

# Community Organization Functions

A community organization function (COF) is a public event where home prepared food may be served. To qualify as a community organization function, the event must meet all of the following requirements.

- It is open to the general public, for example advertised as “Everyone welcome!”.
- It occurs rarely or infrequently.
- It must not be part of a special event, like a fair, festival or exhibition.
- It must be organized by a not-for-profit community organization, like a community or multicultural association, church, service or recreational club, school, or sports team.
- It is operated to raise money for the community organization or another charitable purpose.
- It is catered by volunteers who receive no or minimal payment.
- It runs no longer than two (2) days unless approved by Environmental Public Health (EPH).

Examples of community organization functions include community sports events, fall harvest suppers and wild game dinners.

## Notification

The organizer of a community organization function must

- Notify EPH of the event by submitting a completed Community Organization Function Notification **at least fourteen (14)** days prior to the function.
- Notify attendees of the community organization function that home-prepared foods are being served.

## Ensuring a Successful Community Organization Function

Practice good food safety when planning and preparing food for your community organization function. Most foodborne illnesses from large community events are caused by:

1. cooling food too slowly
2. keeping hot foods below 60°C (140°F) while transporting or serving
3. allowing sick people to prepare and serve food
4. preparing food too far in advance, such as a day or more ahead of time
5. allowing cross-contamination i.e. storing raw food near cooked food
6. leaving high-risk food in the Danger Zone, between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F)

The following food safety tips will help ensure a safe and successful community event.

### **FOOD HANDLING REQUIREMENTS**

The COF organizer and voluntary caterers preparing the food must ensure that food is handled in a clean and safe manner, at home or in approved food facilities.

- Home-prepared foods must be prepared and donated only by members of the community organization hosting the function.
- Unpasteurized milk and unfit foods cannot be served or used as ingredients in food items.
- Pets must be kept out of the kitchen or vehicles when food is being prepared, served or transported.

### Food Handler Hygiene

- Wash hands often with hot soapy water, especially after using the washroom and before handling any food.
- Keep hair under control.
- Avoid habits that contaminate food or food preparation areas, like licking fingers, biting fingernails, smoking or wearing aprons outside the food preparation areas.
- Cover cuts and/or sores with a bandage and glove before handling food.
- Prepare food only if you are feeling well. Do not prepare food if you are vomiting, have diarrhea or jaundice.
- Wear clean clothing and footwear.

### **FOOD SAFETY BASICS**

#### Plan Ahead

- Select a location or facility that meets your needs. Ask yourself:
  - Does it have adequate storage space in the refrigerator and freezer?
  - Does it have the cooking and hot-holding equipment you need?
  - Is it clean?
- Select a person who knows good food safety practices to manage your function.
- Ensure the water source you are using is safe.

### Keep Food Safe During Preparation

- Serve food as soon as possible. Prepare food just before your event.
- Use tongs and other utensils to prepare or serve food. Wash your hands and change gloves between tasks, if you are using gloves.
- Keep raw meat away from ready-to-eat foods like lettuce, fruit and bread. Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that held raw food.
- Wash and sanitize cutting boards and other food preparation surfaces to prevent cross contamination. You can make a simple sanitizing solution by mixing 1/2 teaspoon of household bleach into one litre of water.
- Cook food to 74°C (165°F). Check the internal temperature of meat, poultry and casseroles using a thermometer.
- Cook food thoroughly. Never partially cook food for finishing later. Wash fresh fruit and vegetables before preparing or serving.

### Keep Food Out of the “Danger Zone”

The Danger Zone is the range of temperatures between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). Bacteria in food can grow and multiply quickly at these temperatures.

- Keep hot food hot, at least 60°C (140°F) or above.
- Keep cold food cold, at least 4°C (40°F) or below.
- Keep high-risk foods, like meat, poultry and casseroles at Danger Zone temperatures for no more than two (2) hours.
- Defrost or thaw foods in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Never leave high-risk foods to thaw at room temperature.
- Divide foods into smaller portions to allow for quicker cooling. For example, cut cooked poultry and roasts into smaller portions before placing in the refrigerator.

### Keep Food Safe When Transporting

- Keep hot food hot by using insulated containers, or by tightly wrapping the food container in several layers of tin foil or a clean heavy blanket.
- Keep cold food cold in an insulated cooler with ice or freezer packs.
- Pack high-risk foods just before you leave, and do not open them until serving time.
- Unload hot and cold foods first, and immediately place them in hot holding equipment or coolers.

### Keep Food Safe When Serving

- Keep serving portions small if not kept in hot or cold holding equipment.
- Serve hot food from chafing dishes, pre-heated steam tables, warming trays and/or slow cookers, if possible. Never place food in a steam table, if the food has not been cooked or reheated to 74°C (165°F) first.
- Use clean and sanitized dishes and utensils to serve food. Replace empty platters and dishes with freshly filled ones. Never add new food to a serving dish or platter that is partially empty.
- Check food temperatures often.

### Keep Leftover Food Safe

- Discard leftover food that has been left out at room temperature for more than two (2) hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze food that was not served.
- Follow the rule, “When in doubt, throw it out”.
- Allow leftover to be taken home only by members of the host organization.

---

Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

PUB-707-202301

2017 Alberta Health Services, Safe Healthy Environments



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). You are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the work to Alberta Health Services and abide by the other license terms. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same, similar, or compatible license. The license does not apply to content for which the Alberta Health Services is not the copyright owner.

This material is intended for general information only and is provided on an “as is,” “where is” basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information.

# PLEASE BE ADVISED

Food has been prepared  
and donated by community  
members.

Food may not have been  
prepared in an approved  
food establishment.



Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online at ahs.ca/eph.](#)