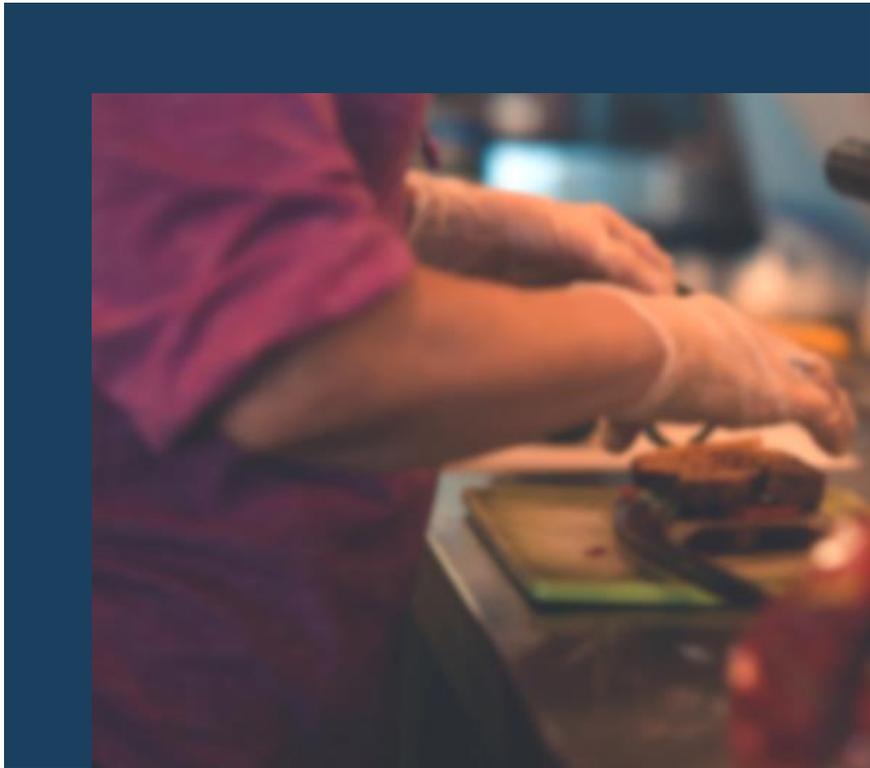




**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THE  
SAFE REOPENING OF MEETINGS  
AND EVENTS IN ONTARIO**

*A resource created by the Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association  
in collaboration with a committee of government & industry leaders.*



# In this Guide

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<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COVID-19 TRANSMISSION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PHYSICAL DISTANCING</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SANITIZATION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CONTACT TRACING</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>STAFF PROTECTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PLANNING THE MEETING OR EVENT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>ENTERING THE MEETING OR EVENT</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>MANAGING THE MEETING ROOM</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>MANAGING THE MEAL SERVICE</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>RECEPTIONS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>MAINTAINING THE RESTROOMS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>KEEPING A SAFE KITCHEN</b>	<b>14</b>

# Introduction

To understand how to best navigate this unprecedented time and support restaurant and foodservice operators, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association (ORHMA) has been working closely with industry leaders, multiple government agencies, technology experts, legal advisors and key supply partners. Together, we have developed DineSafe, a catalogue of best practices to help guide your safe and successful reopening.

Focusing on processes that protect staff and guests and exceed health and safety expectations, this guide aims to provide the roadmap to restaurant recovery. By following these recommendations, we can each design safe, welcoming spaces that inspire public trust, so our industry as a whole can not only survive but thrive.

More specifically, this practical guide to reopening is organized in the flow of a typical guest experience, and it outlines required and desired health and safety deliverables, as well as elements you should uniquely consider for your particular operations.

While we may have to modify our approach and update our spaces, two core elements of our business remain: our dedication to looking after our teams and our guests; and our mission to provide safe and memorable dining experiences so guests want to return to and want to tell others about. Today, more than ever before, we have the opportunity to demonstrate our collective commitment to hospitality excellence.

