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Darien Health Dept: Food Establishment Inspections Suspended, Here's What's Replacing Them

Author : David Gurliacci

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The Darien Health Department has given a description of what it's now doing to ensure food safety while formal inspection reporting has been suspended since the state suspended in-restaurant dining in mid-March.

The department now has restaurants screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms, social distancing on the job and use of personal protective equipment (PPEs). Signage and floor or ground markings are required for customers waiting in line to pick up food, and one-way foot traffic flow is required.

Workers must make sure to wash their hands, and no bare-handed contact with ready-to-eat food is allowed.

The department is also making unannounced visits to food-serving establishments to make sure the safety rules are being enforced by establishment management and adhered to by employees, even though inspections aren't formally recorded in the regular reports.

"This office has begun dialog with our local establishments to ensure that when reopening does occur, it will be in accordance with best practices to protect the public and the food service workers," the announcement said.

The Entire Announcement

Here's the full text of the announcement:

NOTICE:

The issuance of Food Service Establishment Ratings has been suspended until such time as restaurants have resumed normal operating activities.

Routine on-site inspections of restaurants have been suspended since the governor ORDERED closure of food service facilities on March 16, 2020.

To ensure the continued safety of those facilities that have remained open providing takeout, curbside or delivery service during the period of time when routine inspections have been suspended, this office has maintained constant contact via phone or email with each open facility as follows:

Employee wellness — ensuring active managerial controls are in place, the screening of employees specifically for COVID19 type symptoms, social distancing requirements are met when employees are working, and the provision of and proper utilization of PPE.

Social Distancing requirements: reviewing social distancing protocols to protect the health of the public, the monitoring and control of the number of patrons inside the establishment at any given time, ensuring limited access to common areas, using tape, chalk or signage to mark out 6 feet on the floor to allow for separation at counters, checkout lines and sidewalks, and the control of access and egress into facilities with a one way traffic pattern.

Safe Food Handling: proper hand washing by food handlers and delivery drivers must be practiced and enforced by the person in charge, reminding managers that bare hand contact is not allowed with ready to eat foods, safe holding and cooking temperatures in the kitchen must be monitored and commonly used sanitation practices are followed to prevent the potential spread of illness.

Active managerial control: how is this essential function being practiced to reduce the risk of food-borne illness or COVID-19 transmission, special emphasis must be placed on good hygiene practices and sanitation.

All facilities receive regular CDC guidance updates as necessary.

To supplement the above and verify safe food handling practices are being adhered to during this period, we continue with site visits and in-person interviews at each facility on a random, unannounced basis, in the

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same fashion inspections are normally conducted.

This office has begun dialog with our local establishments to ensure that when reopening does occur, it will be in accordance with best practices to protect the public and the food service workers.

Remember to wash your hands, wear a facial mask when in public and practice social distancing! Be smart, be safe, be healthy.

— David Knauf, REHS, MS, MPH

Director of Health, Darien