

Phase III Guidelines for Restaurants

Effective November 30, 2020 through December 13, 2020 additional restrictions are in place that override information in this document, most notably the degree to which your activities, venues and industry may operate and at what capacity. Please refer to [Rhode Island on Pause](#) that is posted on Reopening RI's website for the most current information.

This guidance document describes procedures for restaurants, cafeterias, other food service establishments, breweries, distilleries, farmer wineries, and bars (herein referred to as “restaurants” or “establishments”) operating and resuming services in a phased approach in accordance with established guidelines. If you have questions, please contact the Rhode Island Department of Health’s (RIDOH) Center for Food Protection at 401.222.2749 or 401.222.2750. In addition to the sector-specific guidance outlined here, all businesses are required to comply with the [general business guidelines](#) posted on www.reopeningRI.com.

Summary of Phase III operations

Restaurants may continue indoor dining in addition to outdoor dining (subject to applicable municipal approval) as well as pick-up, delivery, and drive-through operations. This guidance includes guidelines, recommendations, and requirements that will assist establishments in following the general business guidance that is required of all establishments. Establishments are reminded that these guidelines will continue to be updated as additional activities are permitted in future phases of the reopening and in accordance with updates to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and RIDOH regulations and guidance.

Effective November 8, 2020, all bars and restaurants must close at 10 p.m. Sunday – Thursday and at 10:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Guidance for On-Premises Dining

Physical Distancing, Capacity and Operations:

- An establishment’s indoor dining capacity is limited to 66% of an establishment’s regular seating capacity so long as spacing requirements described below can be maintained.
- Outdoor dining is still encouraged as long as the restaurant does not service more than its normal operating capacity and physical distancing can be maintained. Additionally, if an establishment has established extra outdoor dining capacity in Phase I or Phase II, that additional outdoor capacity may remain in Phase III if the municipality continues to approve such additional capacity (in accordance with the municipality’s approval processes).
- Self-service seating (e.g. in a fast food restaurant) is prohibited. Staff may designate tables for customers (e.g. by table number) upon checkout, as long as the establishment ensures that tables are cleaned between customers and that customers sit only in areas that permit physical distancing.
- All customers consuming food or drink on premises must be seated in accordance with all indoor and outdoor dining requirements.’
- Mingling or congregating of customers is prohibited. Establishments should take measures to prevent mingling and congregating of customers—especially at bars and in waiting areas, including outdoor bars and waiting areas. Examples of these measures include designating

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staff to enforce physical distancing at bars and in waiting areas, establishing queues of customers with demarcated six-foot physical distancing spacing in waiting areas, and posting signage reminding customers of the importance of physical distancing.

- Tables must:
 - Be separated by at least eight feet from table edge to table edge or to allow six feet spacing between seated customers at different tables; and
 - Be at least six feet away from areas with regular customer foot traffic (e.g. routes to bathrooms, entrances, and exits).
 - Tables may be closer together if physical, non-porous barriers (e.g. Plexiglas, plastic glass, etc.) of an appropriate height (tall enough to fully separate seated customers) are installed between tables.
- The capacity for indoor catered events is 25 people, and the capacity for outdoor catered events is 75 people, with exceptions for previously scheduled weddings.
- Customers are strongly encouraged to minimize the size of their party, to minimize the number of non-household members they dine with, and to keep their party to eight people or fewer. Additionally, no more than eight customers are allowed at a single table. Parties of eight or more customers are to be seated at two or more separate tables, and it is recommended strongly that restaurants seat such larger parties outdoors, where possible. Restaurants may also choose not to allow larger parties.
- Service to standing customers (e.g. in a bar area) is prohibited with the exception of food pick-up where standards for pick-up referenced below in the *Guidance for Pick-up, Drive-through, and Delivery* section are followed. This guidance includes six feet of physical distance between individuals in pick-up and waiting areas.
- Establishments must prevent customer access to potential gathering spaces on the premises (e.g. dance floors, courtyards). Customer seating anywhere other than at tables or designated seating areas of a bar is prohibited.
- Restaurants are recommended to help prevent socializing or mixing between tables or between different parties.
- It is recommended that, to the extent possible, establishments maximize spacing between individuals. Establishments are reminded of the State's general guidance regarding physical distancing which reads that "All persons should remain at least six (6) feet apart at all times. If social distancing is not feasible, individuals must minimize time in violation of social distancing, and additional precautions should be taken. Procedures that cannot be executed with social distancing should be documented by businesses and organizations in the written COVID-19 Control Plan required."
- Establishments should consider designating separate entrances and exits for customers, where practicable, to promote one-way customer traffic.
- Establishments should demarcate physical distancing spaces in waiting areas and indicate customer traffic flows with tape or paint on the floor as well as with signage.
- In order to facilitate physical distancing among staff and to minimize the number of people staff interact with, establishments should consider:
 - Staggering employee shifts and break times;
 - Cohorting staff within each shift (i.e. keeping the same shift schedules and avoiding mixing staff across shifts);
 - Designating separate work zones for servers;
 - Spacing workstations and personnel positioning by six feet, when practicable; and
 - Eliminating or minimizing the use of shared equipment.
- Establishments should make adjustments to promote physical distancing within bathrooms

