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DOC NO. AG-2020-03145**MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020 -004****GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF DOT-ACCREDITED RESTAURANTS
UNDER THE NEW NORMAL**

WHEREAS, under Republic Act (RA) No. 11469 or the Bayanihan To Heal as One Act, the President is authorized to direct the operation of establishments to carry out the declared national policy of mitigating the transmission of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, under the Memorandum of the Executive Secretary dated 28 March 2020, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is directed to issue guidelines for the exercise of the President's mandate under the Bayanihan To Heal as One Act;

WHEREAS, pursuant to RA 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009, the DOT is mandated to promulgate rules and regulations governing the operation and activities of all tourism enterprises;

WHEREAS, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines defines the "New Normal" as emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization;

WHEREAS, there is a need to provide guidelines to institutionalize the present health and safety protocols in the operations of restaurant under a New Normal Scenario;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, the Guidelines Governing the Operation of Restaurant Under the New Normal is hereby issued:

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Short Title. – This Circular shall be known as "The New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for DOT- Accredited Restaurants".

Section 2. Definition of Terms. – For purposes of these Circular, the term:

- (a) "Accommodation Establishments" shall refer to establishments operating primarily for accommodation purposes including, but not limited to, hotels, resorts, apartment hotels, tourist inns, motels, pension houses, private homes used for homestay, ecolodges, serviced apartments, condotels, and bed and breakfast facilities.
- (b) "Accreditation" shall refer to a Certification issued by the Department of Tourism (DOT) to a tourism enterprise that officially recognizes it as having complied with the minimum standards for the operation of tourism facilities and services.
- (c) "Buffet Service" shall refer to a system of serving meals where the diners serve themselves, with or without assistance from a waiter, from a food selection placed on a table in a public and accessible area.

- (d) “Bussers” refer to restaurant staff in charge of clearing tables.
- (e) “Client-Facing Staff” refer to staff that regularly interacts with a customers, often in person.
- (f) “Food Safety Apparel” refers to protective garments and accessories worn prevent cross-contamination between the wearer and the food product, such as hairnets or haircaps, gloves, aprons, and footwear.
- (g) “Health Declaration Form” refers to refers to a form that a person must fill-up to declare his or her current health condition and travel history for the past fourteen (14) days.
- (h) “New Normal” shall refer to the emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization.
- (i) “Physical distancing” or “Social Distancing” refers to the strict maintenance of a distance of at least one (1) meter radius between persons in a public setting.
- (j) “Restaurant” shall refer to any establishment that prepares and serves meals or refreshments to the public for a fee.
- (k) “Salad Bar” shall refer to a buffet-style table or counter at a restaurant on which salad components are provided for customers to assemble their own salad plates.
- (l) “Self-Service” shall refer to a type of service wherein customers select food items from a display, pay for the same to a cashier, and bring the food to a seating place.
- (m) “Thermal Scanner” shall refer to devices meant to detect high body temperatures as a clue for infectious diseases.
- (n) “Temperature Gun” shall refer to a thermometer which infers temperature from a portion of the thermal radiation sometimes called black-body radiation emitted by the object being measured. This permits temperature measurement from a distance without contact with the object to be measured.
- (o) “Ventilation system” refers to a mechanical structure of connected devices that controls airflow within a confined space.

Section 3. Coverage. This Memorandum Circular shall apply to all DOT-Accredited restaurants and restaurants in DOT-Accredited Accommodation Establishments.

II. RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT

Section 4. Health Declaration Form. The restaurant proprietor must ensure that employees fill out a Health Declaration Form prior to every duty.

Section 5. Monitoring of Body Temperature of All Employees. The restaurant proprietor must ensure the monitoring of body temperature of all employees every time they report to work. Unwell employees or those with mild flu-like symptoms shall be directed to see a doctor and to stay at home.

Section 6. Provision of Food Safety Apparel. The restaurant proprietor must provide all its employees with at least the following Food Safety Apparel while they are on duty:

- a) Hairnets or haircaps;
- b) Face masks;
- c) Face shields;
- d) Gloves;
- e) Apron; and
- f) Shoe Cover.

Section 7. Dissemination of Safety and Health-Related Protocols. The restaurant proprietor must ensure that its employees are trained and regularly updated on health concerns and other related information by installing a safety bulletin board and maintain display of safety and health related information in the working premises.

Section 8. Cleanliness within the Premises. The restaurant proprietor must ensure cleanliness within all its premises, including the kitchen, storage, back areas, and parking.

Section 9. Annual Health Check-up. The restaurant proprietor must ensure that all employees undergo annual health check up.

Section 10. Maximum Customer Capacity. The restaurant proprietor shall set a maximum customer capacity for the establishment at 50% of the seating or venue capacity.

III. RESTAURANT CONFIGURATION AND SET-UP

Section 11. Disinfectant Mats. Disinfectant mats shall be installed at the entrance of the restaurant.

Section 12. Tables and Seating Arrangement.

