



County of San Diego Charitable Meals Guidance During COVID-19



A meal can bring a sense of community and joy to those who may not be able to make it themselves, feed the hungry, and raise awareness about food insecurity.

As there is some risk when interacting with non-household members, extra precautions are needed to minimize those risks and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The following guidance provides recommendations on providing charitable food during the pandemic and clarifies the procedures and protocols required to ensure meals are distributed safely.

Recommended

- **Best** Volunteering or partnering with a local food bank to assist with an established operation. To find an organization near you, visit www.sandiegofoodbank.org or www.feedingsandiego.org.
- **Better** Pre-packaged hot/cold meals that are picked up on site via drive-through or walk up during specified hours. Organizations must meet all current [Public Health Order requirements](#), including, but not limited to, employee/volunteer health checks (temperature checks, symptom screen, and verifying individuals were not recently exposed to a known case within the past 14 days), physical distancing, appropriate face coverings, public notification signage, and regular disinfection of all common touch points.
- **Good** Outdoor dining with 6 feet of space between individuals who are not from the same household.

Prohibited

- Food service or preparation from a home for charitable feeding.

Charitable feeding operations may only be conducted by an organization that is **Permitted** or **Registered** with the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH), or **Exempt** from California Retail Food Code regulations. To learn if your charitable feeding operation is **Exempt** or requires a **Registration** or **Permit**, visit DEH's Charitable Feeding Operation website at:

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/fhd/food/charitablefeedings.html>

Organizations that hold a health permit or Limited Service Charitable Feeding Organization (LSCFO) Registration from DEH and would like to provide a charitable meal to those in need beyond the organization's normal distribution, must follow the guidelines in this document and develop a safe operating plan for the feeding. The safe operating plan and a completed [San Diego Food Facility, Operating Protocol](#) must both be posted and available for review.

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General

- Provide separate entrances and exits to prevent gathering of guests who are coming or going from the event, and have the appropriate [San Diego Safe Dining Posters](#) and [San Diego Food Facility Operating Protocol](#) posted at the entrance to your event.
- Conduct health screenings on all employees and volunteers to ensure they do not have COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 in the 14 days leading up to the feeding.
- Ensure adequate hand sanitizer is available for all guests and staff.
- Ensure face coverings are always worn, when not seated to eat, and extra face coverings should be available for those guests who do not have one.
- Mark all areas where guests will be waiting in line to ensure proper physical distancing.
- Have an adequate amount of portable or permanent toilets that are stocked with hand soap and paper towels and that are disinfected on an hourly basis.
- Use an approved EPA listed disinfectant that is capable of controlling the spread of COVID-19 and follow DEH's [General Disinfection Guidance](#).
- Establish what the maximum capacity is for the pickup and/or dining options to ensure proper physical distancing can be maintained. Assign staff to regulate the number of guests who come into the event area to stay within this maximum capacity.
- Ensure there is enough staff on site and available, and that they have all been properly trained on the safe operating plan and food facility protocols.
- Have a designated Prevention Plan Manager who will be responsible for ensuring that the safe operating plan is being executed according to the plan and assisting volunteers and other staff members in difficult situations.

Pick Up Only

- Ensure adequate hot and cold holding equipment is available to maintain proper holding temperature of the meals that will be provided. Regular monitoring of holding temperatures shall be conducted, and corrective action will need to be taken for any food items not held at proper temperatures.
- Ensure all areas where people will be waiting in line are clearly marked to ensure proper physical distancing.
- For drive-through events, establish a plan to control for the increase in traffic around your facility and check with your local Zoning Department on any requirements that need to be met for traffic control.

On Site Dining

- Seating times for dine-in options must be staggered to prevent large gatherings from forming while people wait to be seated.
- There can be no consumer self-service of food, including the use of bulk condiment dispensers. All condiments must be in individually wrapped packages and provided with the meals.
- All tables must be set up to ensure 6 feet of physical distancing is maintained between them. All tables will need to be properly disinfected between use.

For questions regarding this information, more information regarding charitable feeding operations, or a complimentary review of the feeding's safe operating plan, please contact the DEH Charitable Feeding Information Line at **(858) 505-6803** or via email at DEHFoodSafety@sdcounty.ca.gov.

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