State updates MI COVID-19 Safer Dining Program for restaurants to help protect customers and workers

Voluntary program promotes effective ventilation in Michigan restaurants and food establishments

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The State of Michigan is expanding on the new **MI COVID-19 Safer Dining Program**. Under the voluntary program, restaurants utilize a licensed HVAC contractor or engineer to inspect their ventilation systems and receive recommended changes to improve circulation within their workplace to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread. The program's parameters are based on the best guidance available from the CDC, EPA and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers.

The program, directed by the Dept. of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), will help make restaurants operate more safely - for their workforce, diners, and local communities – and help diners identify restaurants committed to safer operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Restaurants are encouraged to have their HVAC system inspected to ensure effective ventilation. Proper and efficient HVAC systems or other ventilation changes, along with compliance with MDHHS and MIOSHA orders and guidance, can lower the probability of transmission in indoor settings.

Once restaurants successfully complete the voluntary process, they will receive a certificate to post at their establishments that verifies their participation.

"This voluntary program compliments the State's outreach and educational efforts related to HVAC and other workplace safety programs," said COVID-19 Workplace Safety Director Sean Egan. "We remain committed to helping businesses implement processes and techniques to maximize safety through layered mitigation strategies, and this program is another opportunity for businesses to do just that."

Businesses can begin the process now by visiting **Michigan.gov/COVIDSaferDining** to download the program participation forms to comply with the Michigan Safer Dining program and further mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in indoor dining locations.

The website also offers a variety of support resources for restaurants and other businesses, including resources to locate licensed HVAC contractors across Michigan.

“As our community members look to once again support our small, local business in person, building confidence that customer safety is being prioritized is going to be extremely important,” said People First Economy President Hanna Schulze. “The fact is, many of these businesses have been going above and beyond to provide safe environments for their customers and employees since the beginning of the pandemic – take the Michigan Restaurant Promise, for example. Opportunities like this ventilation certification will present another opportunity for businesses to communicate that they have been, and will continue to, take every care to serve patrons safely.”

Gov. Whitmer has proposed funding to support the Safer Dining Program as part of a $10 million supplemental budget request for restaurant support through MIOSHA.

The Safer Dining program builds on LEO’s existing suite of programs to support all types of Michigan employers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs include:

- MIOSHA’s Ambassador program, where safety and health experts have partnered with NSF and are visiting businesses statewide to offer free education and support, with a focus on workplaces with a higher risk of community transmission. Employers can **schedule their free consultation online.**

- LEO’s **series of HVAC webinars** to help educate businesses on HVAC needs, resources and recommendations, including utility rebates, incentives and financing.

- A set of online resources at **Michigan.gov/COVIDWorkplaceSafety** provides businesses with the guidelines they and their employees must follow and includes a **sample COVID-19 preparedness and response plan** and a **reopening checklist** to help businesses put safeguards in place. Businesses can also find posters for employees and customers, factsheets and educational videos and more.

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