

April 20, 2020  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Christian County Health Department Working with Local Food Establishments to Ensure Food Safety during the COVID-19 Emergency**

As a precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19, our staff is evaluating options for conducting essential food safety services while engaging in social distancing. During this stressful time for the food service industry, we are here to help. We will work together to ensure that the food customers are ordering from restaurants is safe for consumption. This need exists more during this event than any other emergency we have faced.

The question we were facing was how to conduct food safety inspections while engaging in social distancing. Our normal routine and follow-up inspections do not allow for social distancing. In response, Christian County Health Department will be conducting "Pilot" Virtual Food inspections in the next week or two to meet social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 emergency period.

As a restaurant manager will this approach benefit you? This process will be educationally focused on the food service risk factors and are non-graded. It will provide you with a food safety inspection. We will offer compliance assistance on any observed risk factor violations during the virtual visit to correct any food safety concerns. The virtual visit will allow us to talk about your current operational challenges and address any new processes you may be using under the current service restrictions. After the virtual visit, you will receive a document via email that shows you have completed a virtual inspection.

During this pilot program we will be conducting virtual inspections on a volunteer basis or with establishments that have struggled in the past. We will also be looking into conducting pre-open food establishment inspections virtually; more information on what that will look like; will be provided in the next few days. These virtual visits will be non-graded and related to education and compliance assistance only.

An email will be sent to establishments to request inspection in the next few days with more guidance.

Virtual observations will concentrate on the following items:

- Employee health policies
- Hand hygiene
- Proper glove usage (including the new fact sheet of proper glove usage)
- Frequent cleaning of high touch areas, such as refrigerator handles, microwave doors, countertops, etc.
- Holding temperatures
- Cooling temperatures
- Cooking temperatures

All observed violations should be corrected during the virtual visit. If pests are observed, we will discuss the needed corrections and schedule another virtual visit to follow up based on proposed action to correct.

If you have any question in regard to Christian County Virtual Food Inspections please contact Christian County Health Department 417-581-8183 or email kimberly.foster@lpha.mo.gov.