

March 25, 2021

Dear State of Michigan Legislators and friends in Lansing,

I truly appreciate your time today. Inasmuch as my speaking time was limited, I hope you will read this note as well as the three letters we send our clients, venues and to our employees for every event we held in 2020. I think you will find that we take the COVID virus very seriously and want to do everything possible to eliminate the spread while catering or hosting an event. We as a company have followed these guidelines and insisted that our partner venues and catering clients have as well. At times it was difficult but Distinctive Catering and venue management were adamant that our guidelines were followed. We know of no cases of COVID contracted from any of our events.

As I mentioned in my short talk today, our part of the hospitality industry seems to have been ignored when it comes to guidance. Different from hotels, restaurants and bars, we work a year or two in advance. We cannot just shut down until the green light goes on. We work a year in advance and would lose another year of sales if we have to wait. Many of my counterparts were not able to sustain the rent and payroll with no knowledge of when they can service their clients.

As a senior "statesman" for them, I have offered my advice as well as financial assistance to them to stay open, but at the end of the day, even with guidance and financial help they could not provide services given the unknow future.

As a group of industry leaders in catering and venue management we have met many times in hopes we could get direction from the Governor and MDHHS to no avail. We are left literally in limbo with little recourse to sustain our businesses. I am fortunate for the financial resources to sustain my businesses at a very heavy cost to my personal finances. Others have not. At one point I was in a position to take over the D2D facilities in Grand Rapids. These are two fantastic wedding and event facilities that a young man named Ryan Burns had leased prior to COVID. He spent all he had to secure a lease and was doing well. With the onset of COVID and the cancellation of all events, Ryan was left with an angry landlord and rent of \$22,000 per month, with no income. With this opportunity to take over the facility like the "barbarian at the gate", I reconsidered and thought it would be better to help him negotiate with the landlord rather than ruin his dream. I am so thankful I came to my senses. He is struggling deeply with no PPP but truly hopes our communication with Lansing will bring help to his company so he can service his reserved clients this year. It is truly touch and go for this young man who has invested everything in his dream. Please believe me, he is not alone in his strife as many others have pursued similar dreams.

A few things I would like you to consider, many of which are in the attached letter:

1. Weddings and receptions are essential events, generally once in a lifetime and very expensive, as well as requiring years of planning.
2. Those who attend weddings and reception events do so very rarely. Maybe one or two times per year. For most it is not even one event in a year.
3. Different than restaurants or bars, we can control the behavior of guests from the time they arrive until they leave. Seating and service is well defined with social distancing. Masks can be enforced. Dancing safeties can be enforced. (Please see my letters.) In my 25 years experience,

the wedding receptions have changed drastically. No longer are they all night "blowouts" lasting until 2:00 am. For the most part they are wrapping up by 10:00 pm with only a handful of guests left. The attendees are close family and close friends and there is a high level of concern for everyone's safety as expected. It is not random people walking in off the street unknown to each other to visit a bar or restaurant that may or may not be following any guidelines. On a side note, that has been my experience.

4. Guest counts will be reduced to 50% seating capacity. In addition, those who are not comfortable with gatherings may choose not to attend, even though it will be safer than Costco or Meijer where there are few requirements for social distancing.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely ask as a member of the hospitality community that feels neglected for all the wrong reasons while others are able to open, that you consider to allow us to open indoor events at 50% capacity, to avoid another year of lost sales and potential loss of our businesses.

With all due appreciation and respect,

Thomas Doyle

Owner

Distinctive Catering and Event Management

616-340-6806

tomdoyle@distinctivecatering.com

July 11th, 2020

Dear *(Bride & Groom Names)*,

All of us at Distinctive Catering look forward to serving you and your guest a spectacular meal and accommodating beverage services on *(DATE OF EVENT)!*

As you know the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the governor to put significant restrictions on service in order to reduce the spread of this ever-changing virus. As a company, we are obligated to follow this advice for everyone's safety. Therefore, the following practices will need to be followed at the facility by all present at the reception. This is to uphold the safest event possible for all parties evolved:

- The facility must be disinfected from end to end and top to bottom by the venue owner within 24 hours of your event. We strongly recommend a disinfecting fogger machine for the facility along with the cleaning and sanitizing of any areas the disinfectant fogger cannot reach in the facility.
- It is our company policy that **ALL guests must wear suitable masks** properly covering their nose and mouth completely while in the facility or near others whether they are inside or outside. They may remove their masks at the table to eat and consume beverages. Anytime they leave the table for any reason, they must have their mask properly worn. This includes to get a drink, visit the buffet, use the restroom, converse with other guests, dance, or for any other reason.
- All tables must be set at least 6 feet apart from the back of a chair at one table to the back of a chair at the other table. This is for indoor and outdoor events. We encourage you to use a seating chart and sit those in the same households together.
- Guests going to the bar for a beverage will be asked to stand six feet apart in a single file line while approaching the bar. It would be best if only one person per couple went for drinks. We ask that you provide signage and mark the floor inside feet increments. Our bar staff will be behind a plastic shield for additional safety measures.
- Guests going through the buffet must wear masks and use the hand sanitizer (provided by DC) before getting their food from the buffet. We will release tables one at a time so as not to commingle the different tables of guests. DC will have a representative at the buffet to oversee the sanitation of hands. No one will be allowed through the buffet unless they sanitize their hands and are wearing a mask. This is for the safety of those who follow them.
- Slow dancing will be allowed without masks for the bride and groom as well as the parents of the bride and groom and those who are of the same family. For "fast dances," everyone must wear masks and practice acceptable social distancing of at least six feet at all times.
- Signage will be prominently posted for your guests to see and read outlining these safety requirements at the entrance of the venue, and in other areas. Their entrance to the venue will indicate their acceptance of the policy and release Distinctive Catering of any responsibility should they or anyone else in their family contract COVID-19 or other illness while attending your ceremony and or reception. They may be asked to sign a waiver releasing Distinctive Catering of any COVID-19 sickness liability.