Recognizing the situation is quickly evolving, ORHMA is continuing to collaborate with the Province of Ontario, as well as other industry suppliers and specialists, and will continue to provide you with updated tools and resources. We are here to assist you and the industry in any way we can, and welcome any questions, recommendations or requests you may have.

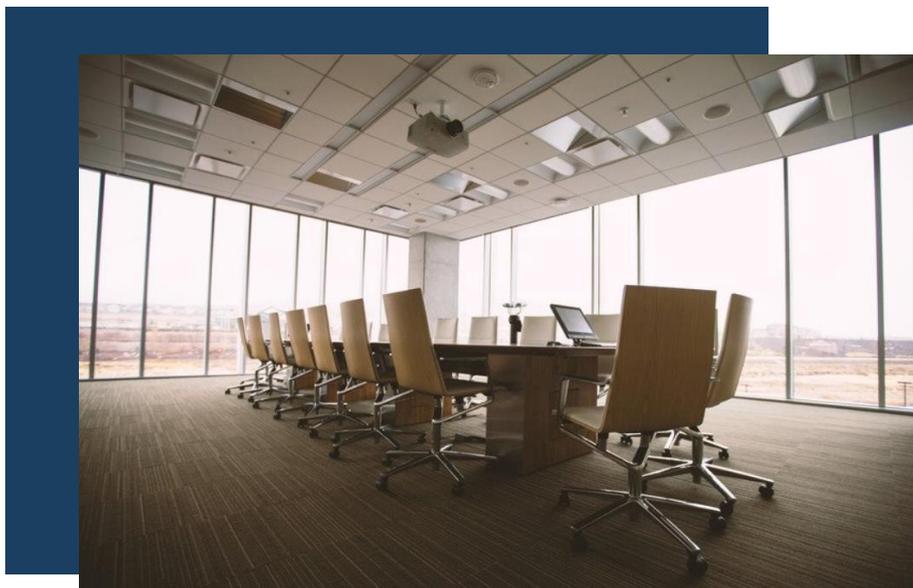
# SUMMARY

Guests and staff alike will be evaluating every element of the experience—from approaching the restaurant and being seated to dining and paying—more critically throughout the reopening transition. With guests first visiting experimentally, they will be assessing how safe and enjoyable their experience was, and will likely share their impression with others. This is your opportunity to make a positive, lasting impact.

As an operator and a leader, it is imperative you adopt a thoughtful approach, with a “touchless and distanced” environment being the new ideal. In this guide, ORHMA has compiled the widely accepted best practices for your consideration.

This is a new paradigm for the restaurant and foodservice industry as a whole. Individually and as a collective, we will be most successful if we recognize that behaviours, motivations and expectations have changed; and we adapt to and embrace our new reality.

The guidance below describes how these requirements might be implemented, but operators are ultimately responsible for providing an environment that minimizes the risk of transmission of COVID-19.



# 1. COVID-19 TRANSMISSION GENERAL

Social distancing is encouraged as the respiratory droplets of those infected by COVID-19 can travel up to two metres/six feet when we cough, sneeze or talk. It is possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. This new virus can survive on plastic and stainless-steel surfaces for up to 72 hours.

## 2. PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN MEETING & EVENTS

Distancing is about avoiding close contact and keeping a distance of 6 feet or 2 meters from others.

- Distancing can be accomplished with proper directional signage and markings and where applicable by the assistance of service staff in guidance and control.
- Distancing rules apply and start at the facility's entrance, during the reception, meeting breaks and restroom visits, waiting at the food and beverage station, seating meeting room arrangements, escalators, elevators right through to guest departure. The protocols outlined here support distancing rules for the entire guest flow and experience. Where distancing cannot be achieved with reasonable confidence, face coverings should be worn.
- The traditional meeting room set-ups such a close proximity theatre style seating need to be replaced with seating approaches which follow distancing rules. This will mean allowing spaces between chairs and appropriate seating at tables.
- Social receptions should not to be encouraged, however, if required this guide provides a set of protocols to operate with safety for guests and staff.
- While government rules will dictate maximum numbers associated allowed for group functions in the context of spaces, the basic summary is that smaller groupings will be easier to manage effectively.

