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**GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OUR HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**



## South Carolina – Opening Restaurants Phase One Recommendations

The guidelines detailed in this plan are driven by three major considerations: safety, gradual and phasing in. We respectfully submit the balanced and strategic approach using best practices is the optimal approach for the state – our fellow citizens and our guests.

In that spirit we suggest beginning to phase in the opening of restaurant outdoor dining areas on May 4 with their being treated the same as takeout, curbside service and delivery from the regulation standpoint. Following with restaurants including dine-in areas to open on a date yet to be determined based on the factors described below. This will allow lead time for staff to be re-hired and trained, the food supply chain to be fully and normally operational, safety measures to be implemented, including providing ample time for operators to get the necessary Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to keep staff and diners safe.

During the Phase One of restaurants reopening in South Carolina, it is suggested that the following steps are adhered to until the data demonstrates these requirements can be relaxed along with recommendations from CDC/FDA/DHEC before moving on to subsequent phases. Phase Two should experience an increase in customer counts in restaurants, and Phase Three could mean decreasing social distancing in restaurants, but this won't be clear until it is demonstrated that Phase One can be done successfully.

Prior to reopening, it is critical that every restaurant intending to reopen evaluate their inventory, review their food safety certification and procedures to ensure they can open in compliance with SC Food Safety regulations, and do a deep re-clean and sanitize the entire restaurant facility using the CDC-recommended guidelines during COVID-19.

South Carolina is committed to following the protocols established by Governor McMaster regarding safe social distancing and this heightened awareness of public safety. South Carolina's restaurant industry is waiting for the return of its guests and, in the meantime, we are preparing for the reopening by suggesting doing the following things to **welcome customers**:

- Post a sign on the door to your restaurant that no one with a fever or persistent cough is to be permitted in the restaurant.
- Provide signage at each public entrance to inform all employees and customers that they should:
  - Not allowed to enter if they feel generally unwell
  - Maintain a minimum of 6-foot distance
  - Sneeze or cough into a cloth or tissue
  - Not shake hands or engage in any unnecessary physical contact

- Post a sign on receiving door that no suppliers or vendors should enter if they have a fever or persistent cough.

**Furthermore, we are recommending the following “best practices” for reassuring your customers of your commitment to their safety while dining:**

- Post in a publicly prominent place in your facility and on your website your commitment to:
  - Food safety
  - Staff safety training
  - Steps that you are taking to go above and beyond in providing safe food and a safe, enjoyable dining experience
  - Customer safety
  - Customer responsibility
- Create, execute and post publicly a full scale ‘ready for dine-in’ cleaning and sanitizing protocol in preparation for welcoming customers.

**We recommend the following steps be followed in order to safely open back up and build the trust of our customers in this unique and trying time in our history:**

**Training:**

- Continue and enhance employee safety training, highly emphasizing proper hand washing and hygiene etiquette.
- Encourage restaurants to bring in staff at least one week prior to opening for the purpose of training, cleaning, building inventory, etc.
- All restaurants are required to meet the minimum education and training standards outlined in DHEC Regulation 61-25. At least one employee with the authority to direct and control food preparation and service shall be a food protection manager who has been certified by an accredited program. Only Conference for Food Protection ANSI-certified Food Protection Manager courses meet the requirements of 2-102.20
- All restaurants are encouraged to have their employees complete the DHEC-approved Food Handler training and all managers earn their Conference for Food Protection ANSI-certified Food Protection Manager certification.
- For those operations with carry out and delivery service, have employees take the Free ServSafe COVID-19 training for carryout and delivery service.

