

Houston County Health Department

PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING A FOOD SERVICE PERMIT

PLANS-INFORMAL

All businesses that prepare and sell food to the public must have permits to operate. Businesses selling food for take-out and in conjunction with retail food sales (such as a convenience store or gas station) or businesses that manufacture or bake foods for sale to other stores require a permit from the State Department of Agriculture (229) 430-4245.

If a business has seating for customers to eat or if it prepares meals for take-out, a food service permit from the Houston County Health Department is needed. The following facilities are included: restaurants, coffee shops, cafeterias, short order cafes, luncheonettes, taverns/bars, lunchrooms, places with retail sandwiches or salads, soda fountains, institutions (both private and public), food carts, itinerant restaurants, industrial cafeterias, catering establishments, and similar facilities by whatever name called.

Before a business buys equipment or leases a facility it should discuss its plans with the local Health Authority. Opening a restaurant involves more than installing equipment and an "Open for Business" sign. There are many health regulations and building codes that must be met depending on the situation. Some may be very expensive or time consuming.

After meeting with the health inspector, the owner/manager should meet with the city or county building inspector depending on where the facility will be located. The building inspector may also need to refer the owner/manager to the fire inspector. If the facility is on public sewer, a meeting with the pollution control inspector to determine grease trap requirements (478-929-1921). If public water and sewer are not available, approval for water and sewer must be obtained from the Health Department prior to approval of construction/formal plans.

The next step is to provide formal plans to everyone.

PLANS-FORMAL

At least fourteen (14) days before starting construction or remodeling, or prior to the installation of new equipment, the business must submit detailed, drawn plans to the Health Department. The plans must show the proposed layout and arrangement of all walls, counters, rooms, equipment, shelving, etc. The plans must indicate where plumbing and ventilation systems will be run and must detail what materials are to be used in construction. Cut sheets for all kitchen equipment, including hot water heater and a complete menu is also required. An example of an acceptable plan is provided. (Attachment #1)

Plan Review/Food Service Permit/Page Two

A plan review fee of \$200.00 for facilities that seat fewer than 50 patrons and an additional \$5.00 for each seat over 50 is due at the time of plan submission.

When the Health Authority has completed the plan review, a written notice of approval/disapproval will be sent. The business may begin work on its facility, only after approval of their plans, by the Health Authority, Building Inspector, Fire Inspector and Pollution Control.

INSPECTIONS

Contact the Health Department to arrange for a preliminary inspection during the construction process and to arrange for a final inspection after the building is complete, clean and all equipment is in place.

APPLICATION FOR PERMIT

Complete the application for a food service permit and submit the original copy to the Health Department at least ten (10) days prior to the anticipated date of opening and commencement of operation. An annual inspection fee of \$200.00 for up to 50 seats, \$300.00 for 51-100 seats, or \$400.00 for 101 or more seats for the annual food service fee is due at this time. The billing cycle runs annually from January through December and fees are not pro-rated.

PERMIT

The Food Service permit will be issued upon satisfactory compliance with all regulations and requirements and is required to obtain a business licenses. The permit must be prominently displayed at all times in a location approved by the Health Authority.

Once permitted, unannounced routine inspections will be conducted according to regulation. Once obtained, the most current inspection must be prominently displayed in public view at all times, within fifteen feet (15') of the front or primary public door and between five feet(5') and seven feet (7') from the floor and in an areas where it can be read at a distance of one foot (1') away. The top one-third of the current inspection report must also be displayed at any and all drive-thru windows.

SOME BASIC GUIDELINES FOR RESTAURANTS

Following is a general list of requirements for food service facilities and is not “all- inclusive”. It is only a partial listing of the most common problems noted during plan reviews. Georgia Food Service Rules and Regulations of Department of Human Resources, Public Health, Chapter 290-5-14, contain

Plan Review/Food Service Permit/Page Three

complete requirements. A copy is available at the local Health Department or may be found online at: <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/envservices/foodservice>.

