Campus Dining Services
Guidance for Higher Education Institutions

The update to this document clarifies the 50% capacity limit to dining halls, while also clarifying why campus dining halls are not subject to the 250 maximum that applies to restaurants.

Campus dining services — including resident dining locations, retail locations, convenience stores, and catering services — must develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. The purpose of this document is to outline the requirements and topics that the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan must address and that will support social distancing and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in these settings. This document is an expansion of Guidance for Mitigating COVID-19 at Higher Education Institutions (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/guideihe.pdf).

In developing this guidance, MDH reviewed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance for Higher Education, the American College Health Association, and recommendations from the MDH Higher Education workgroups, composed of representatives from colleges and universities across Minnesota. Additionally, this guidance was developed taking into account parameters and capacities already set forth in other state guidance documents, including Stay Safe Industry Guidance and MDH’s guidance for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 schools. In general, the parameters set out in this document adhere to relevant percent and total capacity caps found in other guidance documents, and where higher education guidance varies from similar settings, other precautions are put in place so that the impact is the same as the original intent of all guidance requirements – social distancing and reducing transmission potential. In this document, dining halls are limited to 50% capacity but are not subject to the 250 maximum that applies to restaurants. Campus dining halls are designed to hold a much larger number of diners than the average restaurant, so the 50% capacity limit, in combination with the requirements that 6 feet or greater distance be maintained between parties and that no table exceed four people, means that students can be sufficiently spread out. Additionally, dining halls on campus serve residential students and are often a residential student’s main source for obtaining meals.
Key requirements

- Ensure a minimum of 6 feet of distance between dining parties, greater than 6 feet is preferred. To the extent feasible, 6 feet should also be maintained between individuals in each dining party.
  - If in some circumstances 6 feet is not feasible, party sizes of up to four people per table can be considered, but tables should be large enough to allow for some distancing.
- Limit indoor occupant capacity to no more than 50%.
- Require patrons to wear face coverings at all times unless they are seated and eating or unless there is a different exemption that applies.
- Require workers to wear face coverings at all times.

Face coverings

As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and indoor public spaces, per Executive Order 20-81. In addition to the indoor requirement, workers are required to wear face coverings in outdoor spaces where social distancing is not possible.

- The Executive Order provides exemptions for people with medical conditions, mental health conditions, or disabilities that makes them unable to tolerate wearing a face covering.
- If a food service worker is unable to wear a face covering for one of the reasons listed above, or because of work conditions that would make wearing a face covering difficult or unsafe (e.g., due to high temperatures), workers may use face covering alternatives, such as a face shield.
- The Executive Order allows face coverings to be temporarily removed in certain situations. For more detailed guidance about the requirements of Executive Order 20-81, visit:
  - Executive Orders from Governor Walz (mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp).
  - Masks and face coverings (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks).
  - Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html).
  - Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html).

Wearing a face covering is not a substitute for frequent hand washing, avoiding touching the face, and social distancing, which are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.
Campus dining preparation and use

General food safety

- Follow the requirements of the Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 4626, Food Code; Food Managers (www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4626/).
- Self-service food and beverage areas are allowed as long as the COVID-19 plan addresses customer protections such as oversight of the self-service area to ensure social distancing is maintained, hands are being sanitized, and customers are wearing face coverings in the self-service area. Best practice would be to prepackage food ahead of time as much as possible.
- If providing a “grab-and-go” service, stock coolers to no more than minimum levels.
- Ensure handwashing sinks are accessible and fully stocked with soap, paper towels, hand washing signs, and trash bins.
- Ensure the person in charge is a certified food protection manager (CFPM) and that their certification is up to date.
- Provide food handler training to help employees stay up to date.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Each campus should review its protocols for cleaning and disinfecting.
- Establish a documented sanitation schedule and checklist, identifying surfaces/equipment to be cleaned and disinfected, the agent to be used, and the frequency at which cleaning and disinfecting occurs.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all areas, such as offices, restrooms, locker and changing rooms, and common areas, including floors, shared electronic equipment, machinery, tools, controls, etc.
- Frequently clean and disinfect all high-touch areas throughout the day; staff may need to be added to ensure that there is enough focus on cleaning frequently touched areas. Frequency should be based on number of individuals coming through and touching common areas and the ability for staff to maintain a regular schedule of cleaning. Areas considered high-touch include:
  - Milk handles, soda fountains, and soft service ice cream.
  - All counters and servicing areas.
  - Doorknobs, barriers, railings, handles, and other surfaces.
- Electronic devices (e.g., light switches, circuit breakers) should not be cleaned and disinfected with a liquid agent. Consider covering switches/devices with a poly covering that allows the user to manipulate the device without touching the switch, and change out the poly covering frequently. Electronic devices must be cleaned and disinfected only when disconnected from the power source, and cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the listing/labeling requirements.
- Select appropriate and ensure the needed supply of disinfectants – consider effectiveness and safety. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) List N has identified a list of products that meet EPA’s criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2. See EPA’s List N: Disinfectants for Use Against...