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(alternating stalls, sinks, etc.), or take other steps as is practicable (including the posting of signage).

- Servers, bartenders, bussers, and other customer-facing staff should minimize time spent within six feet of customers and other staff.
- Online and phone reservations are strongly encouraged. If online and phone reservations cannot be implemented, outdoor reservation or host stations for taking in-person reservations and receiving customers are strongly recommended as an alternative.
- Upon arriving at the premises for dining, the establishment should ensure that parties are directed to their table in a manner that respects physical distancing guidelines.
- Self-service drink refills are not allowed. Any drink refill must use clean dishware (sanitized between use) or new.
- All self-service food stations where food is not prepackaged, wrapped, or otherwise protected (e.g. salad bars and buffets) are prohibited.
- Hookah is not allowed.

Bars and bar areas: Through their seating arrangements and approach to serving customers (seated service only), bars should appear very similar to restaurants. Bars and bar areas (including sushi bars, raw bars, and other food prep areas with bar seating) may be operated in one of three ways:

- Option 1: There are functioning bar work areas (e.g. drink making stations, dishwashing stations, glassware storage) with no bar seating, and the bar area is closed to customers (roped off or otherwise separated from the rest of the establishment).
- Option 2: There is bar seating with no functioning bar work areas (e.g. no drink making stations, dishwashing stations, glassware storage). No staff are permitted to work behind the bar. Parties must be seated at bars, and parties must be spaced at least six feet from one another.
- Option 3: There are functioning bar work areas (e.g. drink making stations, dishwashing stations, glassware storage) and bar seating if there is a rigid, non-porous barrier (e.g. Plexiglas, plastic glass, etc.) of an appropriate height separating customers from the bar space. Parties must be seated at bars, and parties must be spaced at least six feet from one another.
 - Staff may serve seated customers drinks and food through a gap or opening in the barrier, provided that this gap or opening in the barrier is no more than eight inches and working bar areas (e.g. drink making stations or glassware storage) are located at least six feet from these gaps. Establishments are strongly encouraged to minimize the number and size of these gaps.
- Establishments are encouraged to review illustrated guidance for bar operations available on www.reopeningri.com.

Shared objects and frequently touched objects and surfaces

- Establishments should clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g. toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) with increased frequency and in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Condiments and similar products (e.g. salt, pepper, ketchup, mustard, salad dressing) should only be provided via single-servings (e.g. individual packages or cups) unless provided upon request and sanitized between each use.
- Establishments must use one of the following:

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- Paper menus that are immediately disposed after each use;
- Digital, electronic, whiteboard, or chalkboard menus; or
- Reusable menus that are sanitized after each use.
- Utensils and dishware used for table service must either be disposable and discarded between parties or be removed, sanitized, and replaced between parties. Utensils should be rolled or packaged.

Establishments should consider increasing ventilation with outdoor air circulation in kitchens and other indoor areas (e.g. food prep areas), when safe, practicable, and in alignment with food safety regulations.

Collecting contact tracing information

- Establishments must maintain a log to retain the names, phone numbers, and the date/time in the establishment of at least one member of each party dining in the restaurant.
- Establishments must also maintain an employee work log.
- The logs must be kept for a period of 30 days and this information must be made available to RIDOH, upon request, for the purposes of contact tracing. Records dating before the previous 30 days must be permanently destroyed. Visitors and other entrants whose information is collected shall be notified at the time of collection that the information is being collected solely for the purpose of contact tracing.

