable gloves for food preparation. However, please ensure that gloves are changed as often as you would wash your hands (such as when changing tasks, handling money, and so on). Ensure that you wash your hands before you change into a new pair of gloves.

7. Are there any resources to support clients and staff in managing anxiety and stress around the COVID-19 Pandemic?

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. The following resources can support staff and clients in ways to reduce stress:

Clients: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Care providers: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/health-care-provider-support>

8. Where can I find the most updated provincial COVID-19 information and recommendations?

The most up to date COVID-19 response information can be found here: BC Centre of Disease Control COVID-19 for the Public: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>