



Circular H...126../2020

GUIDELINE FOR HEALTH CARE FOOD SERVICE UNITS RELATED TO COVID-19 PREVENTION AND CONTROL

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

The purpose of this guideline is to highlight measures to ensure the integrity of the food chain is maintained within health care food service areas and that adequate and safe food supplies are available for consumers and to protect staff, patients and visitors against exposure to COVID-19. This document should be read in conjunction with Circular H70/2020: Preventing and Managing Coronavirus infection in the workplace, Circular H58/2020: Covid-19 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy, as well as Circular H75/2020: Policy for Operationalization of Isolation and Quarantine Facilities.

Provincial Food Service Management (PFSM) is underpinned by prerequisite measures that include good hygiene practices, cleaning and sanitation, zoning of processing areas, supplier control, storage, distribution and transportation of food, personnel hygiene and fitness to work – all the basic conditions and activities necessary to maintain a hygienic food processing environment. The scope of this document includes receiving of food items/goods, storage (defrosting, debugging, preparation, dishing up, distribution, serving and cleaning of trolleys.

Implementing key hygiene controls at each stage of the food processing chain is therefore critical for the prevention of food contamination.

DEFINITIONS	
Food service manager	Means a qualified and specialized person in food service/catering management, who is responsible for the effective management of the food services component and its operation; employment and management of personnel and exercising of financial control; and maintenance of hygiene and quality standards, in order to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and staff
Food safety	Means the assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.
Food handler	Means a person who in the course of his or her normal routine work on food premises, directly handles or comes into contact with packaged or unpackaged food, food equipment and utensils, or food contact surfaces and is therefore expected to comply with food hygiene requirements.

Hand hygiene	Means the most effective way to reduce infection transmission in food service settings. Included in the term hand hygiene is any activity that reduces the level of contamination with micro-organisms, for example alcohol-based hand rub and hand washing with soap and water.
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POTENTIAL TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 VIA FOOD AND FOOD SURFACE AREAS

The decision to use disposable crockery and cutlery during serving of meals to persons under investigation (PUI) and Covid-19 patients resides with the management of the health facility. However, such crockery and cutlery then need to be safely disposed of as Health Care Risk Waste.

Should management decide to use none disposable crockery and cutlery, appropriate washing or cleansing procedures of these items should be implemented.

It is required that Food Service Managers ensure compliance with measures to protect food handlers from contracting COVID-19, to prevent exposure to or transmission of the virus, and to strengthen food hygiene and sanitation practices within the food environment.

It is of vital importance for food services to:

- reinforce personal hygiene measures and to provide refresher training on food hygiene principle
- eliminate or reduce the risk of food surfaces and food packaging materials becoming contaminated with the virus from food handlers.

Personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, gloves et cetera, can be effective in reducing the spread of viruses and food borne disease pathogens within food services areas, but only if used properly.

The use of PPE effectiveness strongly depends on adequate and regular supplies, adequate staff training, appropriate hand hygiene and specifically appropriate human behaviour.

Food Service Management is strongly advised to introduce physical distancing and stringent hygiene and sanitation measures which promote frequent and effective hand washing and sanitation at each stage of food preparation and distribution thereof.

Please refer to attached WCGH: SOP- Cleaning Food Holding Trolleys. (Annexure 1)

FOOD HANDLERS: AWARENESS OF COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

Administrative controls such as a comprehensive workplace plan of action for preparedness in line with risks posed by COVID 19 infection should be instituted and communicated to staff as per the WCGH Circular H58/2020: COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy.

The following standard precautions are aimed at reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among workers from recognized and unrecognized sources, maintaining a healthy workforce, and detect and exclude infected food handlers and their immediate contacts from the workplace:

Staff working in the food service section need to be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19, so that they can seek appropriate medical care and testing to minimise the risk of infecting fellow workers. Food service managers therefore need to produce written guidance for staff on reporting such symptoms and on exclusion from work.

All staff are required to wear masks, utilising sanitation stations and observe social distancing requirements.

All staff should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.

It is important to ensure that environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly. Frequent cleaning 2- 3 times/ day. Water, detergent. Wipe over contaminated surfaces with disinfectant such as 1:1000 ppm available chlorine or 70% alcohol

Alcohol-based sanitizers/surface disinfectants should be used for cleaning purposes. In general, alcohol-based disinfectants (ethanol, propan-2-ol, propan-1-ol) have been shown to significantly reduce infectivity of enveloped viruses like COVID-19 virus, in concentrations of 70-80%.

