

Government facilitates catering premises to make changes to modes of operation according to needs

The Government will gazette today (May 5) the directions and specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (the Regulation) (Cap. 599F) to allow flexibility under the pre-requisite of fulfilling the "vaccine bubble" principle for catering premises to change their modes of operation according to the requirement in the remaining days of the current cycle of this round of social distancing measures. The relevant directions and specifications will take effect from 0.00am on May 6 till May 12 (the specified period).

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said, "The Government notices that some catering premises are unable to choose type C or type D mode of operation at the start of the cycle on April 29, 2021, as their staff members are unable to receive vaccination in time. The Government understands that some operators hope to change their modes of operation expeditiously once their staff have received vaccination. Therefore, the Government has accepted the trade's views on handling this flexibly."

According to the latest directions under the Regulation, catering businesses must display a notice showing the new mode of operation at the entrance of the catering premises before the change could take effect.

The spokesman also reminded catering premises under type C or type D mode of operation that they must register relevant information, including the mode(s) of operation, number of staff completed the COVID-19 vaccination course and number of staff not suitable to receive COVID-19 vaccination, at the FEHD's webpage. The two types of premises must also display a floor plan according to specified specifications at its entrance pursuant to the requirement, for differentiating and identifying different designated zones. The floor plan may be changed from time to time having regard to operational needs, but will take effect only after it has been displayed.

In addition, the FEHD will add a tab on "frequently asked questions and answers" on its thematic webpage on "vaccine bubble" (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/events/covid19/vaccine_bubble.html) that seeks to help the trade and the public to understand the above measures and other operational details of "vaccine bubble". Furthermore, a scanning app developed by the Government is now available at Google Play Store, Apple App Store and Huawei AppGallery for operators of premises to verify the authenticity of the QR codes of their customers' vaccination or COVID-19 test records. This could be downloaded by smart phones of different operating systems for use. The name of the app is "QR Code Verification Scanner", and its icon is shown at the Annex.

The FEHD spokesman also reminded catering business operators that according to the prevailing directions under Cap. 599F, for staff of catering business undergoing a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19, the specimens collected must be through combined nasal and throat swabs. The staff concerned can continue to make use of the 21 community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations across the territory for testing. For details, please refer to the webpage (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html).