

Good Morning,

My name is Arnold Ivey and I am the Executive Chef at IronRock Tap House in Greensburg PA.

I am here today to testify about my experience, dealing with the pandemic from the vantage point of running an upscale restaurant as we moved away from the state of emergency level and entered the GREEN phase. Yes, we are happy we opened back up and we were given the thought-out guidelines to do so. We followed these guidelines without a problem.

What we did not get is any kind of information as to what we should do if we encounter a confirmed case of covid-19 in our establishment - employee or guest. No SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) was given to us nor to any other restaurants to my knowledge. We also had no clue to our rights as a business when dealing with this pandemic - do we have to close? Are we able to stay open? Who do we notify?

When we encountered a staff member that showed symptoms of covid, got tested and was confirmed positive, we had no clue what to do! We thought everyone might be infected. So, everyone got tested. We thought the restaurant needed to close again, so we closed it. We quarantined our entire staff, even those that tested negative and those that thought they were not exposed to the individual - the contracted definition of 6ft & 15 minutes.

I personally spent hours and weeks talking to the Health Department, Department of Agriculture, and the contact tracers within the 14-day quarantine. Everyone had different information. Everyone said do what we are saying. This whole encounter was extremely confusing. Some employees got threatening letters stating that if they did not quarantine, they would be made to by various means of law enforcement. Attached is a written testimony of a staff member who received such a letter.

Copy of letter attached
Copy of testimony attached

Because it was an employee issue, the business was not looped in or included in any information as to how to proceed, move forward, take the next step. No one explained our options. No one told us about Critical Infrastructure Exemption or Crisis Capacity both which would have helped us. We would have abided by those guidelines and not closed our doors.

We were told we would be given a one-page SOP and summary of guidelines for restaurants. We still have yet to receive it.

These are examples of conversations as I am seeking information:

(Health Dept. - Nurse 1 of 2)

INFO: Positive case of covid HAS to quarantine 14 days and exposed* to someone tested positive or having symptoms HAS to quarantine 14 days. "But that's healthcare I deal with that, you would have to speak with Mohammed as he handles restaurants. Do you have his email?"

(Department of Agriculture)

INFO: Positive case of Covid/symptoms they go home. Close to sanitize for 24 hours. Monitor staff for temps and symptoms.

(Health Dept. - Disease Intervention Specialist)

INFO: More mixed up information from contact tracing specialists. 5 different managers reached out, asked the same questions and the information received only matched 2 of 5 times. Other 3 were completely different - none matching. This is more confusing than even I can explain here.

(Department of Agriculture - Manager)

Info: I asked if we could have someone from HD come in and speak with the managers to ensure we are all on the same page. We could then properly inform the staff and make business decisions based on facts. He said "Yes. No problem. I will call to set it up with Inspector." Then restated information given from 1st call a few days prior...Positive case of Covid/symptoms they go home. Close to sanitize for 24 hours. Monitor staff for temps and symptoms.

(Health Dept. nurse 2 of 2)

INFO: Case of Covid, Symptoms, or Exposed* (Exposed* even without symptoms and even testing negative) mandatory 14 day in home quarantine. "The Department of Agriculture's team is not in charge of these issues we deal with people and health. They are only food safety. But was going to ask his boss if that's the case or has something changed."

(State Health Inspector)

INFO: Same message as before. Went through CDC guidelines they all received. No mention of Exposed* mandatory 14 day quarantine. He asked if I could email my question and he would get it to upper management of the Department of Agriculture to look into.

All of these are examples of the lack of clarity that is being delivered to us. There needs to be an immediate resolution so that we have an opportunity to survive as an industry.