FOOD HANDLERS: APPROPRIATE USE OF DISPOSABLE GLOVES

Gloves may be used by food handlers but must be changed frequently and hands must be washed between glove changes and when gloves are removed.

Food handlers should be aware that wearing gloves can allow bacteria to build up on the surface of hands, so hand washing is extremely important when gloves are removed to avoid subsequent contamination of food.

Food workers should avoid touching their mouth and eyes when wearing gloves.

- Disposable gloves worn by food handlers should only be worn if absolutely necessary and should not be used in the food work environment as a substitute for hand washing.
- Training with regard to wearing of gloves and especially removal thereof must be given.
- Food service units need to ensure that adequate sanitation stations are provided and ensure that food workers thoroughly and frequently wash their hands.
- Normal soap and warm running water are adequate for hand washing. Hand sanitizers can be used as an additional measure but should not replace hand washing.

FOOD HANDLERS: PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Physical distancing is very important to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This is achieved by minimising contact between potentially infected individuals and healthy individuals.

The following rules to physical distancing should be applied when around other people:

- Keep a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres (2 arm lengths) from others during work
- Do NOT shake hands, or hug, or fist bump, or elbow bump.
- All food service units should provide PPE such as cloth face masks, hair nets or Polypropylene Mob Caps, disposable gloves, clean overalls for staff. Supervisors should monitor that staff are wearing the appropriate PPE.

FOOD HANDLERS: COVID-19 ILLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

The precondition that underpins food service units need to include guidelines for managing staff sickness and a policy for return to work when staff recover from illness.

Staff must be trained in the use of and comply with such guidelines and to report illness at the earliest opportunity to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to fellow workers.

Staff management practices (e.g. reporting illness and exclusion of ill workers) will make it unlikely that a food handler will become unwell in the workplace with symptoms of COVID-19. Staff need to be aware that they should not report to work with symptoms of COVID-19 but notify such illness by telephone and seek medical advice.

Each Food Service Unit should have a contingency- or comprehensive workplace plan of action for preparedness in line with risks posed by COVID 19 infection and communicated to staff as per the WCGH Circular H58/2020: COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy, and Circular H70/2020: Preventing and Managing Coronavirus infection in the Workplace, in the event staff get infected and the food service unit has to be vacated due to it being sanitised for a period of time on consideration of the facility management.

It is critical to note that it may not always be necessary to close the immediate workplace and certainly not the entire workplace if the employee has had limited access to a building or premises, or limited contact with fellow employees. This consideration of closure should be guided by the risk assessment, which requires amongst others for the workplace to be disinfected.

It is not necessary a legal requirement for an employer to terminate all of its operations, merely because a single employee has tested positive for Covid-19.

It would be sufficient for the employee to be restricted from entering the workplace or, if already at the workplace, to institute isolation measures for such worker and to provide him/her with a surgical mask and to arrange for the worker to be transported to a health facility or an area of self-isolation, in such a manner that protects other workers or members of the public against the risk of Covid-19 exposure.

Appropriate disinfecting measures must be instituted by the employer after the employee has been safely removed from the workplace and continue to exclude the employee from the workplace until such time as a medical practitioner is able to clear the employee for return to work.

The institution of deep cleaning should be done in accordance with Contract Notice 58/2020: Award of contract WCGHSL: COVID-19 (Multiple award) for the provision of Service Providers to render a deep cleaning service to sites identified by the Western Cape Department of Health for the period ending 31 October 2020 - Effective immediately.

FOOD HANDLERS: TRANSPORT AND DELIVERY OF FOOD PRODUCTS BY FOOD SERVICE PROVIDERS

The primary focus of any additional hygiene and sanitation measures implemented by food service units is on keeping the premises COVID-19 virus free. Food service units will only become contaminated by an infected person, contaminated products or items brought onto the premises.

Food Service providers, including health establishments should ensure that the regulatory requirements laid out by Regulations Governing General Hygiene Requirements for Food Premises, the Transport of Food and Related Matters (Regulation No R.638 of 2018) are met as a minimum requirement.

Food Service providers should ensure that transport regulations regarding number of passengers, sanitation and wearing of masks are adhered to.

Food service providers must therefore ensure that drivers and food delivery staff:

- use a hand sanitizer before passing delivery documents to food premises staff or commencement of off-loading food or food products
- are aware of the potential risks involved in contact transmission of COVID-19 through contact with contaminated touch surfaces such as steering wheels, door handles, etc. It is therefore imperative that Food Service Providers ensure that shared workspaces such as the inside of vehicles, especially frequently touched areas, are thoroughly cleaned prior to transportation of food,
- observe proper hand hygiene, in conjunction with physical distancing when picking up deliveries and passing deliveries to food service units need to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and wear clean protective clothing, to avoid cross-contamination.
- are aware of the need to ensure that all transport containers are kept clean and frequently disinfected, foods must be protected from contamination, and must be separated from other goods that may cause contamination.