Recreation, entertainment and live performances

- If establishments have recreation or entertainment operations (e.g. arcade games or pool tables), these operations are subject to the requirements and recommendations described in the State's guidance for Recreational, Historical, Cultural, and Entertainment Establishments.
- Live performances are allowed, provided that:
 - There is 14 feet of physical distance between performers and from tables and high-traffic areas. This distance can be reduced to six feet if:
 - All performers wear masks throughout the performance and there is no vocal performance; or
 - There is a physical, non-porous barrier (e.g. Plexiglas) separating performers from other performers, from tables, and from high-traffic areas.
 - No mingling or congregating is allowed, and customers must remain seated at their tables.

Outdoor dining

- If an establishment proposes to use: (1) a sidewalk area for outdoor service or (2) a restricted street area for parking, the licensee needs to apply to the Department of Transportation for a sidewalk seating/roadway permit. The application for this permit and information is available at: https://www.reopeningri.com/resource_pdfs/Restaurant-outdoor-dining-permit-application-05.19.20.pdf
- Restaurants are encouraged to adopt a policy of no smoking/no vaping in outdoor dining areas.

Where not specified above, all organizations should follow the general guidance from RIDOH and CDC regarding gathering sizes and physical distancing. Please refer to the general guidance document for businesses and organizations that is posted on <http://www.reopeningri.com/>

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Guidance for Pick-up, Drive-through, and Delivery

Establishments should follow the [FDA guidelines for pick-up, drive-through, and delivery operations](#) that are posted on FDA's website.

In addition to applicable guidance for on-premise dining, restaurants providing pick-up, drive-through, and delivery should take the following steps to assist customers with physical distancing:

- Encourage customers to place orders online or by phone.
- Offer curbside pick-up (i.e. not allowing customers indoors) where practicable.
- Demarcate six-foot spacing in any lines (e.g. by using tape and/or with signage, rope/belt stanchions, or other methods).
- Demarcate a six-foot distance between each pick-up or payment location (e.g. counter, table, register).
- Demarcate a six-foot distance between the waiting line for customers and any pick-up or payment locations.
- Close any waiting areas and demarcate six-foot spacing for pick-up lines. Establishments may use the non-critical retail guidance (one customer per 100 square feet of floor area) as a general rule for determining how many customers should be allowed in a space at a time for takeout operations.
- Establishments are encouraged to install physical, non-porous barriers (e.g. Plexiglas, plastic glass) in accordance with standards established by RIDOH at key points of customer interaction (waiting areas and payment stations).

Payment

- Establishments should encourage contactless and/or cashless payment methods where feasible.
- Establishments should encourage staff handling customer transactions to wash their hands with increased frequency.
- To the extent customer contact is required in processing transactions (e.g. entering a PIN number, signing a receipt), the establishment should take special measures to ensure contacted areas (e.g. payment devices, pens, cardholders) are sanitized frequently (e.g. after each use).

Screening procedures

- RIDOH requires that food establishments screen employees, customers, and visitors entering an establishment. People whose responses to screening questions indicate that they are COVID-19 positive, sick, or who show visible signs of illness, must be denied entrance and instructed to isolate. Employers may supplement screening questions with temperature checks. Please review the [general business guidance](#) for more details on screening. Screening of customers and visitors may consist of self-screening as guided by posted signage.
- In addition to screening for COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors as outlined in the general guidance, restaurants should inform customers, when they make a reservation, of screening requirements and should notify customers that they should not dine at the restaurant if any member of their party does not meet screening standards. This notification can be done by phone, text, email, or verbally.

Face coverings and other personal protective equipment

- Everyone must wear a mask when they're near people who don't live with them.

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Enhanced cleaning and/or disinfecting procedures

- Prior to reopening, an establishment must conduct a thorough cleaning of the facility, including all dining, kitchen, bathroom, and commonly touched surfaces.
- Dining tables fall into the category of frequently touched surfaces, and restaurants must clean each table, chair, and other commonly touched surfaces related to that table in accordance with CDC guidelines and between parties.
- Establishments must make hand-washing facilities (with running soap and water) or hand sanitizer available to all employees and customers. Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be made available at the establishment's entrances and exits, as well as in dining areas, when feasible.
- Establishments must clean bathrooms, pick-up locations, payment stations, and other commonly touched or customer-facing areas in accordance with the CDC guidelines documented in the general business guidelines.
- Establishments should remind employees of pre-existing food safety regulations, healthy handwashing practices, and the importance of regular cleaning.