11.1. The restaurant seating capacity should allow at least one (1) meter spacing between customers.

11.2. Dining tables that can accommodate ten (10) guests, shall accommodate only five (5) guests.

11.3. Tables shall be arranged such that the distance from the back of one chair to the back of another chair shall be more than one (1) meter apart and the guests face each other from a distance of at least one (1) meter. If seats are fixed, alternate seats shall be marked out.

11.4. Face-to-face seating in tables shall only be permissible when transparent dividers (e.g. acrylic plastic, plexiglass, sneeze guards, etc.) are installed.

Section 13. Menus. As far as practicable, a menu shall be displayed on the counter or other conspicuous area, and handheld menus shall be dispensed with.

Section 14. Signage. Signage or notices must be installed in conspicuous areas reminding customers to wash their hands with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds or disinfect with 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the restaurant.

Section 15. Self-Service and Condiment Stations. Self-service stations like do-it-yourself customer refill and condiment stations shall be prohibited.

Section 16. Buffet and Salad Bars. Buffet service and salad bars shall be prohibited.

Section 17. Pick-up or takeaway zones. As far as practicable, there shall be designated pick-up or take away zones for customers whose orders are for take-out.

Section 18. Queuing System. Queue lines shall be clearly demarcated and signage shall be in place to ensure that guests queuing to order or pick-up food observe physical distancing. Floor markings may be installed for this purpose.

Section 19. Leisure Facilities. The operation of ancillary leisure facilities and amenities, such as in-house play areas, libraries, karaoke machines, etc., if any, shall be temporarily suspended.

Section 20. Alarm System for Employee Hand Washing. An alarm system may be installed in a strategic location to remind employees to wash their hands rigorously with soap and warm water for at least twenty (20) seconds every 20 minutes. If soap and water are not readily available, 70% solution alcohol/alcohol-based hand sanitizer shall be used as an alternative.

IV. EMPLOYEES

Section 21. Proper Hygiene and Good Grooming. Employees must observe proper hygiene and good grooming. They shall refrain from wearing jewelries (e.g. rings, bracelets, watches, earrings, and exposed body piercings, etc.) while working.

Section 22. Personal Effects. Employees' personal effects shall be placed in plastic bags and stored in an area inaccessible to customers.

Section 23. Food Safety Apparel. Employees shall wear Food Safety Apparel provided under Section 6 while on duty.

Section 24. Physical Distancing. Employees shall observe Physical Distancing of at least one (1) meter from one another while working.

Section 25. Hand Washing. Food attendants and kitchen personnel shall wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, before preparing and after handling food.

Section 26. Contact with Food Products. Employees shall avoid touching with their bare hands ready-to-eat foods, instead, they shall use appropriate utensils such as spatulas, tongs, single use-gloves, or dispensing equipment. If the task requires direct contact with ready-to-eat foods, employees shall wash their hands and the exposed portions of the arms for 20 seconds prior to donning gloves and before touching food or food-contact surfaces. Hands shall be washed immediately after removing gloves.

Section 27. Client-Facing Staff. Client-Facing Employees such as waiters, cashier, or Bussers, shall wash their hands frequently with soap and water at least every 20 minutes.

Section 28. Clean as You Go Policy. Employees must emulate the "Clean As You Go" policy by keeping the work area clean and tidy continually throughout the working day.

Section 29. Employee Meal Times. Staff break and meal times shall be done on shifting schedules. During their break or meal time, employees shall dine at the designated discreet areas where physical distancing of at least one (1) meter apart shall be observed.

Section 30. Employee Conduct. Employees shall not loiter in other areas outside of their work stations. Close interactions not necessary for work shall not be allowed. Employees shall not spit on any surface in the restaurant.

V. CUSTOMERS

Section 31. No mask, No Entry Policy. Customers not wearing masks shall not be allowed to enter the restaurant. Face mask shall be worn properly at all times except when eating and drinking.

Section 32. Temperature Check. Body temperature checking using a thermal scanner or thermometer gun shall be administered to all customers upon entry at the restaurant. Only customers who are cleared during screening shall be allowed to enter. Those with fever or who exhibit flu-like symptoms shall be refused entry.

Section 33. Physical Distancing. Customers shall observe physical distancing of at least one (1) meter from one another in communal areas, such as dining areas, toilets, and queueing areas.

Section 34. Sanitizing Mats. Customers shall sanitize their footwear using sanitizing mats and drying pads installed at the entrance of the restaurant before entering the establishment.

Section 35. Contact Tracing. Customers shall provide their names and contact details in a contact-tracing log sheet to be provided by restaurant personnel should the necessity for contact-tracing arises

Section 36. Health Declaration Form. Customers shall fill out a Health Declaration Form upon entry to the restaurant.

VI. SERVICE AND OTHER PROCEDURE

Section 37. Utensils and Condiments. Single-use items like napkins, fork and spoon other utensils and condiments shall be dispensed with by the staff directly to the clients by wrapping them with biodegradable packaging.