### **Restaurant Dining Room Focus:**

- Create a plan and checklist of all back of house and front of house surfaces the staff and customers will come in contact with.
- Select one person per shift to be in charge of safety and sanitation during the shift, observing and ensuring that hand washing is done appropriately, and sanitation of dining room areas, restrooms, lobbies and door areas is done regularly and consistently (minimum of hourly).
- Restaurants already have sanitization regulations that need to continue to be adhered to based on regulation 61-25, Retail Food Establishments.
- Install touchless hand sanitizers at all entry doors if availability permits. At your main entrance, provide a cleaning station with alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues, and a trash can for visitors.
- Use sanitizing solutions to clean tables, chairs, and check presenters after each seating. Clean and sanitize salt and pepper fixtures or use single use condiments. Use paper menus if possible or sanitize menus after each use.
- Sanitize all doorknobs and other frequently touched surfaces as much as possible between newly arriving parties with approved sanitizing solution.
- Cleaning supplies should be single use (paper towels, disposable mop heads) or laundered between uses (dish towels, mop heads).
- Space tables both indoor and outdoor at least six feet apart. If not possible, seat tables in rotation, or block seats. Reduce seating in dining rooms to the appropriate level based on square footage and layout of the dining room.
- No more than eight customers at a table during Phase One of the reopening of our restaurants.
- Manual or digital reservation system would be helpful to be more efficient with table seating. Have diners wait for tables in cars or outdoors using social distancing regulations rather than congregating in your dining room. Text them when their table is available.
- If there is any waiting outside the restaurant or at the counter, tape or markings should be used to monitor six feet physical distance.
- If not already standard operating procedures, have sanitization check lists for restrooms and other public areas.
- Set up guidelines for server stations so they are not congregating together. Depending on the size of the restaurant, consider having a station for each server.
- During routine business hours, frequently and thoroughly clean and disinfect all frequently touched objects within the dining and customer areas (doorknobs, cabinet handles, handrails, light switches, kitchen counters, dining room tables).

- Deep clean and disinfect the entire facility during non-operational hours at least five times per week.
- Only use kiosks or touch screens if they can be sanitized between uses, encourage touchless payment operations like credit cards with no signature required.
- Do not place utensils on table until patron is seated and, if possible, use disposable single-use utensils.
- In self-service seating restaurants, signage should be placed on tables/booths which are not to be occupied so that proper social distancing can be maintained.
- Remove bar stools or maintain a 6' distance between each to allow people to order drinks at the bar and sit using appropriate social distancing.

**Food Safety Focus:**

- Place settings, utensils, menus, and condiments will either be single-use or will be cleaned and disinfected after every use.
- Continue to clean and sanitize food preparation surfaces in the kitchen and other food storage areas at the frequency required by R. 61-25.
- Buffets and self-service stations: Have staff dispense food from buffets (cafeteria-style) or discontinue these services to prevent customer reuse of service utensils and potential physical contamination.
- Have sanitizer or another disinfectant readily available to all guests and employees.
- Thoroughly disinfect every table, chair/booth, utensil, glass, and surface the guest has contacted.
- Staff should wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after cleaning and disinfecting is completed. Ensure that staff properly wash their hands immediately after gloves are removed.

**Employee Safety Focus:**

- Each employee will pass a health check or health survey prior to each shift.
- Heightened hygienic practices including peer observation and supervisor oversight to ensure staff are washing hands frequently and correctly, gloves may be used and must be changed properly, and that staff avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- It is recommended to have physical barriers such as Plexiglas between employees and customers when possible for counter service ordering, food pick up areas and host stands.

- Use technology solutions where possible to reduce person-to-person interaction, mobile and menu tablets, test on arrival for seating and contactless payment options.
- Each staff member will have his/her temperature taken before their shift and there will be ongoing interaction with staff on their health status and the health of anyone with whom they may be in close contact (family members, roommates, etc.).
- Immediately exclude any staff members indicating symptoms or that have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone diagnosed COVID-19.
- Ensure staff do NOT share cups and eating utensils with others.
- All employees handling food should wear gloves during Phase One. This is not just for the safety of our guests, but also for their psychological sense of safety.
- Employees should be allowed to wear gloves and masks if they so desire, even in front-of-the-house positions and in the restaurant environments when a six-foot social distancing area in the kitchen and front counter area would be difficult to maintain.

**Customer Safety Focus:**

- Discontinue services that allow customers to fill or refill their own beverage cups such as coffee cups or growlers.
- Plan ahead of time for a circumstance in which you'll need to expedite a guest's exit from your restaurant.
- Be prepared to put guests in touch with medical resources.