## 3. PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT USE & CONSIDERATIONS

The use of non-medical masks or face coverings in all indoor public spaces are mandated by selected local public health units and its highly recommended to be worn in all municipalities especially for service staff.

- Guests can take their masks off when eating.
- Event leader/conveyor should be advised of the requirement to have available to attendees' extra masks for any that require additional or replacements.
- Consider having masks available for sale if they become required to groups.

## 4. SANITIZATION

Cleaning and disinfecting standards should be established by each facility following creation of a detailed checklist of the different areas and surfaces in each location. This should be done before opening and during breaks.

- Give attention to key touch points and objects (e.g. food contact surfaces, hand contact areas, door handles, switches, table-tops, chairs, transparent barriers, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers).
  - Shared equipment such as credit card machines and cash registers.
  - Disinfectants should be DIN registered and approved for COVID-19. Staff should be fully trained in application and required contact times
  - Consider installing devices such as automatic doors and lights, electronic taps etc.
  - Thoroughly clean the premises before opening.
  - Provide sanitizing containers/stations in staff rooms, foyer, meeting rooms and washroom areas.
  - Where possible, prop doors open.
- More details on cleaning and disinfection are available at [Public Health Ontario](#).

## 5. CONTACT TRACING

Venues will be required to keep a list and contact information for all staff and guests with date of the event and function name. This can easily be accomplished through arrangements with the meeting and event planner. All attendees are expected to be confirmed upon arrival with accurate records held should they be needed in the future.



# 6 ■ STAFF PROTECTION

Your team members, the faces of your business, are integral to your operations. Their safety and well-being should be a key priority. To keep your staff comfortable and healthy, consider the following:

- Designate one key staff member to serve as your health and safety leader, who will be prepared to share and review processes and best practice, and answer questions. Similarly, designate one key staff member on every shift to oversee the cleaning and sanitation thoroughness. [Read more](#) for information on health and safety leaders and your business requirements.
- Staff should be aware of COVID-19 precautions, and physically distance as much as possible, including with other staff. Staff congregating can be a high risk for COVID-19 transmission.
- Train staff on how best to serve food, maintain safe physical distancing and avoid unnecessary handling.
  - Install directional arrows to direct employees and minimize direct contact.
  - Practice physical distancing during breaks.
  - Assign staff to specific tasks and minimize contact between them.
  - Ensure staff have access to gloves and masks as needed.
- Train staff in proper use of gloves and masks. Gloves are not essential, but, if used, must be changed frequently and hands washed between uses.
- Encourage frequent handwashing using the correct technique, and to avoid touching face.
- Keep a staff log of when and where staff worked, with contact information, in case it is required for contact tracing by public health.
- Consider having all staff members complete the National Restaurant Association's ServSafe Reopening Guidance: COVID-19 Precautions training video prior to returning, ensuring the entire team is familiar with the basics. Currently offered without cost, it provides a video learning module and will automatically issue a certificate following viewing. [Register to view the video on-demand here.](#)
- Should a staff member have any symptoms, they should be expected to stay at home.
- Prior to their first shift back, each team member should sign a declaration, acknowledging the expectation that they will not come to work and will follow a specific notification process with the management, should they be at risk of having COVID-19. This includes if: they have any symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, shortness of breath; have been in contact with COVID-19; and/or have travelled and are currently subject to 14-day quarantine.
- Consider pre-shift temperature checks for all staff with contactless thermometers and a signed sheet indicating confirmation that they are not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, have been out of the country within 14 days, or have knowingly been in proximity to anyone that has had symptoms or been out of country in the prior 14 days. If used, this should be recorded and filed.

