



*Our response to COVID-19 is evolving;
this document is relevant as of 1 p.m., March 19*

Statement to Business Owners

Concerns about exposure to the COVID-19 virus will undoubtedly dramatically reduce in-person customer traffic to your business. As owners and managers of public spaces, small business owners must be leaders in their community at this time. Your response to COVID-19 will require agile leadership, consideration for the mental and physical health of your staff and the public, and regular communication with your customers. We are here to support you with resources and guidance.

Schedule an [Open Office Hour](#) with a TechTown team member or an [Ask An Expert appointment](#) with our Professional Service Network to help develop and adjust your plan for shifting market demand. TechTown clients and alumni should contact their designated TechTown staff member for assistance.

Contact the DEGC [District Business Liaison](#) team to learn of the most up-to-date resources and information from the City of Detroit or to request assistance for your business.

General COVID-19 Information

If you suspect that you may need to be tested, or if you have a question about COVID-19, contact the State of Michigan MDHHS Hotline at 1-888-535-6136 between 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily.

Older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions — such as heart disease, diabetes or lung disease — and immunocompromised individuals are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill.

Keep this in mind when making decisions pertinent to your own health or your employees' health.

Refer to the [State of Michigan Tip Sheet for Older Adults](#) and page 4 of this document for further official resources.

Considerations for Staff

While this is certainly a stressful time for business owners, consider the physical and mental well-being of public-facing, front line staff members.

1. Identify vulnerable staff members and respect their circumstances — they may choose to limit their risk of contracting the virus by not reporting to work
2. Reduce anxiety in the workplace through regular, open communication from an owner or manager. Listen to employee concerns, and act upon them to the best of your ability.
3. Work with staff impacted by school closures. Be prepared to work with less staff and/or to create a temporary staffing structure for a more flexible work environment.

Communication to Customers

It is critical to communicate with your customers about changes to your operations, what protective measures you have implemented and how they will be protected when they visit your business. **Let them know how seriously you take preventing the spread of COVID-19 and how much you value their business.**

Financial Planning

It is urgent that you review your finances at this time. Knowledge of your cash flow, and specifically your cash reserves, will be necessary as you plan for payroll and inventory and as you respond to market fluctuations. Shifts in the market may require you to take on debt in order to sustain your business. Some high-level considerations:

1. Proactively communicate with your bank, landlord and other significant debt issuers. Negotiate a payment plan to help support these critically important relationships.
2. Should you have a business interruption insurance policy, now is the time to contact your insurance agent
3. Keep all receipts of business expenses and losses that you can specifically attribute to COVID-19

Operations Recommendations and Resources for Small Businesses

1. **Staff with flu-like symptoms should not report to work until they are symptom-free;** [encourage self-screening for COVID-19 symptoms](#) | [En Espanol](#)
2. **Reinforce routine cleaning standards**
 - Communicate and post reminders to avoid touching your face; cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue
 - Disinfect frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs, tables and handrails regularly
 - Have alcohol-based hand sanitizers (with at least 70% alcohol) and extra napkins/tissues visible and available to customers and staff to encourage proper hygiene
3. **Implement social distancing standards**
 - Limit the number of customers who can be in your store at one time; allow for six feet of spacing for customers
 - Consider appointment-based shopping to stagger customer flow
 - Use online transactions and payment over the phone whenever possible; encourage tap payment features and limit the handling of cash
 - Postpone events
4. **Prepare for a significant increase in carry-out and/or delivery orders;** ensure that you have the proper packaging to support demand
5. **Make updates to your website which reflect your ability to take phone and/or online orders;** ensure that published hours of operation, pricing and menu items are up-to-date

Operations Recommendations Specifically for Food Businesses

The City of Detroit has created a temporary program to provide Carryout Zones for restaurants. Any restaurant that requests an on-street Carryout Zone will be given one for no fee.

- To request a Restaurant Carryout Zone, all you need to do is provide basic information about your restaurant at <http://bit.ly/detroitcurbside>.
- Signage will be installed by the Department of Public Works within 48 to 72 hours of your request.
- The program is **100% free** to City of Detroit restaurateurs and does not require a permit, only a completed application
- For more information on this program, please contact Dayo Akinyemi, Department of Public Works Deputy Director, at 313.224.3901 or at akinyemi@detroitmi.gov.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have no reports of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. Source: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/Coronavirus_Handout_Final_683449_7.pdf

Effective 3/16 at 3 p.m., Governor Whitmer has required the closure of all Michigan restaurants and bars. We will update this resource with more relevant information for food businesses as they are developed.

- 1. Prepare for significant increase in carry-out and/or delivery orders;** ensure that you have the proper packaging to support demand
- 2. Make updates to your website that reflect your ability to take phone and/or online orders;** ensure that published hours of operation, pricing and menu items are up-to-date
- 3. Consider food delivery services** such as DoorDash, Grubhub, Postmates or Uber Eats to enhance your business. Note that there is a fee associated with these services.

Marketing Suggestions

- 1. Communicate your in-store operations response to COVID-19 via social media, email and signage that's visible prior to entry and inside your store**
- 2. Get online.** If you have been thinking about launching a website, now is the time. Many platforms provide simple templates in which you choose a color scheme and upload photography. Consider platforms that seamlessly integrate e-commerce (including gift cards), email and digital marketing, such as Constant Contact, Shopify and BigCommerce. This comprehensive resource includes an overview of one-time and monthly fees associated with building and maintaining a website: <https://www.wpbeginner.com/beginners-guide/how-to-choose-the-best-website-builder/>.
- 3. Promote the purchase of gift cards in person, over the phone and online.** Many major point-of-sale systems offer integrated gift card processing – note that these often add fees. This comprehensive resource includes an overview of fees associated with major point-of-sale (POS) systems: <https://www.merchantmaverick.com/gift-cards-for-small-businesses/>.

4. **Promote online sales.** You may choose to provide free shipping or a special discount code to incentivize shoppers during this time.
5. **Get creative with social media.** Use “live” functions on social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram to show your personality and showcase signature dishes and products. Consider promoting discounts during specific time windows and position it as a virtual shopping event with the Facebook event feature.
6. **Boost your social media posts and email with photography and Canva.** Use this guide to take creative pictures with your cell phone: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/good-pictures-phone-tips>. Use **Canva** — a free and easy online design tool — to create eye-catching images in line with your brand.
 - Canva: <https://www.canva.com/>
 - Free teaching tool: <https://designschool.canva.com/>
7. **Encourage online shoppers to post and share their support.** Consider creating a unique hashtag for your business that customers can share in a social media post.

General marketing note: Be mindful of what you post to social media. It is important not to seem opportunistic or insensitive to those who are or may be ill, have anxiety about COVID-19 or may be facing significant financial hardship.

Sources and Relevant Industry/State/Federal Guidelines

State of Michigan: <https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.CDC.gov/Coronavirus/

World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/>

[CDC Coronavirus General Workplace Safety](#)

[Coronavirus COVID-19 Info Tips for Restaurants \(English and Spanish\)](#)

[Guide for Retail businesses and Service Operators Seattle King County](#)

[MDARD-MDHHS Food Establishment Guidelines](#)

[The Food Industry Association- Food Safety | FMI Pandemic Preparedness for the Food Industry \(see: key customer, supplier, staff, media recommendations pages 8-17\)](#)

[Michigan Retailers Association COVID-19 page](#)

[National Retail Federation COVID-19 Page](#)

<https://www.sba.gov/page/guidance-businesses-employers-plan-respond-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>