



# County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
FOOD AND HOUSING DIVISION

P.O. BOX 129261, SAN DIEGO, CA 92112-9261

Phone: (858) 505-6900 | (800) 253-9933 | Fax: (858) 505-6998 | [www.sdcdeh.org](http://www.sdcdeh.org)



## LIMITED SERVICE CHARITABLE FEEDING OPERATIONS Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is a Limited Service Charitable Feeding Operation (LSCFO)?***

An operation for food service to a consumer solely for providing charity, that is conducted by a nonprofit charitable organization whose food service is limited.

### ***Is a health permit or registration with the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) required? It depends...***

- **NO**, if only 100% pre-packaged non-perishable foods in their original manufacturers packaging and whole, uncut produce are provided. The California Retail Food Code (CRFC) exempts this small level of food distribution.
- **NO**, if 100% pre-packaged foods commercially prepared and packaged (can be perishable or frozen) and whole, uncut produce are provided the LSCFO works in conjunction with a permitted Food Bank. NOTE: This level of service without being partnered with a permitted Food Bank will require a registration with DEH
- **YES**, if the operation heats, portions, or assembles a small volume of foods that were commercially made, distributes whole uncut produce, or reheats commercially made foods for hot holding for same-day service to the consumer, a registration is required for these activities.
- **YES**, if there is any food preparation and distribution to the public beyond the above listed options, a health permit will be required.

### ***Is a commercial kitchen required?***

**YES**, a commercial location is required; however, LSCFOs are not required to comply with the CRFC's commercial kitchen standards. A LSCFO will need to comply with Best Management Practices (BMP's) that do require some facilities.

See BMP's <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/lscfo/bmps.pdf>

### ***What is required for a registration?***

- Completion of a Limited Service Charitable Feeding Operation Registration Application. <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/lscfo/registration.pdf>
- Compliance with Best Management Practices approved by DEH (the local enforcement agency). <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/lscfo/bmps.pdf>
- Annual payment of registration fees. (see question below regarding fees)

### ***What is required for a health permit?***

- Annual payment of health permit fees. (see question below regarding fees)
- Access for routine health inspections.
- Compliance with requirements of a food facility as listed in the CRFC.
- Plan check (and any other applicable agency) approvals on construction and equipment in kitchen.

### ***What are the fees for a health permit and a registration?***

The County of San Diego supports the local *Live Well San Diego* Food System Initiative which works towards a robust and resilient local food system that builds healthy communities, supports the economy and enhances the environment. On December 12, 2018 the County Board of Supervisors approved waiving the fees associated with **registering or obtaining a health permit** for charitable feeding organizations. This means that from January 1, 2019 through June 30, 2019 there is no cost to register or obtain a health permit from the Department of Environmental Health (DEH).

***What if the current operation requires a health permit but the kitchen won't be able to comply with structural and equipment requirements?***

- The operation can be scaled down to meet the requirements of a Limited Service Charitable Feeding Operation that does not require a health permit.
- The operation can operate as a caterer out of an already permitted and compliant commercial kitchen. This would still require a health permit but might ease the commercial kitchen compliance cost.
- Operate out of an already permitted kitchen where the permittee agrees to take responsibility for the Charitable Feeding operation. This would not require an additional permit as you would operate under the willing permittee's already existing health permit.

***Does an operation that receives some reimbursements for the cost of business via grants or other contracts qualify as a Limited Service Charitable Feeding Operation?***

**YES**, A nonprofit organization whose sole purpose is to provide charity, can still qualify as an LSCFO.

***Are outdoor feedings allowed?***

Limited Service Charitable Feeding Operations who have obtained a registration, approval from the Department of Environmental Health, and are following approved food safety best management practices can distribute food at an outdoor location under the following conditions:

- The food service is limited to the foods/level of preparation that are allowable under a LSCFO.
- The outdoor food service does not exceed 4 hours.

Note: A LSCFO wanting to do outdoor feedings will also need to contact local zoning authorities to gain approval on set-up locations or Parks and Recreation if the feeding will be conducted in a local park.

***Can an LSCFO store or prepare food at home?***

**NO**, food preparation or storage in a home is prohibited.

***What if a LSCFO provides 100% pre-packaged foods and is partnered with a permitted Food Bank but sometimes need to break down large bulk food items into smaller portions to distribute? Will that require a registration?***

**It depends...** If the LSCFO is breaking down a large bulk food item that becomes unpackaged or open during this process then a registration will be required. If the product can be broken down without opening packages (i.e. smaller pre-packaged yogurts that come inside a larger box) then a registration will not be required.

***What about making pasta or cooking noodles? Would that fall under a health permit or a registration?***

**It depends...** If the any of the food (i.e. pasta, sauce, meatballs) is being made from scratch (i.e. cutting and chopping ingredients or even cooking raw meat, etc.) then a health permit will be required. If the pasta making process only includes boiling of noodles and adding sauce from a jar or can and pre-cooked meatballs that only need reheating, then only a registration would be required.

***How can a LSCFO partner with a permitted Food Bank?***

Contact one of the two permitted Food Banks in San Diego County to inquire about their requirements for a partnership.

**San Diego Food Bank:** (866)-350-FOOD (3663)

**Feeding San Diego:** (858) 452-3663 or [info@feedingsandiego.org](mailto:info@feedingsandiego.org)

***Is the registration or health permit required to be on site where food is distributed?***

**Yes.** A health permit needs to be posted in a conspicuous place in the food facility. It is recommended that a registration or at least a copy of be present a food distribution even if conducting an outdoor feeding.

***Can produce grown in a backyard be distributed?***

**Yes,** produce grown on non-agriculturally zoned land is an approved source and can come from. gleaners, community gardens, or backyard growers.

***For more information:***

For more information regarding charitable feeding operations, please contact the Charitable Feeding Voicemail Information Line at (858) 505-6803 or via email at [DEHFOODSAFETY@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:DEHFOODSAFETY@sdcounty.ca.gov). Please visit DEH's website at [www.sdcdeh.org](http://www.sdcdeh.org).