1. Foods must be prepared in an approved kitchen that is not used for family cooking. You may not cater or cook out of your home kitchen.
2. All doors exiting the building must be tight-fitting to include thresholds and self-closers.
3. Toilet rooms shall be completely enclosed with a tight-fitting, self-closing door that may not open directly into a food preparation area. Toilet rooms must have screened windows or mechanical ventilation. The ventilation must exhaust directly to the outside of the building and may not join other exhaust ducts or empty into the attic. Stalls in ladies rooms must have covered feminine napkin disposal units.
4. The walking and driving surfaces of all exterior areas of food service establishments shall be a hard surface of gravel or similar material. They shall be graded to prevent pooling and kept free of litter.
5. Following is a list of minimum sink requirements. It is also recommended that one or two additional sinks be installed for processing of seafood and chicken if served. Processing of those foods may not be done in the sinks listed in the minimum requirements.
 - One vegetable/fruit sink
 - One three-compartment sink with drain boards on both ends
 - Hand washing sinks (number depends on size of operation)
 - One mop sink or can wash sink
6. An adequately sized water heater is required. A dishwasher requires that a much larger heater be installed. Definitely coordinate this item with the Health Authority.
7. If you have a take-out window it must be self-closing or have an air fan (fly fan) that comes on automatically when the window is open.
8. All light bulbs, even those inside equipment, must be shatterproof or be shielded so that exploding bulbs could not contaminate food or the premises.
9. Designated storage areas for cleaning supplies and poisons are required. The areas must be away from food, equipment, utensils and single-use product storage.
10. Garbage dumpsters shall be easily cleanable with tight-fitting lids and doors and shall be stored on smooth concrete or sealed asphalt pad. If washed on site, a sewer drain must be at the pad and the pad should be sloped toward the drain.
11. Ice storage bins and food preparation sinks shall be drained through an air gap or indirect connection. Devices shall be installed to protect against backflow and back siphonage at all fixtures and equipment where an air gap at least twice the diameter of the water supply inlet is not provided between the water supply inlet and the fixture's flood level rim. All hose bibs must have a backflow prevention device.

Plan Review/Food Service Permit/Page Four

12. Protective devices for counter, serving lines, salad bars and other similar food displays shall be designed and constructed so as to intercept contaminants which may be expelled from the customer's mouth or nose.
13. Floors shall be smooth, durable, non-absorbent and easily cleanable. Carpeting is prohibited in food preparation, equipment and/or utensil washing areas, food storage areas and in the toilet room areas.
14. Junctures between walls and floors shall be coved and sealed.
15. Walls and ceilings of food preparation and storage areas and toilet rooms shall be light colored, smooth, non-absorbent and easily cleanable. Concrete blocks, if used, must be filled, sealed and finished to provide a smooth, easily cleanable surface.
16. Equipment to be placed on the floor must be easily portable, sealed to the floor, or provided with approved legs to give a minimum six inch clearance.
17. Storage areas must be at least six inches above the floor (dependant upon shelf width) and not under exposed plumbing.
18. Plumbing, soft drink lines, etc. must not be fastened to the walls as they make cleaning difficult. They must be inside the walls.
19. All equipment used in the kitchen must meet ANSI standards.
20. Hand Wash signs must be posted at every hand sink used by employee.
21. A choking poster must be posted in each dining room.
22. A Certified Food Safety Manager must be working at the facility within 90 days of opening. Their certificate must be posted in public view. Check with the Health Authority for approved training.
23. **Smoke-Free Air Act**- If your establishment will allow smoking, no one under 18 may enter the facility and you must post signage stating "Smoking is Allowed, No One under 18 Admitted". If you desire to have a smoking area, a physically separate room and physically separate ventilation system will be required and must be prior-approved by the Health Authority.

Note: This is a partial listing only. For more complete information, obtain a copy of the Georgia Food Service Rules and Regulations, Chapter 290-5-14, available at your local health department or online at: <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/envservices/foodservice>.