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Cluster Zones

The State of New York is now using a Micro-Cluster Strategy to identify areas with increased coronavirus transmission. When an area is designated as a Cluster Zone, additional restrictions on restaurants will go into effect. As of the time of publication December 3, 2020, no areas in Livingston County are in a Cluster Zone. For more information, visit <https://forward.ny.gov/>.

COVID-Positive Staff: What happens next?

Uh oh—one of your employees has tested positive for COVID-19. What now? First of all—don't panic! We're here to help you protect your staff, your customers, and your business.

When an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, several things happen at once. The employee will get a call from the Health Department to discuss isolation requirements and to identify anyone they have been in contact with. If your employee notifies you before this happens, make sure you encourage them to be open and honest with the contact tracer. Sometimes employees try to protect their workplace by hiding potential exposures—this doesn't work! Not only does it risk the health of your workers and their families, but it also prevents effective mitigation strategies that can keep your business open.

Tell your staff that a coworker is positive, but remember that you cannot name the employee due to privacy considerations (even if staff figure it out on their own!). Not everyone who works at the facility may be considered a close contact. The Health Department will ask detailed questions about the whos, whens, and hows of their interactions. If the Health Department determines that any of your other workers have been exposed they might be required to quarantine, which means they will stay home for a period of time to watch for symptoms. They might also receive a coronavirus test during their quarantine. Employees who aren't identified as close contacts should still monitor themselves for symptoms and report any concerns to you. A guide for when employees can return to work is available on our website.

You will also need to do some deep cleaning before resuming operations. Any areas (including bathrooms and break areas) where the employee was should be

thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. A guide for cleaning practices is available on our website too, at www.livingstoncounty.us/eh.

Some restaurants worry about bad publicity from a COVID positive case. As coronavirus continues to spread in our community, more and more businesses are affected. The Health Department does not identify a business publicly unless there is a need to reach potentially exposed patrons. Sometimes (especially with social media) rumors travel faster than the virus! Being transparent with the public about what you are doing to protect staff and customers can go a long way toward keeping your trustworthy reputation in the community.

So will your restaurant need to close temporarily? Maybe. You may need to close if you need more time to complete the cleaning process, or if too many employees are out due to isolation and quarantine requirements. The Health Department *will not* order you to close if you can safely continue operating. Just like always, we're here to help! Call our office promptly to report positive cases and we can help you make a plan to stay **healthy, safe, and open for business.**





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LIVINGSTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Commitment to Leading the
 Community For a Healthier and Safer
 Tomorrow

www.livingstoncounty.us/eh

Visit our COVID-19 resource page for
 food service operators!

www.livingstoncounty.us/1222



Public Health Law & COVID-19

No doubt—managing a food service establishment during a global health emergency is challenging. One such challenge is figuring out how to operate in compliance with the Public Health Law (guidelines and rules), especially when the rules are changing. Here are some tips to help you along:

First, the most important thing you can do as an operator is to stay current with the rules. The best place to do this is to go directly to the New York State Department of Health web site (www.health.ny.gov) or to www.forward.ny.gov. If it is listed here, then it is a safe bet that it is the correct information. Always double-check the dates on publications to be sure you're seeing the most current version.

Second, understand what the rules mean. One of the big items that we have run into is if kitchen staff have to wear a mask. The answer is YES. Just recently, the State has clarified this in the PHL. Section 66.3.2(c) "...Employees of food service establishments must wear a mask or facial covering at all times while at their place of work". Referring to the reopening guide will provide you with information that can keep you operating within

the rules. The entire PHL can be found at <https://regs.health.ny.gov>.

Lastly, understand what the consequences could be for operating out of compliance. The Public Health Law is designed to reduce the spread of coronavirus, so not following the rules can have serious consequences. Your staff or customers could be at risk of illness. The public may choose to stop supporting your business if they perceive it to be unsafe. You could receive a fine from the Health Department. For serious violations, your business might even be closed!

Your cooperation is critical to protecting public health. If you have questions about the Public Health Law, call our office or check our website.



Food Worker Training

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Livingston County Department of Health is adhering to the Executive Order for non-essential gatherings to reduce the risk of infection. For now that includes our in-person food service course. Facilities without a certified food worker should contact our office to discuss possible certificate extensions and alternative certifications.

Online Food Workers Course

The Livingston County Department of Health continues to offer an **online** Food Worker Training Certification! This course may be completed at anytime. For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.livingstoncounty.us/1019/Food-Worker-Training>

Please note that there is \$10 fee for the online course which is paid directly to the third party course provider.

At least one employee from each food establishment must have a current certificate from an approved Food Workers Course.