- Where possible stagger shift start and end times (even by a few minutes), stagger breaks and lunch breaks, update absence policies and new protocols for back filling absences.
- Consider masks or face visors for front of house staff, as well as for back of house staff when they may not be able to socially distance sufficiently. Many municipalities in Ontario have mandated the use of masks in indoor spaces.
- Consider posting a sign on your doors, requesting guests with symptoms of COVID-19 to refrain from entering the establishment. Include messaging that clarifies that your establishment has the right to refuse entry or demand exiting to anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms in order to protect your other guests and staff.
- Develop a clear communications plan, should you or one of your team members feel compelled to refuse service to a guest displaying COVID-19 symptoms. This message should be delivered by a manager or supervisor.

## **7. PLANNING THE MEETING OR EVENT**

### **Effective Preparation Supports Success**

Detailing meeting planning needs and proactive communication with event conveyor planners for sign off prior to the event to reduce last minute setup or changes which may impact Social/Physical Distancing.

- Ideally a pre-function walkthrough should take place well in advance with event conveyor to ensure clear joint understandings of approach, limitations, and needs and to avoid any last-minute challenges which could have been identified prior. An FAQ document can be prepared and distributed to event planners to sign off on all requirements.
- Ensure meeting and event planners provide a list of attendees including emails and phone #s following event which identifies any who attended.
- Stagger event times to reduce number of attendees entering facility at one time
- Stagger break and meal times to reduce impact on any particular space, passage or restrooms
- Suggest session times in room to shortened periods (i.e. 30 minutes) to allow for shortened periods in a room where virus particles could be accumulating
- Where possible, plan locations of various sub-events (i.e.. Breakout rooms, meeting office) to be in close proximity to other areas used to limit distances travelled by groups of individuals
- Proper signage can be impactful while helping with service
- Events should be planned with longer breaks to allow for less queueing at the washrooms
- Employee pre-shift communication of meeting and event needs
- Prior to meeting/event, suggest convenor communicates a reiteration of non-attendance for any not feeling well or experiencing any potential COVID symptoms
- Suggest planner considers use of technology for attendees to exchange contact info

# 8.

## ENTERING THE MEETING OR EVENT & COMMON AREAS

### Welcoming Guests & Inspiring Confidence

Aim to establish comfort, ensuring guests are confident they're entering a safe space. To help guests feel taken care from their first steps, consider the follow recommendations:

- To prevent the need to use handles, add an attachment to your main doors, if possible, in operations where automatic doors are absent.
- Signage suggesting limited number of passengers in elevators and staggering use of escalator where applicable.
- While temperature alone cannot be relied on to identify COVID-positive individuals, attendees may have increased comfort if thermal scanners are in use. (consider sources to offer this service to planners)
- Provide hand sanitizer at all entranceways, ideally through touchless dispensers. Encourage/require guests to use the sanitizer on their way in.
- To limit potential distancing challenges, introduce a one-way flow of guests for entering and exiting, and use directional signage.
- Have gloves available to staff in areas where handling guest material exist.
- Barriers between arrival check-in and registration staff should be in place.
- To encourage guests to maintain reasonable distance from others, apply spacing stickers on your floors especially at potential gathering points such as registration areas, washroom entrances, food & beverage stations. Tip: ensure hard surface floor is completely clean and dry before application and non-residual stickers are used on carpeting
- To avoid grouping in at entrance to seating areas, have an appropriate number of staff available to direct and guide guests to their locations quickly. Use table floor plans to accelerate the process of self-seating. If congregation occurs ask guests who cannot safely maintain distance to wait in lobby or corridor areas which are clearly marked with spacing stickers.

#### ***For event registrations consider:***

- Staggered times for attendees to check-in to minimize crowds.
- Suggest to meeting planner that any welcome bags for attendees should include safety tips, masks, sanitizers etc.
- Sanitizer stations should be distributed throughout the event space
- If name badges are used, consider self-print stations and have lettering sufficiently large as to be visible from at least the 2-meter distance.
- Offer phone sanitizing stations for attendees