- Review product labels and safety data sheets, follow manufacturer specifications, and use required personal protective equipment for the product.
- Sanitize all tables after each use.
  - Create a process for staff to clean after each use in dining areas.
  - Consider having a laminated green side/red side card (green side would go up after sanitizing, red side up as customer leaves to notify staff and warn other customers).
  - Provide information and supplies to allow customers to clean their dining area when they arrive and before they leave.
- Bathrooms within dining areas should be cleaned on a regular basis with attention given to high-touch areas.
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces according to the Minnesota Food Code (see link above).
  - Follow the manufacturer’s label to ensure that appropriate products are used to sanitize food contact surfaces. Not all disinfectants are appropriate for food contact surface sanitizing.
  - Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces, food preparation surfaces, and beverage equipment after each use.
  - Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentrations, application method, contact and drying time, use of personal protective equipment, and warnings about not mixing products together).
  - Consider providing cleaning and disinfection kits (sprays or buckets, hand sanitizers, or other cleaning supplies) that are readily accessible throughout the establishment for areas that will be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- If possible, increase cleaning of public spaces with a target of two cleanings per meal period. Certain high-touch surfaces may need more frequent cleaning.
  - If possible, increase the number of days cleaned or the scope of cleaning, i.e., if weekend or evening cleaning was limited, consider treating all seven days similarly.
  - Ensure that bathrooms in or near dining areas have hand soap so students are encouraged to hand wash frequently. Consider using paper towels vs. hand dryers.
  - Consider adding hand sanitizer to all common spaces.
  - Consider providing cleaning supplies, for student use, in all dining areas.

**Drop-off, pick-up, and delivery practices and protocol**

- Businesses must have a process for contactless deliveries that allows people to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from each other while allowing workers to verify receipt of the delivery. Whenever possible, businesses should attempt to conduct transactions electronically (e.g., app, phone) to eliminate the need for close contact between workers and delivery personnel.
Workers must maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others when receiving or exchanging deliveries.

Workers must minimize unnecessary exchanging or sharing of scanners, pens, or other tools with delivery personnel.

Communications and training

Create a training for staff and student workers on COVID-19 and cleaning protocols.

Ensure that all workers and members of management are trained regarding COVID-19 exposure, use of protective equipment and supplies, as well as applicable policies, procedures, practices, and protocols. The training must be provided by and paid for by the business. The training must be provided in a manner and language that each employee can understand, and must be adjusted to reasonably accommodate all limiting factors present. See OSHA’s Resource for Development and Delivery of Training to Workers (osha.gov/Publications/osha3824.pdf). See also Minnesota’s Small Assemblies for Testing and Training (www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID-19_training_facilities.pdf) for guidance with facilitating training for employees while addressing COVID-19 implications.

Ensure that the COVID-19 Business Preparedness Plan is posted in readily accessible locations, and is shared with and reviewed by all workers.

Ensure that the necessary or required rules and practices are communicated to workers, and adequately enforce their provisions.

Ensure that workers comply with and follow established rules and practices.

Educate students and visitors about the steps being taken for their protection to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Protective measures should be communicated to students and visitors prior to their visit to inform them of their role in protecting workers and other customers.

Employee requirements

Ensure sick workers stay home

Establish health screening protocols for workers at the start of each shift (e.g., health screening survey, taking temperature). See MDH’s Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf). The checklist is also available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish at Businesses and Employers: COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html).

Send workers with COVID-19 symptoms home immediately. If they cannot be sent home immediately, isolate in a closed room until they can be sent home. Workers who have been in close contact with a household member with COVID-19 should not be at work until their quarantine period is finished.

Establish communication protocols and steps to take when workers have been exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace.
Designate a person to maintain communication with and gather information from workers who may be ill, to ensure the privacy of workers is maintained.

