

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FOOD BANK AND FOOD DONATION CENTRES – STEP 3

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Food banks and food donation centres provide essential services to residents and require continual donations from the community. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is currently at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance and clarity for food banks and food donation centers on the prevention and management of COVID-19 at Step 3 by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

HOW TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 DURING STEP 3

The owner/operator or assigned staff should be present and checking to ensure adherence to the following protocols:

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- **NEW:** The total number of members of the public permitted any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment
- Curbside pick-up and delivery are permitted and encouraged.
- Customers who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should be refused entry.

SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including but not limited to screening, physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowds.
- Additional guidance on how to develop a safety plan can be found [here](#).

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING

- Advise staff and volunteers to complete a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before coming to the food bank or food donation centre and follow the direction provided.
- All staff and volunteers must be actively screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before beginning their shift. Anyone failing a screen must follow directions provided by the screening tool.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Ensure there is sufficient workspace and pick-up locations to also allow for the appropriate physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between all volunteers and/or staff.
- Install floor markers for any area where a line-up may occur to maintain physical distancing.
- Provide direction to customers. Install directional arrows (e.g., at entrance/exit) if possible.
- Consider installing a physical barrier at checkout stations (e.g., cubicle, plexiglas window) to protect staff/volunteers and reduce risks.
- Avoid scheduling large volunteer groups from attending the food bank or food donation centre.
- Have staff and volunteers store their personal items in separate lockers or in sealed bins/bags. Do not share personal belongings.
- Ensure sufficient space during breaks and within the lunchroom(s) to allow for physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between volunteers and/or staff. Consider staggering break times to prevent overcrowding or individuals from grouping together.
- Persons waiting in line or congregating outside must also maintain 2 metres (6 feet) distance from every other person.

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USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Every person indoors shall wear a mask or [face covering](#) unless exemptions apply as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- It is recommended that all individuals wear a [well-fitted](#) high quality 3-layered non-medical mask, medical mask or respirator (i.e., N95s, KN95).
- Staff and volunteers are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin.

HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- [Wash hands](#) often using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content. Glove use does not replace handwashing. Ensure hands are washed before and after handling food, using the bathroom, handling cash, etc. Gloves are to be replaced/changed at this time as well.
- [Cough and sneeze](#) into your elbow or use a single-use tissue and practice hand hygiene afterwards.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, restrooms, taps, baby change tables, and surfaces frequently touched in business vehicles such as those used for deliveries.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Health Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. Therefore, it is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection, as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.

SIGNAGE

Post signs at entry visible to staff and patrons regarding masks/face coverings, screening, handwashing, physical distancing and capacity limits. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

HOW TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 DURING PICK-UP AND DELIVERY OF FOOD ITEMS

PICK-UP

- Schedule volunteers to reduce the number of people on-site and ensure they are provided with a mask or [face covering](#) to wear when in the facility.
- Organize appointments for food pick-up to reduce the number of people on-site at the same time, if possible.
- Upon pick-up, ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- To limit interactions with the public for pick-up, staff can leave the packaged food on the counter, or set up a table and have an individual pick it up.
- Practice hand hygiene with either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content immediately after each interaction.

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DELIVERY

- Knock on the door to alert the receiver, then walk away.
- Alternatively, place the items at the door and step back or to the side to maintain a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance.
- Practice hand hygiene with either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content.
- Avoid direct contact with other people. Use non-physical forms of greetings instead of shaking hands.

STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS BRINGING FOOD INTO HOMES

If a staff member or volunteer is required to enter a home for a delivery, they should follow these precautions to protect themselves:

- Avoid touching any surfaces in the client's home.
- Maintain a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) of distance between anybody in the home.
- If clients are required to sign for parcels or deliveries, consider paperless options such as using text or email confirmations to avoid unnecessary close contact.
- Staff/volunteers should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content immediately before and after the delivery.
- Staff and volunteers are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin.

OTHER GUIDANCE

Operators of food banks and donation centres should also refer to the [Ministry of Health – Reference Document for Safe Food Donations](#). The Government of Ontario guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from SMDHU about food safety or the [Ontario Food Premises Regulations](#).

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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