# 9. MANAGING THE MEETING ROOM

## Follow Distancing and Eliminate Shared Table Items

- Encourage classroom setups to allow more control of physical distancing. Either in extended row, or individual 6ft segments, this provides the most effective use of space unless a U-shape or box setting is appropriate and can accommodate the group for a face-to face approach.
- Assign each speaker/entertainer their own microphone that stays with them and is not handed off. Sterilize surfaces and equipment in-between use.
- Eliminate items that may be shared or accidentally passed between guests such as water settings, papers and pens, and substitute them for individually packaged or covered, pre-set items where needed. Providing individual bottled water service set at place settings is best
- Create directional signage for one-way exit/entry into the space and around the room.
- Establish a standard for the number of people to be seated at a table pending the size of table following the 2-meter rule.
- Clean and sterilize high-touch tech tools like lavs, laptops, slide advancers, flip chart markers, etc., between use.
- Maintain set seating positions for guests so the same people use in the same seats during the meeting. For example, name plates / place cards can be used to assign/hold seating positions
- Meeting amenities placed in sealed bags at entrance or side of the meeting room for pick up as required. Work with meeting planner to encourage guests to carry their own note-taking devices.
- Eliminate water stations for meeting events and replace with individual water bottles placed on the tables. Staff who are placing water bottles should be visibly seen wearing gloves for added trust factor.
- Clean and sanitize key room touch points and surfaces during breaks.
- Set seating following the 2-meter distancing rule. Safe meeting room set up samples are [available here](#).
- Hot/cold beverages should be served by a staff member located behind a transparent barrier. If this is not possible, have staff deliver orders outside of your main doors to keep your entrance clear.



# 10. MANAGING THE MEAL SERVICE

## Eliminate Open Share Items

We need to be strategic with how we provide meal service to the guests seating at the tables. Ensure your team is prepared and guests are comfortable.

- Restrict buffet type service. Recommend box type breakfast and lunch service options or buffet service only if staff is using a cafeteria (staff doing all serving) approach with appropriate barriers where possible between staff and guests. No self-service with shared utensils is permitted.
- Invite guests to food stations individually, much like the one-in, one-out policy seen at retail stores, to control traffic and minimize interaction.
- When providing a food service station ensure a transparent barrier exists between servers and guests. Guests should be invited to the stations ensuring control of distancing rules.
- The ideal meal service will follow the pre-boxed or bento box service and cafeteria style with guests picking up their meals. When serving pre-plated salads/desserts these will need to be covered.
- Follow the 2-meter distancing rule with appropriate signage and surface markings where applicable. Service staff guidance recommended.
- Develop a plan for the following service standards:
  - Proper positioning of staff members to maintain distancing and minimize contact
  - Procedure on placing and clearing plates and drinks from the table. Place dishes directly on the tables; avoid passing them to guests.
  - Refills should not be done tableside. Beverages should be replaced with new ones, if needed.
  - Cutlery in rolled up or in pocket of a napkin placed on a side plate
  - Wine glasses placed on the table
  - Sauces and condiments to be served directly on the dinner plate in individual ramekin dishes or offer with disposable containers.
  - Food plate to be placed directly onto the table not passed to guests. Consider 100% recyclable disposable plates and flatware if pre-boxed and bento style are not possible.
  - Serve individual bread, butter and cream or milk accompaniments.
  - Pour beverages directly into the glass do not leave bottles or vessels on tables.
  - Coffee/tea service to be accompanied by packaged condiments brought to the table and discarded following the service.
- Staff should wash or sanitize hands between all guest table tasks.
- Keep music levels low enough to allow for comfortable guest conversations.
- Reduce desire or ability to congregate at the bar, encourage guests to remain at tables or designated gathering spaces

# 11. RECEPTIONS

## Reduced Occupancy & Smaller Group Sizes

Discourage receptions to avoid mingling and only allow foyer receptions where these can accommodate the 2-meter distancing rule. Encourage direct table seating as a standard.

- Provide hand sanitizers ideally through a touchless dispenser.
- Eliminate “help yourself food stations”. Options for reception service where applicable would be plates with a selection of canapes boxed or bento style. Alternately, servers could prepare small plates on direction of guest to be put down for guest pickup off to the side when complete. Where servers accommodate this there should be a transparent barrier provider between server and guest and servers should be wearing facial protection and gloves.

