

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Commissioner



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Governor  
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Lt. Governor

### Environmental Health Section

#### EHS Circular Letter 2020-14

To: Local Directors of Health  
Certified Food Inspectors

From: Tracey Weeks, MS, RS  
Coordinator, Food Protection Program

Date: April 1, 2020

#### **Subject: Update on Food Safety Activities/Inspections during COVID-19 Situation**

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The purpose of this notice is to provide an update to local health departments (LHDs) as a follow-up to EHS Circular Letter 2020-11 sent on March 23, 2020. The Department of Public Health Food Protection Program (FPP) always wishes to provide helpful information to LHDs, but especially now, when we are all working under difficult circumstances. Our goal is to provide information that will make your jobs easier and to support your work in the food safety arena.

Governor Lamont issued Executive Order No. 7N on March 26, 2020. This Order provided additional requirements for food establishments and bars that have remained open for food/beverage takeout for offsite consumption only and delivery. In addition to the previous Orders' requirements, No. 7N requires establishments to limit the number of customers who are allowed entrance to pick up and/or pay for their order. When possible, customers must make payments remotely or by a touchless system. If no touchless payment system is currently in place at a food establishment, both in person and cash payment may be accepted. Further, retail operations that are allowed to remain open to the public "shall take appropriate and reasonable measures" to ensure customers are maintaining six feet between themselves while in the facility and in line waiting to enter the facility. Retail operations shall also use touchless payment systems, when available and practical.

Since many of the food establishments that are regulated by LHDs are still in operation, LHDs should maintain some type of oversight. While the FPP does not expect that all food establishments will be inspected routinely



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within the frequency required in the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies §19-13-B42(t)(1) – (4), LHDs should have a system in place to ensure that safe food practices are being carried out within their jurisdiction.

The lack of presence of the LHD could enable some food establishments to take shortcuts and operate outside of their normal practices. It is for this reason the FPP encourages LHDs to have some form of communication with their food establishments. Gather information about their practices. Some examples of questions to ask:

- Are they aware of the requirements placed on them in the Governor's Executive Orders, to date?
- Are they able to comply with the Governor's Executive Orders?
- What controls have they put in place?
- Do they always have a Certified Food Protection Manager or Designated Alternate onsite?
- Have they instituted any new procedures to be able to provide takeout and delivery food/beverages?
- Have they been able to obtain additional supplies (food, to-go containers, disposable gloves, cleaning and sanitizing supplies, etc.) in order to operate safely?
- Have they had any employees report illness symptoms?
- Do they know what to do if an employee reports symptoms or a positive test for COVID-19 or another reportable disease?

The safety of all certified food inspectors is very important, and they should follow the Governor's recommendation of maintaining social distancing of at least six feet from another person while out in the community. It is possible to achieve the goal of making onsite visits to food establishments while utilizing this strategy. We have heard from some LHDs who are visiting their food establishments and they have reported that the operators and staff have been very appreciate of the visit and welcome any guidance and support that is provided.

Whether you choose to maintain a presence physically or by some other means, you should remind operators of their responsibility to comply with the regulations and within the requirements in the Governor's Executive Orders. Please make yourself aware of the updates in the Executive Orders so that you may educate the operators on what their responsibilities are. Your presence will provide them with necessary support and encouragement at a time when their resources may be strained and the food workers may be concerned about their safety, as well.

The FPP encourages all LHDs, as much as is possible, to conduct onsite visits to provide reassurance and guidance to food establishments. When onsite visits are not possible, provide the same via some other method. You may find some helpful information to share by clicking on the following links:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

[Disinfectant to use against SARS COV-2 \(coronavirus causing COVID-19\)](#)

<http://www.afdo.org/coronavirus-resources>

[COVID-19 FAQs for Farmers markets](#)

[COVID-19 FAQs for FoodServices](#)

[COVID-19 FAQs for FoodServices Receiving and food packaging](#)

[COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

[COVID-19 FAQ Grocery store GENERAL QUESTIONS AND EMPLOYEE HEALTH](#)

[COVID-19 FAQs for Grocery stores Food packaging](#)

[COVID-19 FAQs for Grocery stores Cleaning and disinfection](#)

Any questions or concerns should be sent to Tracey Weeks at [Tracey.Weeks@ct.gov](mailto:Tracey.Weeks@ct.gov) .

Thank you for your commitment to food safety!

C: Brian Toal, Acting Chief, Environmental Health Section, DPH  
Lori Mathieu, Chief, Environmental Health & Drinking Water Branch, DPH  
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