Naturally, we regret having to impose these State of Michigan mandated policies for social gatherings. We know how difficult this will be, as so many things are, because of this virus. On behalf of the entire staff of Distinctive Catering, we appreciate your cooperation in keeping everyone safe on your special day. We truly look forward to serving you.

With Kindest Regards,

Tom Doyle
Owner
Distinctive Catering

July 11, 2020

Hello (venue name)!

All of us at Distinctive Catering look forward to serving our catering clients. We truly enjoy the partnership we have with you and your facility and always do everything we can to put on a spectacular catering event which makes us both look good to our very important clients during and after the event. I have taken this partnering approach with our friends with venues over the last 25 years and I feel it has been very successful for all.

As you are aware, the Governor has issued numerous requirements for us to be able to host and service ceremonies and receptions in order to keep our clients and their guests safe from COVID-19, as well as the employees from DC, along with your employees. Like us, we hope that your facility is following any attendance directives from government officials. We ask that the following policies be enacted to do just that. We appreciate your attention to these matters.

- Thoroughly clean and sanitize your facility including all table and chairs, the floors, the kitchen prep area, the restrooms, the bar service area and all door handles and other items guests may touch during the function. An area disinfectant fogger is suggested as a good way to sanitize your facility.
- We request that you insist on proper social distancing, and/or utilizing all outdoor space.
- We ask that tables be spaced 6 feet apart from chair back to chair back to adhere to the practice of social distancing required by the mandates for indoor and outdoor facilities.
- We ask that the lead into the bar have the floor marked in six feet increments with something to indicate that guests stand single file leading up to the bar where guest can receive their requested beverage. We will provide protective shields between the guest and bartender.
- We request that you provide hand sanitizer for the guests at the entrance to the facility and in the restrooms as well as signage to alert all incoming guests to please sanitize their hands prior to entering the facility and leaving the restroom.
- We ask that your staff wear masks throughout the event for their protection and the protection of our staff and all of the guests. Our staff will be wearing masks 100% of the time. We ask that you enforce this with your clients and guests.

We certainly understand that these are difficult procedures to enact and very difficult to enforce the behavior of the clients and their guests, however, it is for everyone's safety which is why we are concerned.

We have sent the clients a letter listing everything expected of them and their guests (please see attached letter we are sending them).

We also have very strict policies for our employees to follow (please see attached letter to them) to ensure we are doing everything possible to protect them, your employees and all guests of the event from this terrible virus.

It is truly our hope that despite these difficult requirements we can provide our guests with a spectacular evening of great food, beverage and exemplary service that people have come to expect from DC and your venue. Our intent is to do with providing the upmost safest way possible for all parties involved.

As I mentioned earlier, all of us at DC cherish our relationship with (venue name) and look forward to a long future together promoting each other's business now and when these trying times have subsided.

We wish you and your team all the best and if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at tomdoyle@distinctivecatering.com or 616-340-6806. I will be happy to help in any way I can.

Take good care,

Tom Doyle
Owner
Distinctive Catering

July 10, 2020

To our valued employees,

First and foremost, welcome back! We have missed you all and are excited to finally be up and running again!

Moving forward, it is of the utmost importance that we make sure all of you are taking the safety of our guests and each other seriously. A few changes have been put in place due to everything regarding the pandemic. Please read these changes carefully and commit them to memory. Save and revisit these points frequently so that you know what is expected of you as DC employees.

- Prior to clocking in, employee temperatures will be taken by a manager. A manager will greet you at the time clock and take your temperature with a contactless thermometer.
- Facemask and/or face shields **MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES – NO EXCEPTIONS**
- We encourage everyone to get A COVID test. We can supply information on where to go, we will also pay you for your time taken on being tested. Projectbaseline.org is a great website for securing testing. (Personally, I go every two weeks to ensure my safety)
- Following the taking of an employee's temperature, all employees will then be required to fill out a health questionnaire prior to starting their shift. If you have any symptoms of being sick, you will be sent home.
- Proper PPE – gloves and disposable masks and/or face shields – will be provided at the start of each shift. These items are to be disposed of properly after each shift and never re-used. **Please be sure to change your gloves often.**
- **HANDWASHING**- You must wash your hands after using the bathroom, changing gloves, or handling different items or product.
- All utensils, china, and glasses are to be sanitized by an employee wearing proper PPE prior to these items leaving the center.
- Hand sanitizer stations must be set up at the beginning of buffet lines. Additionally, sanitizer and a hand washing station must be brought to every event for employee use. Make sure you are washing your hands after a glove change, after touching different items, after bathroom use, after touching your face, nose, or hair, etcetera.
- Company vehicles must be sanitized before, during, and after each use. **No exceptions.**
- **ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING WHILE PUNCHED IN FOR YOUR SHIFT.** This includes while you are on DC property, inside a company vehicle, and while you are inside or outside of a venue or private residence.
- Before beginning your shift, it is **your** responsibility to make sure you are in a **CLEAN** uniform. Proper uniform includes: Black dress pants (**NO LEGGINGS OR SKINNY JEANS**), non-slip **all black** shoes, and a DC polo tucked in to your dress pants. If you do not have these items, some may be provided for you and a monetary amount will be deducted from your pay check. Your personal hygiene is of the utmost importance. Please refrain from touching your face or hair at all times.

Please keep in mind that each venue is different and will have its own set of rules. You, as DC employees, must follow these rules to the fullest.

Welcome back everyone! Here's to a safe and successful wedding season!

Thank You,
Tom Doyle and the entire Distinctive Catering management team.