Implementing Guidance

- Establishments must designate an employee to implement and monitor for compliance with physical distancing measures, sanitization, and other standards included in this guidance. This employee may be the Food Safety Manager; however, establishments may designate an alternate employee.
- Establishments must institute employee training programs on these standards.
- Establishments should post signage, visible to customers, that communicates expected physical distancing, face coverings, and customer screening policies.

Guidance for Catered Events and Other Event Food and Beverage Operations

The State's restaurants guidance applies to all catered events and other event food and beverage operations. Examples of these events include wedding receptions, galas, awards events, celebrations, and corporate functions. In addition to all other applicable guidelines, catered events and other event food and beverage operations should adhere to following:

- Social gatherings within restaurants or with licensed caterers are limited to 25 people for indoor settings and 75 people for outdoor settings, with exceptions for previously scheduled weddings. Note that staff (e.g. event planners and servers) are excluded from these event size limits. Event hosts and organizers should keep in mind that indoor settings carry greater risks than outdoor settings, and the smaller the event size, the lower the risk.
- An establishment's indoor dining capacity is limited to 66% of an establishment's regular seating capacity.
- No more than eight guests are allowed at a single table. It is encouraged that guests be seated by household, whenever practicable.
- The service and consumption of food and beverages must follow the restaurants guidance. Consistent with the restaurants guidance, no mingling or congregating and no standing service or consumption is allowed. To align with these standards, establishments and event planners/hosts may wish to consider options such as individualized boxes of hors d'oeuvres/appetizers (i.e. no passed hors d'oeuvres/appetizers), seated "cocktail hours," and direct table service for all food and beverages (i.e. not providing traditional bar service). Consistent with the restaurants guidance, walk-up bar service is not permitted.
- Food stations are not recommended. However, if food stations are used:
 - Guests may not serve themselves unless the food is prepackaged, wrapped, or

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otherwise protected. Self-service salad bars, buffets, and other food stations where food is exposed are prohibited.

- Establishments should install sneeze guards or other barriers to separate servers from guests.
- Plates, utensils, and other dinnerware cannot be exposed at food stations. Establishments can address this (1) by staffing food stations and keeping dinnerware separate (e.g. behind a sneeze guard or other barrier) or (2) leaving dinnerware for each guest at their seated tables.
- Consistent with guidelines above, guests must be spaced six-feet apart in line, and lines must be spaced at least six-feet away from other guests' tables. Establishments are strongly encouraged to demarcate six-foot spacing in lines and otherwise facilitate physical distancing among guests in lines.
- To reduce congestion around food stations and otherwise minimize congregating and mingling, establishments should request that guests remain seated until their table is called and return to their seats immediately after collecting their food.
- Establishments and event planners/hosts should note that the state's standards for face coverings especially applies to guests when away from their tables to get food from food stations.
- Family-style food service (e.g. bread baskets, shared salads, etc.) is not allowed unless table members are of the same household or unless the food items are individually wrapped.
- Bar service to standing customers at catered events is not allowed. As alternatives to standing bar service, establishments may wish to consider providing beverage service (1) through servers to seated guests at tables or (2) through the placement of beverages at seated tables for consumption by guests seated at their tables (e.g. buckets of canned/bottled soda or beer; bottles or carafes of wine; enclosed pitchers of batch cocktails), provided that these beverages are not exposed (i.e. beverages should be in a can, bottle, or enclosed pitcher).
- All catered events should be planned/organized (1) to prevent mingling and congregating, (2) to facilitate six-foot physical distancing between individuals, and (3) to promote mask wearing. To align with these standards, establishments and event planners/hosts may wish to consider options such as:
 - Limited performances, including ceremonial/customary dances (e.g. mother/father-son/daughter dances) are allowed in compliance with live performance guidance herein.
 - Open dance floors are avoided.
 - Receiving lines and other event traditions that involve congregating of guests are avoided.
 - It is recommended that there be proactive communication to guests regarding the importance of social distancing and mask wearing in pre-event communication as well as upon guests' arrival and throughout the event.

If you have any questions about events or catered event guidance, please contact the Department of Business Regulation via the online form at <https://dbr.ri.gov/questioncomplaints/> or at 401.889.5550.

Additional resources

Establishments should also consult the following resources:

- [National Restaurant Association's COVID-19 Reopening Guidance](#)
- [CDC's Considerations for Restaurants and Bars](#)

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- [FDA's Best Practices](#)
• [FDA's Reopening Guidance](#)