Section 38. Food Covering. The food attendant who prepared the meal must ensure that it is properly covered before it is served by another staff to the customer.

Section 39. Cashless Method of Payment. Cashless methods of payment with the use of money transfer applications is highly encouraged. If not viable, employees shall hand and receive cash on a small tray to avoid mutual hand contact with customers.

Section 40. Pay-as-you-order. Pay-as-you-order policy is highly encouraged. Payment shall be handed to servers after placing an order through cashless method or through small trays.

VII. DELIVERY

Section 41. Delivery Personnel. Delivery personnel shall wear face masks properly and frequently wash or sanitize their hands with 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer while conducting deliveries.

Section 42. Physical Distancing. Physical distancing of at least one (1) meter between the delivery personnel and the customer must be observed at all times.

Section 43. Food Packaging. Hot and cold foods shall be delivered through properly functioning insulated cases, storage boxes, or appropriate transport vessels. Raw foods shall be separated from cooked and ready-to-eat foods at all times. Any wrapping and packaging used for food transport shall be done properly to prevent food contamination.

Section 44. Sanitation of Delivery Boxes. Coolers, insulation cases, and other delivery boxes used to deliver foods shall be cleaned and sanitized frequently.

Section 45. Online Delivery Services. Tie-ups or partnerships with online platforms that provide delivery service is encouraged.

Section 46. Payment Options. Cashless methods of payment with the use of money transfer applications is highly encouraged. If not viable, personnel shall hand and receive cash on a small tray to avoid mutual hand contact with customers.

VIII. SANITATION, DISINFECTION, SAFETY MEASURE AND OTHERS

Section 47. Disinfection and Sanitation Protocols. The restaurant owner must ensure compliance with the following standards:

- 46.1. Deep cleaning, proper disinfection, and sanitation within the restaurant's premises shall be done regularly;
- 46.2. Frequent sanitation and disinfection of high-touch surface such as bars, kitchen and counter tops, cashiers, menu, tables, chairs, condiment containers, toilet fixtures, etc., shall be conducted at all times;
- 46.3. Food contact surfaces, dishware, utensils, and beverage equipment shall be washed, rinsed and sanitized before and after use;
- 46.4. All dishes, silverware, and glassware shall be washed and disinfected including items that have not been used. Restaurants are encouraged to invest in modern equipment to enhance the washing and disinfection of dishes, silverwares, and glassware;
- 46.5. Toilets shall be cleaned and sanitized every two (2) hours;
- 46.6. Gloves shall be used for cleaning and sanitizing surfaces;
- 46.7. Instructions on the proper use of disinfectant wipes shall be strictly followed. It shall not be reused to wipe down multiple surfaces;
- 46.8. Used reusable gloves shall be properly brought to a laundering area for immediate washing;
- 46.9. Used disposable gloves, disinfecting wipes, and disposable facemasks shall be thrown in the designated container (with cover), and shall be disposed in accordance with the special instructions relating to the material concerned;

- 46.10. All used linens and fabrics shall be bagged or properly contained when transported to a laundering area, if applicable. Staff shall be equipped with masks and disposable gloves or tongs to pick up soiled laundry;
- 46.11. Regular pest control activities in the restaurant shall be implemented; and
- 46.12. Porous pieces of furniture and surfaces, such as walls made of pumice stone, tables and chairs made of untreated wood, posters made of paper, etc., shall be covered with plastic sheets to enable ease of disinfection.

Section 48. Safety Measures. The restaurant owner must ensure compliance with the following health and safety measures:

- 47.1. Availability of 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer and tissue paper or table napkins in close proximity with high-touch areas and in the prominent areas inside the restaurant.
- 47.2. Availability of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials on proper handwashing, respiratory etiquette, proper use of facemask and physical distancing shall be displayed in conspicuous areas of the restaurant. The location of handwashing areas shall likewise be posted.
- 47.3. Hand-washing sinks and toilet flushing facilities must be functional at all times. It shall be adequately supplied with soap and toilet paper or paper towels.
- 47.4. A designated handwashing basin for kitchen staff separate from the dishwashing sink shall be provided.
- 47.5. Kitchen floors shall be installed with directional arrows according to flow of work processes to facilitate crowd control and physical distancing.
- 47.6. Food preparation areas shall be strictly off-limits to all other restaurant employees whose work has no relevance to food preparation.

Section 49. Air Quality. Sufficient ventilation (air conditioning, air ducts, exhaust, fresh air supply) shall be provided to ensure air exchange in different areas of the restaurant.

Section 50. Waste Management. Restaurant wastes shall be properly segregated and disposed of regularly.

IX. OTHER PROVISIONS

Section 51. Penalties. Any violation of these Guidelines may subject the tourism enterprise to the appropriate fines and penalties, including revocation of its DOT Accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

Section 52. Separability. If any provision of this Circular is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and subsisting.

Section 53. Repeal. All issuances, orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provision of this Circular are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 54. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect immediately and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

06 June 2020.


BERNADETTE FOMULO-PUYAT
Secretary 