FOOD HANDLERS: STAFF CANTEENS

High standards for hand washing and respiratory etiquette need to be maintained in staff canteens.

Operational standards staff canteens should include, are:

- Maintaining a physical distance of at least 1.5 metre between individuals, as well during seating arrangements;
- Staggering staff work and break times to reduce staff numbers in a canteen at any one time;
- Restricting non-essential physical contact as much as possible;
- Visible notices for staff promoting hand hygiene and physical distancing;
- Promotion of cough etiquette measures to prevent the spread of respiratory secretions.
- Educate staff regarding covering of nose/mouth when coughing/sneezing, safe disposal of used tissues, and hand washing.
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures for equipment and service utensils, contact surfaces/ high touch points, e.g. counter tops/open self-service displays and door handles

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste management should be read in conjunction with Circular: Guidelines for the management of waste at quarantine and isolation field facilities/centres, from Department of Environmental Affairs and Development planning.

Disposal of Infectious Waste generated from isolation units/wards should be treated as isolation waste as per the SOP:

- Management of COVID-19 Health Care Waste in the Western Cape Health Care Facilities serviced by Compass Medical Waste Services (Cape Metro, Cape Winelands District and Overberg District) dated 03/04/2020, and
- Management of COVID-19 Health Care Waste in the Western Cape Health Care Facilities serviced by Averda Health Care Waste Services (West Coast-, Garden Route- and Central Karoo District) dated 03/04/2020.

RODENT/PEST CONTROL ON PREMISES

Pest control on food premises are paramount in the prevention and control of vector-borne diseases. Transmission of disease from pest infestations can occur in both the internal and external environment of premises through contamination of food equipment, surfaces, food or water.

Implementing control measures on a regular basis is necessary to prevent or eradicate infestation and should be affected by means of a continuous vector control program through accredited service providers.



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DATE: 02 July 2020

List of Annexures:

Annexure 1: SOP: Cleaning Food Holding Trolleys

Reference documents:

- Department of Health -Western Cape Food Service Management Implementation Guidelines
- Food workers: preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the work environment
- The Professional Food Handlers Guide. (In compliance with new Australian Food Safety Standards) HYGIENIC
- Codex Alimentarius. Food hygiene:
- National Environmental Health Norms and Standards for premises and Acceptable Monitoring Standards for Environmental Health Practitioners

Annexure 1:

SOP: CLEANING FOOD HOLDING TROLLEYS

PURPOSE	To prevent food borne illnesses by ensuring that food-holding trolleys remain clean while transporting food to the wards.		
SCOPE	This procedure applies to all staff, including ward staff, handling the food trolley.		
INSTRUCTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train ward staff/housekeeping staff/ward hostesses on using the procedures in this SOP. 2. The trolleys should be cleaned after every meal service. 3. Make sure the trolley is parked in the trolley wash area and brakes are secured. 4. Wear yellow gloves 5. Never use steel wool/pot scourers or any other non-approved cleaning chemicals (Only SABS approved chemicals allowed) 6. Remove all trays and containers from trolley. 7. Wash and sanitize food-holding trolleys using the 2-bucket system and orange cloth. 8. Put general purpose cleaner in red bucket and sanitizer in blue bucket 9. Using circular motions, scrub the inside and outside of the food trolley, and then the lids thoroughly. 10. Wet an orange cleaning cloth in the sanitizing liquid (blue bucket) and sanitize by removing soapy debris from the surfaces. (Do not allow excess water to come into contact with elements). 11. Shine up the stainless steel lids and sides of the food-holding trolley by adding lemon juice or vinegar to rinsing water and then rub up with paper towel. 12. Ensure wheels are free from foreign items. Sanitize wheels with alcohol based sanitiser. 13. Keep doors open and allow to air-dry 14. After cleaning ensure trolleys are parked in trolley bay, ready for use. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food Service Manager/Supervisors to check if trolleys are cleaned daily. 2. Check that all wheels, panels, rubber seals, hinges are in working condition. 3. Report any faulty parts to maintenance immediately and log in the maintenance book. 	Retrain all staff not adhering to SOP.
MONITORING			
CORRECTIVE ACTION			
VERIFICATION AND RECORD KEEPING	FSM manager/supervisor check and tick off on cleaning schedule		
DATE IMPLEMENTED		BY	
DATE REVIEWED		BY	
DATE REVISED		BY	