

## Indoor Food Services

There are two models to consider when offering indoor services:

**Model One:** People come into the space, pick up food, perhaps have access to washrooms, but leave fairly quickly. This is not very good for community-building, but is an efficient way to deliver much-needed food, and hygiene breaks, for a larger number of people.

**Model Two:** People come into the space and stay for some period of time, with food, coffee, washroom access and a chance to socialize, perhaps wifi access and/or sleeping opportunities. This is the most difficult model to implement safely, and will impose limits on numbers, but can meet a wider range of needs.

In either case:

Consider the capacity of your available space, if everyone is keeping distance of at least 6 feet. What is your usual number of guests? If the usual number significantly exceeds capacity, can you expand into other spaces, or do you have a plan for limiting occupancy while continuing to deliver services? This is a particular consideration for the second model; the first model can accommodate larger numbers, as people move through more quickly. Some programmes have limited their indoor services only to those who are homeless, rather than underhoused/food-insecure; others have been able to expand into larger spaces.

Keep doors or windows open as much as possible, even if this means that the space is not as warm. Ventilation is extremely important in preventing infection. This will inevitably increase your heating costs and make the space less comfortable, but it is very important, especially if people are staying in the space for periods of time.

Ensure that all your volunteers have done personal risk assessments. Ideally, you should have few or no volunteers over the age of 65, or with high-risk conditions.

Are all your volunteers trained in IPAC (infection prevention and control) procedures, or willing to be trained? Training can be accessed through the Red Cross or Women's College Hospital. Can you trust all volunteers to apply high IPAC standards at all times, including when they are alone with each other?

Think about how you can set up reliable and ongoing access to hand sanitizer, hand soap, and masks in large quantities. If you want to use cloth masks, can you launder them on-site, since many guests will not have access to laundry facilities? Make sure that you have a sufficient supply of masks to distribute at the door, for those who arrive without them. You should expect that many guests will not have masks when they arrive.

In the city of Toronto, our buildings are covered by the municipal mask by-law, even when offering programming for the homeless, which means that are legally required to develop a mask policy, including how to deal with people who claim exemptions, and communicate it to all staff and volunteers, and also required to post signage at all entrances. Education around the need for masks, and how to wear them appropriately, may be needed.

**VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF MUST WEAR MASKS AT ALL TIMES.** Eye protection (faceshields or goggles) is also recommended, though less crucial. Ideally, gowns should be worn if close contact with

others is anticipated – for instance, designated first aid or crisis responders should wear gowns if possible.

Have physical markers and/or staff/volunteer to maintain physical distancing in the line-up both outside and inside the space.

Have a greeter/screener immediately outside or inside the doorway. This person should wear a gown, mask and eye protection (face shield or goggles) and provide hand sanitizer to all who enter. The greeter/screener should ensure people come in one at a time and also ask screening questions (at least informally) of the guests. *(Please see previous screening questionnaire for Outreach Red Stage Guidelines)*

The greeter/screener will also need to control entry so that people come in one at a time, and there is not a concentration of people at food serving points or elsewhere.

If a guest appears to be symptomatic for COVID-19, a volunteer or staff person will need to have a conversation with that guest about going for medical attention/testing as quickly as possible. Ideally this would be a person who has an established relationship with the guests. Be aware of the hours and locations of assessment centres, transfer protocols for your area, and alternatives if the assessment centre is not open. If possible, have a designated area where symptomatic guests can be isolated from others until they can be taken for medical attention.

Design the space for efficient traffic flow to avoid people crowding together (i.e. while being served). If possible, designate a separate exit, to avoid guests passing each other coming and going.

Consider how to serve food/drink in a way that preserves physical distancing and reduces congestion.

Clean/disinfect the space before the program begins as well as between any shifts or sittings. High-touch surfaces (light switches, handrails, chair arms, etc.) should be cleaned at regular periods through the hours of operation.

If offering washroom access, assign staff/volunteer to clean between guests or at least once per hour.

If considering Model B (longer stay/indoor meal consumption):

- Consider how many people can be accommodated in the space, ensuring adequate physical distancing. Is there a potential overflow room? If not, can you make the space available for shifts of 1-2 hours each? What will you do if you need to turn people away? If your space is too small, this may not be the best model for your parish.
- Ensure that you have as much natural ventilation as possible (open doors/windows, cross-flow of air and high ceilings are all helpful). If your space cannot be well-ventilated naturally, you may need to reconsider moving indoors.
- Can you remove unnecessary furniture, and position the furniture you have in such a way as to preserve physical distancing?
- Do you have staff/volunteers who are able to circulate and remind guests of appropriate physical distancing and mask wearing (when not actually eating/drinking)? This must be done with sensitivity, and respecting the fact that some people are effectively in social circles/bubbles of proximity while on the street. This can be an emotionally draining job; on the one hand it needs an experienced person, but on the other hand it is ideal if the job can be rotated, to avoid the perception of one person as “policing” the guests.

If you choose not to offer indoor programming, this doesn't mean that you can't engage in direct outreach! You can explore alternatives including tents with radiant heaters (not fan heaters); street outreach with cars, vans, or carts; limited-contact deliveries to the homes of those who are housed but food-insecure; or collaboration with other agencies operating in your area. And, of course, advocacy for more just and equitable social policies is always part of our work.