EATING SPACES AND FOOD: COVID-19 PREVENTION GUIDANCE

This guidance provides best practices for COVID-19 prevention in departmental eating spaces (e.g., lunch and break rooms, workplace meetings where food is being served). Food establishments, medical centers, and residence halls follow their locations or unit-specific procedures. Individuals must continue to follow requirements of the University's COVID-19 Prevention Plan, the UW Face Covering Policy and building signage.

PREPARE EATING SPACES

- **Physical Distancing**
  - Physical distancing is recommended for all individuals while indoors at a University location, especially for those who are not fully vaccinated, and when actively eating and drinking. Clearly identify eating spaces and orient furniture to allow for individuals to physically distance as much as possible, while indoors and actively eating and drinking. Consider designating multiple eating spaces, if possible, to prevent crowding and allow for individuals to distance from others if they choose to. It is not appropriate to ask individuals about their vaccination status.
  - Physical distancing is required in health care, child care, youth and K-12 settings, regardless of vaccination status. In these settings, furniture must be placed to support a 6-foot distancing requirement in eating areas.

- **Face coverings**
  - Wearing a face covering is required for all individuals while indoors at a University location, except when actively eating or drinking in designated eating/drinking spaces. Read the UW COVID-19 Face Covering Policy for more information about the face covering requirement.

- **Ventilation:** Identify a clearly defined, ventilated area or room for eating and drinking; ideally with a closeable door and/or separate from other work spaces. Refer to the COVID-19 Ventilation FAQs for more information.

- **Signage:** Post signs detailing expectations for the use of the space. Signage should include face covering requirements for the area, hand hygiene, and staying home if sick.

- **Cleaning:** Provide cleaning supplies and disinfectant wipes to clean and disinfect high-touch and shared surfaces regularly.
  - If the eating area has a sink, ensure it is stocked with soap and paper towels; otherwise, provide hand sanitizer.
  - Provide no-touch waste disposal bins.

SPACE USE & FOOD SHARING

- Food and drink may be served during meetings and events outside of health care settings. UW Medicine medical center events and meetings follow UW Medicine policies and procedures for health care settings.

- Consider outdoor options for eating/drinking during meetings and events when possible.

- During meetings/events, consider limiting active eating/drinking time to a short set window and offering a break during that window so attendees can eat-drink elsewhere (i.e., in a less crowded designated eating space, or outdoors) if they choose to.
When eating together, consider options with lower risk, such as attendees bringing their own food and/or drinks, using single-use/single-serving options (e.g., packaged grab-and-go lunches), or having one individual serve shared food. If self-service of shared food is planned, shared serving utensils should be replaced often and high-touch surfaces cleaned regularly.

Self-service and food sharing must not occur in child care settings, K-12, youth programs or when youth are present. In these areas, individually plated meals or grab-and-go meals are recommended.

Units/responsible parties must advise attendees of the applicable COVID-19 requirements and prevention measures for the event or meeting space. This includes reminding individuals of key times to wash hands or use hand sanitizer.

Make hand sanitizer easily accessible and place it near food serving areas to use before and after handling utensils.

When serving food at meetings or events, arrange for food distribution and dish drop-off points (e.g., in multiple locations, stagger distribution and drop-off for groups) to limit crowding and support physical distancing.

Members of a closed UW group (a work unit, a student organization, a lab, a department) may share home-prepared food with each other (e.g., potluck); however, it must not be shared with the wider UW community or the public at a University location.

Visit the Temporary Food Service Permit webpage and FAQs on the EH&S website to determine if you need a permit to serve food/beverages at a meeting or event. If unsure, contact phdept@uw.edu for guidance.

Contact EH&S at 206.543.7262 or phdept@uw.edu for more information.