

The Association of Food and Drug Officials



Media Release

Contact: Brooke Benschoter, APR
bbenschoter@afdo.org
515-202-1396

Content note: AFDO Executive Director Steven Mandernach is available for individual comment and discussion regarding today's CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report article release.

AFDO Responds to CDC Article on Restaurant Role in COVID-19 Transmission

Today, March 5th, in the CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, an article focused on the transmission of COVID-19 and suggests that the use of mitigation strategies around the reopening of bars and restaurants are strongly linked to COVID-19 cases and deaths. The full article can be found on the CDC website.

Steven Mandernach, AFDO Executive Director, says that mitigation strategies put into place as early as last spring have been working. He also says the hospitality industry must not let its guard down, both for employees and customers even in states where food workers are being vaccinated.

"We know that reopening and returning to business-as-usual pre-pandemic is not in the best interest of public health," says Mandernach. "The pandemic is not over and we have to remain vigilant."

"We continue to encourage the industry to use known strategies to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the hospitality industry," Mandernach adds. "Mask wearing and social distancing in restaurants must be continued. It's important to remember the loosening of dining restrictions was typically accompanied by lessening of restrictions in other venues like fitness facilities or hair salons. All of these are likely a factor in the higher illness and mortality rates."

"Takeout and delivery options are another lifeline for the industry and remain an excellent option for consumers to minimize transmission risk," Mandernach points out.

"We continue to see the hospitality industry respond and evolve to continue to protect their businesses by protecting their employees and customers," Mandernach says. "We have and continue to encourage retail food establishments and those who support them to refer to AFDO's guidance documents regarding operations and COVID-19. These guidance documents contain key action steps that protect the public safety and an establishment's personnel."

Prior guidance includes the following:

Employee Health and Exposure. The most important way to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the community, including restaurants and bars, is to restrict individuals that are ill, showing symptoms, or known to be exposed from working.

Customer Health and Exposure. Positive, ill, or potentially exposed customers also need to stay home and not expose others to this deadly virus.

Social Distancing. The risk of transmission of COVID-19 can be greatly reduced by maintaining social distancing in these community settings.

Mask Usage. Masks also need to be worn while waiting in line, walking through the facility, using restrooms, and when six feet cannot be maintained from individuals not in your small group.

Outdoor Dining. When possible, outdoor dining can further assist in limiting transmission.

3/5/21

Guidance documents regarding operations and COVID-19

- [Restrictions for the Retail Food Industry Recommendations for Easing COVID-19 AFDO](#)
- [AFDO Restaurant Reopening Fact Sheet COVID-19 Back to Work Guidance](#)

Additional guidance from the FDA can be found below:

- [During the COVID-19 Pandemic – Food Safety Checklist Best Practices for Re-Opening Retail Food Establishments](#)
- [Best Practices for Re-Opening Retail Food Establishments During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

About the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)

Since 1896, AFDO unites high-level regulatory officials, industry representatives, trade associations, academia and consumer organizations. AFDO members strive to foster uniformity in the adoption and enforcement of science-based food, drug, medical device and cosmetic products safety laws and regulation for improved public health.