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FINAL EXAM

SOP For Restaurant Industry

The novel COVID-19 virus is the biggest threat the world faces today. To combat it, countries all around the world are ensuring that their citizens follow the precautionary guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other credible health institutions. These guidelines put a strong emphasis on increasing personal hygiene and reducing human-to-human contact as a way to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The aim of this essay is to show how the restaurant industry in particular can abide by the guidelines set by WHO by following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These SOPs are carefully designed keeping the realities for running a restaurant in mind.

We recognize that in these current times, food industry workers play a more critical role than ever before, and count as an essential business required for the proper functioning of society. And unlike other businesses that operate from home and/or can run with minimum contact, the restaurant industry can do neither. Food has to be prepared on premises and the workforce has to work in close proximity to prepare, package and deliver the items to their customers.

That being said, it is important to note that certain precautions and measures can be taken to significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 in the restaurant industry. And implementing such SOPs is necessary because the safety of workers involved in the food production and supply chain is extremely important to keep society as a whole safe.

With this in mind, let us look at the SOPs restaurateurs must follow to safely run their operations in a society that faces constant threat from the novel coronavirus.

SOP 1: Employees must ensure their personal hygiene before leaving for their workplace.

Employees must enter the workplace with clean hair, brushed teeth and deodorant. Special care must be taken to ensure their hands have short, clean fingernails.

SOP 2: Clean garments and clothes should be worn

Employees should take care to wear clothes that have been washed in high temperatures that have been rinsed with proper laundry detergent and thoroughly air-dried. In addition, multiple clean and sanitized aprons, towels and cloths should be provided for cleaning purposes.

SOP 3: Employees must wash their hands.

Upon entering and leaving the workplace, employees must wash their hands for at least 20 seconds. In addition, hands should be washed in the following situations:

- Before preparing any food or handling food equipment.
- When switching between raw food items and ready-to-cook/prepared food items.
- After returning from the toilet, or any other activity to the workstation.
- After coughing/sneezing or being in close proximity of someone who is coughing/sneezing.
- After doing an unsanitary activity i.e. emptying trash, washing dishes, cleaning tables etc.

After washing hands, they should be dried with single-use paper towels or air dryers.

SOP 4: Employees should be given PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment).

After ensuring their own cleanliness and hygiene, employees must be given protective equipment to reduce their risk of being infected. The items that should be compulsory are protective masks, hairnet, apron and disposable gloves.

SOP 5: All equipment, flatware and utensils is to be washed after each use.

After a customer's order is prepared, the relevant equipment and utensils used to prepare their order should be thoroughly washed with high temperature water and dishwashing liquid.

SOP 6: Frequent changing of hairnet and gloves must be observed.

Employees should be provided with latex-free, non-powdered gloves and hairnets to be used when handling food directly. Gloves should be changed when they are used for 4 hours or in case of switching from one activity type to another i.e. from working with raw food to serving prepared food.

SOP 7: Reduce contact when working

When working in close proximity, try maintaining as much distance as possible. If workstations can be separated, doing so is also encouraged. In addition, limit operations and reduce the number of employees working at a given time. Also, staff should be divided into teams to reduce contact between multiple members as much as possible.

SOP 8: Working area should be frequently decontaminated

Since individuals infected with COVID-19 most likely will not show visible symptoms, it is important to disinfect the workplace as frequently as possible, preferably used alcohol-based solutions. And if an employee is found being ill in the workplace, the area around it should be sealed off and immediately decontaminated.

SOP 9: Customers should be managed to ensure social distancing

A guide should be placed outside the restaurant requesting customers to stand 5 feet apart. Floor marking should be placed to make it easy for customers to follow social distancing guidelines. Plexiglass barriers should be placed in counters to protect staff from customers.

SOP 10: A strict tasting method should be implemented.

All employees should make sure to use a sanitary tasting method which is as follows:

- Scoop up a sample from the food container with a spoon.
- Transfer the contents from the spoon to another spoon.
- Taste using the second spoon.

Always use a clean spoon for each tasting to ensure food does not get contaminated.

SOP 11: Designate special areas for food breaks for employees.

Employees should be provided with a specific area for their lunch/dinner breaks that is away from the workstation where food is prepared and delivered. When going to and returning from the break, employees must observe handwashing and glove changing procedures.

SOP 12: Food Should Be Received From Supplier In A Contactless Way

Raw items and packaged products should be delivered one at a time from approved suppliers. Packaging should be checked for tears, incomplete labels, torn seals and more. Each package should be observed for odor and temperature. Food should be delivered in non-operating hours to ensure minimum contact.

SOP 13: Develop Emergency Procedure For Food Contacted With Blood Or Other Body Fluids

In case of an accident which results in the contamination of food with blood or other unsanitary fluids, the person responsible for it should immediately remove themselves from the area. Other employees should immediately dispose of the food and sanitise the affected area and equipment.

SOP 14: Ensure that proper cleaning chemicals are stocked

The employees must have access to high quality dishwashing liquids, mopping chemicals and surface cleaning liquids to keep the workspace clean and sanitised.

SOP 15: Make sure that hot water is available at all times

For effective removal of bacteria from hands, utensils and equipment, employees must have access to hot water.

SOP 16: A commercial dishwasher must be available at all times

To ensure minimum contact with equipment, a dishwasher should be used and a person trained to properly operate it.

SOP 17: Designated, closed disposal containers should be available.

For disposal of unsanitary items and used gloves and other equipment, an airtight disposal container should be available outside the workplace to ensure employees can quickly and properly dispose of used items and trash.

SOP 18: Hand sanitizers should be provided to customers entering the shop.

Hand sanitizers and alcoholic scrubs should be given to each customer entering the restaurant.

SOP 19: Customers entering the shop should be staggered.

Only a minimum number of customers should be allowed in at a particular time - and only for takeaways to ensure 1 meter distance can be maintained.

SOP 20: Main doors should be contacted by as few people as possible.

Doors should be kept open to reduce contact for people entering/leaving. Or one person should be appointed to open/close doors for customers.

SOP 21: Self-Service Food Counters Should Be Properly Covered.

If placing food items in open display, they should be covered inside plexiglass and have plastic wrapping over them. When taking out, tongs should be used to ensure minimum contact.

SOP 22: COVID guidelines should be prominently displayed on premises.

To ensure customers and staff follow social distancing procedures, WHO approved COVID-19 guidelines for social distancing should be displayed on banners and posters outside and inside the premises and workstation

SOP 23: Employees and customers with COVID symptoms should be removed from site.

If an individual is observed having symptoms such as these:

- a fever (high temperature – 37.5 degrees Celsius or above)
- a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- shortness of breath
- breathing difficulties
- fatigue

They should be isolated and encouraged to call their emergency healthline number.

SOP 24: Employees should be provided free COVID-19 testing

Employees should be tested and financed for COVID-19 tests at least once if possible to ensure no asymptomatic employee is in the workplace. If not possible, they should at least be monitored for COVID-19 symptoms.

SOP 25: Employees who are COVID positive should not be allowed to re-enter the workplace until recovered

If confirmed that an employee is COVID positive, they should not enter the workplace and isolate themselves until properly recovered.