



ACSA Recommended Guidelines

Tasting Room Operations during COVID-19

The following health and safety guidelines for reopening distillery operations during COVID-19 have been compiled from published government guidance documents including those from the FDA, CDC, and OSHA. They are meant to serve as a resource in conjunction with additional state and local guidance that may be in effect in your area. Reopening under these guidelines presents a host of challenges that distilleries will need to address and develop policies around before reopening to the public. We recommend using this document alongside additional directives in place in your area to develop a thorough plan for reopening that addresses both employee and guest safety in a way that helps all involved understand the processes in place to minimize risks within your establishment.

While this document is primarily focused on tasting room operations, there are many guidelines that can and should be translated to spirits production operations and sales activities as well. Those items are marked with an asterisk (*). This document is not intended to replace or supersede official guidance from any government entity or any legal advice provided to you by an attorney. Additionally, this document may be revised in the future. Readers of this document should consult ACSA's website to ensure the copy referenced is the most current version.

This document was produced by ACSA's Education Committee with consultation with Dr. Wendy Grace, MD, MS, MA.

Education & Training

Required

- Educate employees prior to reopening to the public on:
 - Proper sanitization and personal hygiene requirements consistent with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance
 - Importance of not coming to work if sick
 - [Symptom criteria for COVID-19](#)
 - Proper PPE use (putting it on/taking it off, maintenance, storage, etc.)

- Create and maintain records of employee training on all required health and safety protocols.
- Post any required documentation for employees including:
 - [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#)
- Stay current on state and local guidelines for reopening, including any increases or decreases in limitations.
 - [National Restaurant Association COVID-19 Landing Page](#)
 - [National Restaurant Association Return to Work Guidelines](#)
 - [CDC's Small Business Landing Page](#)
 - [FDA's COVID-19 Landing Page](#)
 - [OSHA's Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

Recommended

- Develop educational materials for employees on social distancing and hygiene requirements. This should be expanded to include recommendations/best practices for social distancing and hygiene recommendations outside of work as well.
 - Best practices include considerations for restraining loose hair and the temporary prevention on wearing jewelry on hands and wrists.
- Develop health and safety guidance for customers on social distancing and hygiene requirements related to tasting room visits.
- Create or source materials which can be displayed throughout the tasting room and restrooms for both employees and customers on distancing and hygiene requirements inside the tasting room
- Develop policies and procedures necessary to support the proper execution of these mandatory tasks

Employee Wellness Screenings

Required

- *Follow state and local requirements regarding wellness screenings for the primary symptoms of COVID-19
- *At minimum, wellness screens should include the following questions:
 - Have you developed any of the following symptoms not attributable to another cause:
 - Shortness of breath or trouble breathing?
 - Cough?
 - Fever or feel feverish?
 - Vomiting or diarrhea?
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Any other symptoms that might indicate you are ill?
 - [CDC COVID-19 Symptoms Information](#)

Recommended

- *Perform temperature checks consistent with CDC guidance daily for employees where appropriate and equipment is available
- *Have a process in place to ensure employees who answer yes to any of the wellness screening questions or have a temperature above 100.4° are advised to stay home and call to get medical advice to evaluate their condition.
- *Develop policies and procedures necessary to support the proper execution of the mandatory tasks above

Employee Sanitization

Required

- Minimize employee bare-hand contact with food through use of utensils.
- *Reinforce that meticulous hand hygiene (frequent and proper handwashing) is of utmost importance for all employees.
- *Post handwashing signage at each sink.
- Use only sanitization materials that are approved for use in contact with food as described on the label.
- *Develop guidelines for handwashing and for use of gloves as deemed appropriate. Good hand washing and sanitizing may be more effective than the use of gloves for preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Develop procedures to prevent cross contamination between tasks like delivering drinks and bussing tables

Recommended

- *Develop guidelines for employees regarding the use of masks or other required PPE
- *Develop policies and procedures necessary to support the proper execution of these mandatory tasks

Distancing & Occupancy

Required

- Develop and communicate to customers any guidelines implemented regarding face coverings as mandated by the state or local government
- *Require employees to maintain a six-foot distance from other employees and customers.