Establish worker sickness reporting protocols.


Establish a process to identify contact between infected workers and other workers who may have been exposed. See Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), May 2020 (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html).

Evaluate and adjust sick leave policies to reflect the need for isolation and incentivize workers who are sick to stay home.

Provide accommodations for “high risk” and vulnerable populations. See CDC’s People at Increased Risk for Severe Illness (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html). Vulnerable workers should be encouraged to self-identify, and employers should avoid making unnecessary medical inquiries. Employers should take particular care to reduce these workers’ risk of exposure.

Clearly communicate sick leave policies to all workers.

Establish individual health screening before shifts before entering kitchens.

**Worker hygiene**

Provide protective equipment and supplies, such as face coverings, face shields, gloves, hand sanitizer, and disinfectants, and provide training on proper use.

Create an opportunity for workers to clock-in that does not require touching papers or surfaces.

- If this is not possible, make sure that cleaning wipes and hand sanitizer are available.

Ensure that personal equipment, tools, scanners, pens and phones not be shared or, if shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Ensure workers wash their hands regularly. Ensure handwashing and/or hand sanitizer facilities are readily available and appropriately stocked.

Require that workers wear gloves during all food preparation. Ensure that gloves are changed between each task and work area.

Require workers to wear face coverings (e.g., cloth face coverings) that cover their mouth and nose per Executive Order 20-81, which generally requires workers to wear face coverings indoors at all times, and outdoors when social distancing cannot be maintained. Provide training on proper use.

- In instances where cloth face coverings cannot be worn (such as hot kitchens), face shields that wrap around the face and extend below the chin may be used instead.

- Face coverings and shields must be maintained and cleaned.
Workers are not required to wear a face covering if alone in an office or other enclosed or separated work area, provided that they are not handling or preparing food or in an area where food is stored, handled, or prepared.

- Post “hand washing” and “cover your cough” signs.
- Ensure that doors to multi-stall restrooms can be opened and closed without touching the handles, opening devices, or powered door-operators with a hand, whenever possible. If the door cannot be opened without touching the handle or door-operator with the hand, the business must ensure a trash receptacle is placed by the door to ensure a paper towel can be readily disposed of when operating the door. The location and positioning of waste receptacles should not interfere with life safety requirements (e.g., egress, evacuation, emergency equipment) or any reasonable accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Disable community drinking stations and water fountains. Touchless water bottle filling stations may still be provided.

- Provide tissues for proper cough/sneeze etiquette and no-touch disposal bins.

**Hand hygiene resources**

- [Handwashing for Employees](www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/handwashfs.pdf)
- [Preventing Contamination from Hands](www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/nohandcontfs.pdf)

**Maintain social distancing in a food prep area**

To prevent COVID-19 transmission, practice social distancing, which means maintaining 6 feet of separation between people as much as possible.

- Food workers should evaluate their current space for food preparation and allow for at least 6 feet of separation between themselves while performing required tasks.

- If space permits, food workers should be assigned a repetitive task that will prevent them from having to move to another part of the kitchen/food prep area for additional kitchen supplies or other needs. MDH understands that this might not always be practical due to the size and logistics of the current kitchen workspace.
Maximize remote working—workers who are able to work from home must work from home.

Stagger shifts and breaks. Extend work hours and create additional shifts to reduce the number of workers per shift.

Evaluate traffic patterns and “chokepoints” to reduce crowding at entrances, in hallways, elevators, waiting areas, break areas, common areas to maintain 6 feet of physical distancing.

Limit collective gatherings of workers to 10 people or fewer to maintain 6 feet of physical distancing.

Limit the number of people in restrooms to maintain 6 feet of physical distancing.

Ensure 6 feet of physical distancing in work areas, including at workstations, production lines, break rooms, meeting rooms, waiting rooms, lobbies, etc.

Limit worker interaction across floors, buildings, campuses, worksites, etc.

Increase physical space between workers and other workers, customers and clients through the use of partitions and barriers of sufficient dimension and appropriate material, e.g., plexiglass or taut heavy plastic curtains stretched and secured, as necessary, to protect workers.

What students/staff/visitors can do to minimize the transmission of COVID-19

Advise customers to conduct a self-check of their body temperature the day of their visit.

Post signage and develop messaging that if customers do not feel well or have any symptoms compatible with COVID-19, they should stay home. They should also stay home if they have a household member experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Refer to CDC’s If You are Sick or Caring for Someone (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html).

