



## Eastern Highlands Health District

4 South Eagleville Road ♦ Mansfield CT 06268 ♦ Tel: (860) 429-3325 ♦ Fax: (860) 429-3321 ♦ Web: [www.EHHD.org](http://www.EHHD.org)

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March 17, 2020

To: All EHHD Food Service Establishments

From: Robert Miller, MPH, RS, Director of Health

We have seen the number of COVID-19 cases rise significantly across the state of Connecticut throughout several counties. Today, Governor Ned Lamont announced a regional approach to combatting the novel coronavirus and the uniform standards will limit crowd capacity for social and recreational gatherings to 50 people effective **at 8 PM March 16, 2020**. This follows updated guidance that the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued yesterday recommending cancellation or postponement of in-person events consisting of 50 people or more.

Governor Ned Lamont also announced that **restaurants and bars that serve food** will temporarily be required to move to **take-out and delivery services only**. Bars that do not serve food will be required to temporarily close. These measures took effect **at 8 PM March 16, 2020**.

Additionally, he announced they are temporarily closing movie theaters, gyms, fitness centers and similar public workout facilities and studios effective **8 PM March 16, 2020**.

**For public safety and out of an abundance of caution, all food establishments that are remaining open must cease operations of self-service ready-to-eat foods. These include salad bars, soup bars, olive bars, hot dog rollers, self-service beverages with common touch points such as coffee dispensers (unless the dispenser can be disinfected after each use); and anything the public serves themselves. These self-serve items shall be replaced with behind-the-counter options that will be served to customers or offered pre-packaged. These changes will take place on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and will be reassessed once the COVID-19 situation has passed.** Inspectors from the Eastern Highlands Health District will be conducting spot checks to verify compliance within the week.

Food has not been identified as a likely source of COVID-19 infection at this time. However, it is important to follow current food safety standards to help protect workers and customers from COVID-19. In addition, expanding your current food safety practices will help slow the spread of respiratory viruses in the community, and help reduce working days lost due to illness. Monitor your employees – if you see any employees who are showing flu-like symptoms they should be excluded from the operation.

Be sure to review all of your hygienic, cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Increase the frequency of handwashing, ensuring all are washing their hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Keep soap and paper towels stocked at all hand sinks. Gloves should be worn for all tasks whether handling raw or ready-to-eat foods. Changing of gloves should occur more frequently, whenever changing tasks and must include handwashing in between.

Cleaning and sanitizing of all equipment, utensils, food contact surfaces, and non-contact food surfaces becomes even more important and should occur more often. Use sanitizers that are registered with EPA. Read the sanitizer label and follow usage directions. Measure the concentration of the sanitizer with test strips to verify the concentration of the solution. The EPA has a list of sanitizers labeled for use against novel coronavirus. Be sure to wash and rinse equipment of visible dirt or debris before sanitizing. Sanitizers work better on clean surfaces. Items that may not usually be wash-rinsed-sanitized should be addressed as well. These include items such as doorknobs, backs of chairs, faucet handles, tabletops, cash registers, and menus.

Should you have any questions or require additional information please contact Lynette Swanson, Chief Sanitarian of the Eastern Highlands Health District at 860-429-3325.