



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**ROY COOPER** • Governor  
**MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH** • Secretary  
**MARK T. BENTON** • Assistant Secretary for Public Health  
Division of Public Health

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** North Carolina Local Health Directors & Environmental Health Directors

**From:** Larry Michael, Environmental Health Section Director  
Zack Moore, Epidemiology Section Director

**Subject:** Requirements for Food Service as Critical Business

**Date:** June 30, 2020

The NC Division of Public Health is providing the following information for local health authorities and food service operators. This memo outlines control measures for food employees that must be adhered to and identifies which food employees may be defined as critical infrastructure workers.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, anyone who has been in close contact with another person with COVID-19 should be quarantined for 14 days regardless of occupation. Close contact is generally defined as being within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes. Staff may deviate from this control measure [under certain conditions](#) only if allowing the quarantined staff to return to work will preserve the continuity of operations for a critical food service operation.

The NC Division of Public Health (DPH) recognizes a difference between food preparatory work for healthcare, long-term care settings, confinement cafeterias, and other sequestered populations, and restaurants that provide food to customers who have other food service options. The former provides an essential function to those individuals who rely on these services (e.g., hospital cafeterias, meals-on-wheels, local or state confinement facilities) and may not have other food options available.

In general, food service employees, such as cooks, wait staff, hosts, and bussing staff, would not be considered critical infrastructure workers and should quarantine if exposed to a COVID-19 case to avoid spread. The worker or workers will be required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days after the last known exposure. When the exposed food worker serves a healthcare or other confined population, every effort should be made to keep the worker home to self-quarantine. However, in situations when quarantine of food employees prohibits food service to healthcare or sequestered populations and no other food options are available, then such employees may continue to work during the 14-day quarantine period, provided the [CDC criteria](#) are met.

If further modifications are made to the designation of food service workers, DPH will provide updated information to local health departments. If specific instances arise within a county that may require additional interpretation, please reach out to the DPH Epidemiologist on Call at (919) 733-3419. For food establishment or environmental health related questions, contact the Environmental Health Section's Emergency Preparedness and Outbreak Coordinator at (919) 218-6943.

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

LOCATION: 225 North McDowell St., Raleigh, NC 27603  
MAILING ADDRESS: 1902 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1902  
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-733-7301 • FAX: 919-733-1020

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