If customers begin to feel unwell while in the workplace, they should leave immediately and isolate themselves at home.

Have customers review a screening survey that checks for COVID-19 symptoms, close contacts with confirmed cases and quarantined cases, and recent international travel. The questions would be the same as those completed by workers. See MDH’s Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

Encourage customers to regularly wash and/or sanitize their hands.

Limit the equipment, products, or items touched by a customer while at the business.

Require customers to wear a face covering or mask, other than when eating or drinking, unless not recommended for health or physical ability reasons. Cloth face coverings are NOT a substitute for maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet from other people.
Additional protections and protocols

Additional protections for receiving or exchanging payment

- Contactless payment should be used whenever possible. Use an electronic funds transfer service or credit card payment method that allows the client or customer to fully initiate and complete the payment transaction remotely or while separated from the worker.
- When contactless payment is not possible, payment must be made in a manner that allows for at least 6 feet of distance between the worker and customer.
- During check-in and check-out, the configuration at the payment stations and the space between the worker and the customer must allow for physical distancing of at least 6 feet, or a physical barrier must be installed.
- Install barriers of sufficient dimension and appropriate material, e.g., plexiglass or taut heavy plastic curtains stretched and secured, as necessary, to protect worker at the check-in and check-out counter.

Additional protections and protocol for managing occupancy

- Indoor seating at up to 50% occupancy is allowed, with a maximum of 250 people at one time.
- All customers must be seated, including at counters.
- Businesses must limit the number of customers to allow for the required social distancing and not exceed the percentage of occupancy where required.
  - The number of customers at any one time is limited to the number for whom physical distancing of 6 feet can be maintained between parties.
- Advertise business protocols, advising customers of the added COVID-19 precautions that will be taken prior to arrival at the site. Use websites, social media, pre-reservation phone calls and confirmations, and other outlets to educate customers on the steps being taken for their protection and the protection of workers.
- Decline to allow entry to a customer if there is any suspicion that they are sick or symptomatic, and advise them to leave the facility.
- Post instructions for customers at entrances, informing customers:
  - Not to enter if they are experiencing symptoms.
  - About the facility’s occupancy limits.
  - They are required to wear face coverings when not eating or drinking, unless not medically or physically possible.
  - They are required to adhere to hygiene and social distancing instructions, signage, and markings.
Maintain social distancing in dining halls

- Configure tables and chairs within dining seating areas to maintain 6 feet of distance between tables.
  - To help accomplish social distancing:
    - Encourage use of to-go and take out options.
    - Schedule mealtimes for students to control occupancy.
    - Assign students to one dining facility.
  - Reset tables and chairs in dining rooms before each meal service.

- All students and guests must wear masks when not eating, including while in line to receive food.

- Position staff at entrances and exits and implement a process to control the number of students in the serving and dining area at one time so that social distancing is maintained and capacity limits are not exceeded.
  - Install floor markers to show proper social distancing.
  - Use stanchions for lines inside and for queuing up guests as they wait to enter.
  - Create one-way service lines.
  - Face coverings must be worn while waiting in line.

- Consider using meal swipes/transfers to encourage students to use meal plans in other locations outside of the resident dining locations.

- Consider limiting dining halls to those with student required meal plans only.

- Modify hours of operations to allow social distancing in dining halls. This may include:
  - Expanding hours to serve more students over a longer period of time.
  - Move to continuous dining.
  - Alter class schedules to avoid large rushes in dining around meal periods.
  - Consider scheduling meal periods.

Back of house kitchens/dish rooms

- Require that culinary staff maintain social distancing wherever possible.
  - If this is not possible looking at options to expand prep to new areas.
  - Create new spaces for pre-packaging food.

