

## COVID-19 Restaurant and Bar Guidance

As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves across the United States, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) strongly encourages event organizers, staff and attendees to prepare for the possibility of outbreaks in their communities.

The OSDH and its many public health partners work to provide the general public, including event organizers, with guidance intended to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. The following is recommended guidance to follow at all times as the outbreak spreads across our communities.

The following interim guidance may help prevent restaurant and bar exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.

**Note: Some municipalities have enacted more restrictive rules that are specific to that city. Please check with your municipality for more information. Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Norman, Stillwater, Lawton, and Edmond all have restrictions in place as of 03/18/20.**

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's COVID-19 web page.

While there are no confirmed cases of transmission of COVID-19 through food or food packaging according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), here are recommended strategies for restaurant and bar owners to use now:

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Limit gatherings to 10 people or less.
- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.40 F [37.8 0 C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Increased handwashing with warm soapy water for 20 seconds.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.

- Limit dining room capacity or move to carry out or to-go options.
- Remove condiments and other multiple use items from tables.
- Use single service items to reduce contact of equipment by employees.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based (60% alcohol content or greater) hand rubs for customer use. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Plan ways to limit face-to-face contact between employees and customers.



- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. See the CDC website for further information on cleaning.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
- Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
- Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products. Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their business infectious disease outbreak response plan based on the condition in each locality.
- Coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.

## **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR CREATING AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK RESPONSE PLAN**

All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. During a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly. Employers should:

- Ensure the plan is flexible and involve your employees in developing and reviewing your plan. Conduct a focused discussion or exercise using your plan, to find out ahead of time whether the plan has gaps or problems that need to be corrected.
- Share your plan with employees and explain what human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits will be available to them.
- Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK RESPONSE PLAN**

- Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees. OSHA has more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures to COVID-19.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing



strategies. For employees who are able to telework, supervisors should encourage employees to telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved. Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home. Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations. Plan for how your business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or these supply chains are interrupted.

- Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering business operations (e.g., possibly changing or closing operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.
- Plan to minimize exposure between employees and also between employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.
- Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners on your infectious disease outbreak response plans and latest COVID-19 information. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
- In some communities, early childhood programs and 1<-12 schools may be dismissed, particularly if COVID-19 worsens. Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school. Businesses and other employers should prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies for these employees.
- Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies; employers should take the time now to learn about plans in place in each community where they have a business.
- If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the US, consider canceling non-essential business travel to additional countries per travel guidance on the CDC website.
- Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status. Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.
- Engage state and local health departments to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information. When working with your local health department, check their available hours.

Please note, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) encourages anyone who is experiencing flu-like symptoms, to self-quarantine for 14 days and report any concerning symptoms to a health care provider or call the **OSDH Call Center at 877-215-8336**. The OSDH regularly updates the Oklahoma-specific COVID-19 website found at [www.coronavirus.health.ok.gov](http://www.coronavirus.health.ok.gov)