**The following sections are requested to promote the revitalization of the restaurant industry through education, marketing and government relief programs.**

**Customer Responsibilities:**

- If you have been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough, or shortness of breath, please help us keep everyone safe by using our contactless medical health delivery systems.
- If you have underlying health conditions that make you a more vulnerable patron, please use our contactless medical health delivery systems.

### **Marketing and Promotion:**

- Promote to the local community that employees are well-versed in the importance of personal health and hygiene and that they understand the critical importance of cleanliness and sanitation of the establishment.
- Support SCPRT's launching an extensive ad campaign within a reasonable drive market radius.
- Encourage the establishment of localized hospitality industry employment websites

**We also recommend the following actions by the government at local, state and federal levels in order to help promote the reopening of the restaurants and thereby one of the economic engines of our state and country.**

### **Government:**

- The state should consider indemnifying restaurant owners who follow the guidelines from lawsuits predicated on transmission of COVID-19 to guests or employees.
- Possibly provide restaurants with restart grants in the amount of 2x the gross receipts tax paid over the previous 12-month period (Feb 2019 - Feb 2020).
- Suspend Gross Receipts Tax.
- Pursue relief to businesses that demonstrate hardship regarding the payment of fees (including alcohol beverage control fees, permit fees, inspection fees and business license fees).
- Defer all non-essential regulatory changes
- Freeze unemployment insurance rates.
- Defer Insurance premiums for 90 days for general liability, worker's compensation and health insurance policies.
- Enact the Restaurant and Foodservice Industry Recovery Fund (RFIRF).
- Replenish funding and fix the structural issues of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).
- Create a "Healthy Restaurants" Tax Credit or Grant Program.
- Enact the "SNAP COVID-19 Anti-Hunger Restaurant Relief for You Act of 2020".
- Increase funding for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs).
- Allow restaurants to continue off-premise alcohol sales with food to go orders.

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# Temporary Outdoor Seating Guidelines

All restaurants that provide outdoor patio venues must adhere to strict mitigation standards preventing the spread of COVID-19. The general operating matrix will require spacing of groups, limiting concentration of people, strict use of PPE, and frequent sanitizing.

Existing approved outdoor seating areas, to include open air patio, balcony, rooftop, parking lots and sidewalks, must maintain operating features per approved Fire Marshal occupancy.

The following modifications are required:

- Space tables a minimum of 8 feet from each other (measured from all edges of the table);
- Limit table groups to 8 individuals; and
- Eliminate gatherings in the building when entering or exiting outdoor seating area; and
- Maintain strict social/physical distancing guidelines

Open Areas and temporary tents utilized by existing, permitted restaurants, must have all sides of the tent open. The following conditions are required:

- Space tables a minimum of 8 feet from each other (measured from all edges of the table);
- Limit table groups to 8 individuals;
- State approved fire extinguisher within 75 feet of tent area; and
- Minimum 7-foot 6-inch head room (ceiling height).

Tables, chairs, and seats should be cleaned/sanitized after every customer.

## **Frequently Asked Questions regarding tent or portable structures:**

- Can I set tents or open areas outside of the existing building footprint?
  - Yes. but subject to local ordinances and must be contiguous to the permitted/license premise.
- Can I serve beer/wine in the tent or portable structure area if I have an on-premise permit?
  - Yes, provided that there is a demarcation of the area it is being served. This may be accomplished with signs with the restaurant name and rope or tape.
- Can I provide a cocktail (mixed drink) in the tent or portable structure area if I have an on-premise permit?
  - No, liquor cannot be served outside of the licensed premise
- Can I set up a buffet or self-serve beverage?
  - No, table service or pick-up counter service may only be provided.
- Can I provide restroom services inside my restaurant?
  - Yes, you are allowed to be sure to maintain a regular cleaning schedule.
- What are the responsibilities of providing social distancing when there is no table staff?
  - Owner/operator will still manage property as normal and ensure seating layouts and procedures are followed or otherwise cease service.



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