

TOGETHER WE PREPARE TO OPEN CONCESSION STANDS

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During the last few weeks I have been asked by our members many times over “How should we be preparing and what should we be doing in order to be ready to open our businesses at Fairs?” After reading numerous articles and participating in many conversations, I have noticed that there are some suggestions about how to open Food Concession Stands at Fair and Festival crowd-Events post-pandemic that come up over and over. Without guidelines and a crystal ball, I am going to opine that the redundant ones are where we should focus our attention.

Employees: When they arrive for work, take their temperature and confirm with them they feel healthy. If you notice anything that makes you think they do not feel well (*sneezing, sniffles, etc.*) do not assign them work; send them home.

Training: This refers to training that would be in addition to the usual healthy practices, food preparation, Guest Services, and cooking training you already conduct. Be sure that there is signage, photos, videos and check lists stating clearly what is expected of Employees. Be prepared to communicate with people that have a different first language. Stress that they are to follow all the Fair rules of entrance, exit, and social distancing when coming and going to their work stations.

PPE: At the beginning of each shift distribute *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)* such as a face mask and gloves to each Employee with the requirement that they must be worn during the entire work shift.

Hand Washing: Whether hands are in gloves or not, they must be washed (*20 seconds*) or hand sanitized often. Do not touch your face with your hands at all. Require anyone entering or exiting a stand at any time to wash their hands before they do anything else and dry them with paper towels.

Six Feet Apart: When in the stand or out of the stand, work stations will need to be organized to support being six feet apart from each other and the Guest. This may include plexiglass barriers on counters, or between Guest and Cashier, or between work stations.

Hand Sanitizer: It seems that hand sanitizer is expected to be at every stand for Employee and Guest use. These would not be shared containers.

Menus: In most Concessions, menu items are listed on window signage or menu boards. If there is Guest access to either, they will need a consistent schedule for cleaning. If menus are being given to Guests, they must

be single usage.

Ordering: Expanded mobile food ordering will be expected. To be efficient and successful, this will require technology and well thought out procedures. (*Can orders be made before arriving or while walking around and can a pick up time be chosen?*) Orders could also be taken in line by masked order takers and then sent to the kitchen by whatever means chosen by the Operator.

Contactless Payment: Expect cashless options to expand as new payment technology solutions are created; however cash and digital transactions will probably coexist. During the pandemic, patrons have become used to a variety of touch-free payment methods like debit/credit cards, smart card, e-wallet, key fob, smart phones and other mobile devices. Perhaps a separate line may need to be created for cash transactions.

Condiments: Self-serve shared items like sprinkled spices, pumped condiments, straws, cutlery, and napkin dispensers most likely will not be allowed. A package with napkin and cutlery inside and individually wrapped straws, spices, and condiments will probably be acceptable.

Beverage Service: Because no service item can be exchanged back and forth, refill cup programs may change. The Guest can purchase the novelty cup; however, the refill would be given to the Guest in a one-time use cup that they would then pour into their own novelty, refill cup. Also, since drinking fountains will be disabled, be prepared to provide a small cup of water to patrons for taking pills or quenching thirst.

Common Usage: In addition to the cleaning usually done, crews with masks, perhaps eye shields, gloves, and non-toxic supplies will need to constantly be cleaning/sanitizing tables, chairs, counters, railings, and trash containers in full view of the Customer in order for them to feel comfortable. All personal items will have to be stored out of view.

Note: *Please remember all the above is only a best-guess opinion; use it as it makes sense to you.*

Fairs will reopen. Now is the time to formulate an active plan so that you will be ready to reopen with them. Visit your *Health Departments* and listen to what they are thinking, visit Food Concessions that are open and see what they are doing, and share your plans with your Fair Managers. All business relies on relationships: *don't let this year become out-of-sight-out-of-mind*. Be curious, ask questions, and let it be known that you are a **NICA Member** who is ready to help. ▲