### Bar Service:

- Provide transparent barriers to beverage service bars and cashier desks where staff are located.
- More bars per event may be required to prevent attendees from clustering up.
- Eliminate cash payments and only accept debit/credit card payment systems which are touchless.
- Consider use of prepackaged options for beverage alcohol and non-alcohol products to reduce contact and preparation. Consider disposable glassware.
- Consider having beverages prepared on back bar where possible to limit guest facing interaction
- Remove all shared service bar items.
- Bartenders should garnish and provide fully completed drinks.
- To further limit touch points, consider having bartenders wear gloves with proper training. Boxed wines can also work to reduce contact.
- If payments are made through servers, consider touchless methods, such as tapping with cards or phones.



# 12. MAINTAINING THE RESTROOMS

## Frequency Cleaning & Touchless is King

- Consider touchless flushers and faucets, if not already in place.
- Consider having a full-time attendant that can disinfect during breaks and will ensure supplies are replaced immediately. Although costly, this can add confidence to clients and can be incorporated or recommended as an add-on to the clients costs.
- Consider touchless paper towel dispensers, if not already in place. Guests may be particularly uncomfortable with high-velocity dryers aerating spaces.
- Limit occupancy, and post signage to clarify your updated policy.
- Consider restricting urinal usage by spacing or closure.
- Ensure frequent cleaning is done and documented, and post records.
- Strategically place wastebaskets to collect paper towel that guests may use to open doorways.
- Provide hand sanitizer at bathroom exit areas even if simply on a table.

# 13. KEEPING A SAFE KITCHEN

Understandably, guests may worry most about what they can't see. Take great care to maintain a safe kitchen, and consider implementing the following recommendations:

- To encourage safe distancing, mark the floors with spacing stickers.
- Staff who are not interacting with the public (e.g. kitchen staff) only need to wear a mask/face covering if physical distancing can't be maintained.
- To limit contact on orders, designate a food expeditor, who will serve as the singular assembler of table orders for server delivery.
- Ensure contact information for all employees, suppliers, etc., are accurate.
- To promote guest comfort, publicly share the back of house safety measures being taken.

### Cleaning and Sanitization:

- All surfaces must be cleaned prior to disinfecting or sanitizing. Disinfectants must be used on high touch surfaces and not on food contact surfaces. Sanitizers must only be used on food contact surfaces.
- Ensure garbage storage areas are clean and of adequate size for the needs.

## Hygiene

- To avoid droplet dispersion, encourage proper cough and sneeze etiquette through the use of posted reminders and other communications.
- Ensure hand washing stations are adequate and functional, supplied with soap and paper towels.
- Limit the number of people sharing equipment or tools. If this has not been done before, assign each worker a unique set of tools for their use only.

## Food Product

- Food must be protected from contamination at all times. This may include storage, ensuring guards or coverings for food, and utensils.
- Food provided for takeout and delivery should be packaged to protect food from contamination and to be consumed elsewhere.
- Check the condition of all food and discard expired and unfit products

Ensure your food premises is in compliance with the [Food Premises Regulation](#).

# 14. RESOURCES & REFERENCES

- Ontario Government – [Restaurant & Food Services Health & Safety During COVID-19](#)
- Canadian Government - [Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- CDC- [Consideration for Events and Gatherings](#)
- Meeting Professionals International (MPI) [Navigating the New Normal: Tips for Organizing Meetings and Events in a Post-COVID World](#)

**Please note:** The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) has provided this document and associated resources in an effort to help operators with guidance items. Contents are recommendations only and ORHMA does not accept any liability for matters related to such guidance or application of guidance. Any matters related to operation of an establishment in regards to compliance with established or forthcoming regulations should be reviewed with qualified legal representatives. All recommendations in this document are subject to change based on government requirements pending.

HAVE QUESTIONS OR WANT TO CHAT?

**Be in touch.**

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