

Emergency Food Providers COVID-19 Recommendations

We understand the importance of ensuring that emergency food providers are able to continue to meet the needs of our communities during this time of uncertainty. Current efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have had a significant impact on how these programs can operate.

To help ensure the safety of staff, volunteers, and service users, we have created the following recommendations:

Post signage on entrance doors.

- [Attention Visitor Signage \(English\) - Government of Ontario](#)
- [Attention Visitor Signage \(French\) - Government of Ontario](#)

Actively screen staff, volunteers, and service users before allowing them to enter any facility

- This means asking everyone entering the premise the following questions:
 1. Are you are feeling unwell with any of the following symptoms?
 - Fever, chills, new cough or difficulty breathing.
 - Other symptoms include: barking cough, sore throat, difficulty swallowing, hoarse voice, runny nose, stuffy or congested nose, lost sense of taste or smell, headache, digestive issues, fatigue, falling down more than usual.
 - For young children and infants symptoms can be sluggishness or lack of appetite.
 2. And have you experienced any of the following:
 - Have you travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days?
 - Does someone you are in close contact with have COVID-19 (for example, someone in your household or workplace)?
 - Are you in close contact with a person who is sick with respiratory symptoms (for example, fever, cough or difficulty breathing) who recently travelled outside of Canada?
- If the individual has answered yes to either of these questions, they should seek assessment for COVID-19 over the phone by calling Hastings and Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) at 613-966-5500.
- For more information, please see the [Ontario COVID-19 Self Assessment](#).

Ensure all staff, volunteers, and clients are aware of infection control practices

- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 70% alcohol) at the entrance doors.
- Ensure that you have enough hand washing stations. Encourage all volunteers to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds before preparing food, after touching their face, after coughing or sneezing (into their elbow).
- If you are unable to access soap and water, use 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or into your elbow, not into your hand.
- Stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others. This is an important recommendation now and during any cold and flu season.

Post the following posters on hand washing and physical distancing (previously called social distancing) in your facility:

- [Hand Washing – Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Physical Distancing – Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Increase on-site cleaning/disinfection, especially of frequently touched surfaces. Clean and disinfect the workplace following these factsheets:

- [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings – Public Health Ontario](#)

Specific Information for Meal Programs

- Avoid large gatherings of over 5 people. Use takeaway options.
- Ensure that your space allows for adequate physical distancing – you can do this by having at least two meters (6 ft) between people. This is important even when waiting in line.
- Takeaway meals could include a bagged meal that can be taken home to be eaten. We encourage you to do this outside of the building rather than have patrons enter your facility. We understand that this may not be possible for everyone. When this is the case, ensure that anyone entering your building is screened.

Specific Information for Food Banks

Distribution:

- Limit gathering of people in lines and waiting areas. Ensure that people are able to maintain a minimum of two meters apart while waiting.
- Consider having people stagger their arrivals.
- Limit the number of people who are allowed into the space at one time. This will increase the time it takes to get people through, so consider extending your hours if possible.
- Have premade packages ready for individuals and different family sizes.
- Do not divide items into smaller packages and provide only unopened packages.
- When possible, consider providing 1-2 weeks provision instead of 3-5 days to reduce the number of visits that people need to make.

Receiving Donations:

- Encourage monetary donations instead of food products to limit contact between donors and food bank personnel, and to better meet the needs of clients.
- Evidence of transmission of COVID-19 through food products is limited, however, efforts should be made to reduce transmission risk receiving these donations including:
 1. Washing hands before and after receiving donations.
 2. Make hand sanitizers available for donor use before donations are transferred.

A Note For Volunteers Who Are Older Adults

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health has advised that all persons over 70 years of age and those who are immunocompromised to self-isolate for a period of 14 days. This means these individuals should only leave home or see others for essential reasons. Whenever possible seek services over the phone or internet, and ask for help from friends, family or neighbours. For more information see the [Ontario COVID-19](#) page.

Adapting Your Services

Remember that all community food programs are different. Solutions may be different for you compared to an agency down the road. You can contact Public Health at 613-966-5500 Ext. 304 to help you decide what will work to meet the needs in your community while slowing the spread of COVID-19. If you do decide to close or put your program on hold, please contact Public Health at 613-966-5500 Ext. 304 so we can share this information with providers.

Trustworthy Sources:

[Hastings Prince Edward Public Health](#)

[Public Health Ontario](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)