- Configure seating to comply with physical distancing requirements. Ensure tables are spaced at least six feet apart so that distancing of six feet between parties is maintained, including when customers approach or leave tables or are seated in chairs.
- Place visual cues to ensure people are six feet apart such as floor markings to ensure customers maintain a six-foot distance while waiting to pay or be seated.
- Post signage as required by individual counties to ensure that customers meet the six-foot distancing requirement.
- Monitor number of customers on premises at one time to ensure physical distancing requirements are maintained and to comply with any capacity restrictions imposed by state and local authorities.
- Limit parties to ten people or fewer (or the allowable number established by your local authority) who have chosen to congregate together. People in the same party seated at the same table do not have to be six feet apart.
- Eliminate bar seating that does not allow for 6 feet of distance between customers and employees and/or food prep workspaces.
- Review events and postpone or cancel any events that will prevent you from maintaining your established policies regarding occupancy and distancing

Recommended

- Continue to encourage telecommuting for those employees for whom it is possible
- Work in shifts when telework is not possible
- If no state or local requirements exist, guidelines should be developed internally and communicated publically for the use of face coverings by customers.
- Develop & train staff on procedures for customer engagement with merchandise.
- Develop policies and procedures necessary to support the proper execution of these mandatory tasks

Operations

Required

- Prohibit customer self-service operations.
- Sanitize customer-contact surfaces at tables before and after each tasting, including seats, tables, menus, point-of-sale machines, and all other touch using approved [cleaners and methods](#).
 - This includes preventing customers from self-seating at tables which have not yet been cleaned and sanitized
- *Frequently sanitize all common areas and touch points, including payment devices.
- Use menus that are single-use, cleanable between customers (laminated), online, or posted on a whiteboard or something similar to avoid multiple contact points.
- Provide all required PPE to employees

Recommended

- Have an established policy regarding refusal of service to customers displaying symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (see symptom information above) and communicate this policy to customers.
- Assign a designated greeter or host to manage customer flow and monitor distancing while customers are waiting to be seated and during the entering and exiting process.
- Consider use of signage to:
 - inform customers "... if they are displaying symptoms consistent with COVID-19 they will be asked to leave." Please note, individual states or cities may have more specific requirements regarding the use of such signage.
 - list COVID-19 symptoms at the entrance to the facility
 - [Symptoms of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Signage](#)
 - inform employees and customers with symptoms that they should stay home
 - [Stop the Spread of Germs Signage](#)
 - inform employees on who to contact if they need assistance
- Consider staging handwashing or hand sanitizing stations for customer use at the entrance to the tasting area and throughout the tasting area. Hand sanitizer must not replace hand washing by employees.
- Limit the number of staff who serve individual parties. Consider assigning the same employee to each party for their entire experience (service, bussing of tables, payment). An employee may be assigned to multiple parties but must practice proper hand hygiene when moving between parties.
- Look at opportunities for touchless payments and build all payment transactions to minimize contact and exposure including sanitizing touched credit cards, pens and looking to minimize cash or check handling.
- Assign employee(s) to monitor customer access to common areas such as restrooms to assure that customers do not congregate.
- *Increase ventilation for indoor spaces to allow for greater air turnover and upgrade filters when possible according to CDC guidelines.
- Plan ahead for interruptions in supply chain and delivery of goods.
- Develop policies and procedures necessary to support the proper execution of these mandatory tasks.

Other Departments

Required

- *Develop and educate employees on requirements for Employee Travel
 - Consider adding guidance on personal travel and subsequent return-to-work timeframes.
 - Will you require isolation?

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- COVID-19 testing prior to return to work? Is it different if travel is out of state? Out of country?
- Will your business require 14 day self-isolation? 7 day self isolation with a negative test?
- *In alignment with state and local regulation, recommend restricting non-essential travel where possible.
- *Develop a policy for addressing a positive COVID-19 test with direct connection to the business, either an employee or a customer testing positive.
- *Review all COVID-19 policies and procedures developed regularly. Triggers for review include: revisions to state or local guidance, local increase in positive tests or community transmission.

Recommendations

- Determine which of the above practices should be implemented across the organization or in other departments and implement/modify appropriately
- Implement proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures throughout the organization including assets like vehicles and forklifts
- Develop policies and procedures necessary to support the proper execution of these mandatory tasks.

* Recommended for all employees/business departments, not just Tasting Room

Please Note: This document is intended to help guide DSPs with best practices upon reopening of tasting rooms. In no way should this guidance be construed as an exhaustive list. As phases for reopenings within localities and states continue to evolve, it is imperative that you check with your own regulatory authorities and continue to monitor federal guidelines. ACSA has provided this for general informational purposes only. The information provided is not legal opinion or legal advice.