- Clean between each prep and task.
  - Make sure that all prep surfaces and equipment are cleaned and sanitized after each use.
  - If feasible, once an hour wipe and sanitize all surfaces including surfaces and equipment that have not been in use.
  - Create a log to track when cleaning and sanitization takes place.
Retail operations

- Communicate about changes within each location.
  - Signage should include information on hand washing, social distancing, service options, etc.
- Where possible, provide payment options that minimize contact.
  - Cashless option where possible.
  - Contactless credit card machines.
  - Mobile ordering where possible.
  - Minimize unnecessary exchanging or sharing of scanners, pens, or other tools.
- Determine occupancy thresholds.
  - Establish levels based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and MDH recommendations to maintain a physical distance of 6 feet between people of different households where feasible.
  - Install floor markers that are 6 feet apart to show social distancing.
  - Food courts should look at occupancy as a whole as well as individual locations.
- Once occupancy is reached, regulate capacity using a one-in one-out process.
- Establish and post criteria to enter.
  - Customers must wear face coverings while gathering food, but face coverings can be removed for eating or drinking.
  - Develop processes for lines outside of the location for times that occupancy is reached.
- Consider options that increase speed of service and avoid rushes.
  - Move menu items to quick service, walk ups, or grab and go.
  - Provide incentives for take-out/disposable containers.
  - Develop a plan for refilling and sanitizing reach-in coolers and service areas.
- Consider plexiglass or barriers at registers where social distancing cannot be maintained.
  - Clean high touch surfaces every 20 minutes, including reach-in cooler handles, doorknobs, barriers, railings, handles, and other surfaces.
  - Place items in a bag before handing to customer (e.g., sandwiches, wraps, burgers, pastries, French fries).

Resident dining

- Establish and post criteria for residents to enter.
  - When in the dining hall, a face covering must be worn unless eating or drinking.
  - Use an altered capacity model to aid in social distancing protocols.
    - Once capacity is reached, allow one in, one out.
▪ Have lines and floor markers outside the dining location to help manage customers when capacity is reached.
▪ Include signage and communication for lines.

▪ Establish separate staff entrances and exits to monitor the flow of diners and facility capacity.
▪ Provide hand sanitizer at the entrance and exit.
▪ Post signage to communicate social distancing, face covering, and other requirements.
  ▪ Use signage that can be sanitized when staff wipe tables and serving areas.
  ▪ Place signage at tables to remind customers about social distancing and table capacity limits. The signs should also prohibit moving table and chairs.
  ▪ Create and post signage about face covering requirements, along with messaging about hand washing.
▪ Frequently clean and disinfect all high touch areas throughout the day, including:
  ▪ High touch milk handles, soda fountains, soft service ice cream (every 20 minutes).
  ▪ Counters and servicing areas (every 20 minutes).
  ▪ Doorknobs, barriers, railings, handles, and other surfaces.
▪ Wipe all tables and chairs after each use.
  ▪ Create a process for cleaning after each use.
  ▪ Create education and opportunities for customers to clean in and clean out of the areas.
▪ Monitor speed of service, especially during peak times.
  ▪ Allow customers to walk in, fill containers, and leave.
  ▪ Have a preset menu that can be picked up without entering the dining hall.
  ▪ Create catering pop-up locations in large areas to grab meals with a simpler menu.
  ▪ Remove made-to-order areas during peak periods to a preset menu.
  ▪ Create preset menus with limited options for dressings or toppings.
▪ Consider other options to simplify service and help patrons move in and out of dining quickly.
  ▪ Move to single-use, pre-package, including utensils. Do not preset tables.
  ▪ Use pre-composting rolls for napkin and cutlery.
  ▪ Remove from use high touch self-service containers and items requiring frequent hand contact (e.g., condiments such as ketchup bottles and salt/pepper shakers, straws, napkin holders). Use single-use items when possible.
Catering

- Move to boxed options as much as possible.
- Have all servers wearing face coverings and gloves.
- Ensure guests wear face coverings when not eating or drinking.
- Buffets:
  - Offer only full-service buffets.
  - Create longer buffet lines to allow social distancing for staff and guests.
  - Use tape or other markings to facilitate social distancing.
- Table service:
  - Set up meeting and dining rooms to adhere to social distancing requirements.
  - Pre-set meals with covers at tables.
  - Create space/staging areas for pre-plating that allows for social distancing.

Resources

American College Health Association


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Colleges, Universities, and Higher Learning (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/)

Environmental Protection Agency

Minnesota Department of Health

- COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Institutes of Higher Education (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanihe.html)
- Industry Guidance for Safely Reopening: Restaurants and Bars (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf)
- Food Service Worker Safety Information: Guidance for School Food Programs (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/foodservice.pdf)

National Pesticide Information Center

- Disinfectants and COVID-19 (npic.orst.edu/ingred/ptype/amicrob/covid19.html)

National Association of College and University Food Service

- Collegiate Dining’s Response to COVID-19 (www.nacufs.org/covid-19-resources1/)