

*Looking up
and ahead*

**A Proactive Approach for the
Future of Your Dining Program**

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The changing landscape of healthcare

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, your critical business issues are also changing.

Rising costs are always a concern, but cost risks are exacerbated now with potentially higher coronavirus prevention expenses and the loss of revenue due to the lack of elective surgeries – all of which impacts cash flow and in some cases leads to furloughed workers. Further, providing your patients with the highest level of care is always top of mind, but staffing shortages and turnover are creating additional difficulties. Do you have a road map, addressing some cost-related key performance indicators?

While we understand these issues are not limited to foodservice, we also know improvements to your dining services program can influence your entire operation, including supply chain, hospitality, safety and sanitation. Rather than attempting to tackle these challenges all at once – or waiting to confront them after it is too late – let us share our vision for the future of dining.



Navigating the future of healthcare dining

Over the past two months, the coronavirus lockdown has altered normal dining operations.

We have used that time to reimagine the dining experience and help you navigate the future. While we don't know yet when dining rooms will be able to reopen, nor what the federal or social context will be, we understand the business infrastructure it takes. We have created a proactive approach specifically for hospitals to best manage their unique situations. This plan has been expertly crafted by Unidine to provide senior executives with clear, measured goals for a seamless reopening of their dining services program, as well as calculated next steps guaranteed to positively impact your entire organization.

After closely observing the highlighted issues and actions of the CDC, other countries and dining service professionals, we have identified four goals to guide us as we start ramping up operations:

- 1. Safety of team members**
- 2. Innovate to decrease costs and increase revenues**
- 3. Mobilize with enhanced program processes to maximize participation and satisfaction**
- 4. Collaborate to make well-informed decisions**

We understand that no two hospitals are alike, and our team can help you craft a customized plan that is flexible to the needs of your organization and is aligned with your goals.

Key learnings from other countries

Some countries are further ahead of the coronavirus wave. They have made more significant steps toward normalization than other impacted regions. We have researched their approaches and have five key takeaways:

1

Clear and visible signals are needed that convey we are in control of health and safety. This is critical to building customer trust.

2

Supporting teams through reassurance, frequent communications and training – and recognizing them for their flexibility and contributions.

3

We need to be prepared for ongoing variability and the potential start-stop of operations.

4

Leveraging the right technology encourages contactless exchanges with customers.

5

Consumers like to be given the means to protect their safety, therefore, providing the right guidance and tools is reassuring.

Dining trends to watch

As we are preparing for a post COVID-19 world, we are anticipating major changes in consumer expectations and behaviors that will impact dining. Here are five trends we believe will shape operations moving forward:



WELLNESS WILL BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT

There is a growing dialogue around immunity, nutrition, energy and balance.



RESILIENCE IS KEY

It will be imperative to withstand the unexpected, react and bounce back immediately and settle into workable new norms.



FLEXIBILITY

In a world where the threat of lockdowns may stay with us for an extended period, we'll need to modify service levels quickly.



REMOTE TOUCHPOINTS CONTINUE

There will remain a need for video conferencing and other technologies to communicate and engage with team members, patients and families.



CARE IS MORE VALUABLE

There have been infinite stories of goodwill, hospitality, concern and reaching out to check on each other more than ever before – impacting operations and service levels.

Reopening approach

Our plan is driven by the need for social distancing and strict safety and sanitation protocols, with a strong emphasis on balancing business and operational implications. From workforce solutions to service models and back-of-the-house management, we provide guidance on what leadership should focus on to navigate the new daily operations.





People

The success of the dining operations relies on our team members. Indeed, if the way we are dining may have changed in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, our consumers are still looking forward to a great meal. Staffing shortage and turnover have been a constant challenge in our industry, but today more than ever, keeping a full and engaged team is paramount. We are sharing some best practices and ideas to adapt your operation and retain talent.

STAFFING MODEL

With a decline in overall demand and census, there is an opportunity to analyze your staffing structure based on the overall dining operation. Adjusted service models should drive your organizational model. Solutions from cross-training to flexing hours and shifting scope of operations are ways to stabilize the team, adjust to the situation and not incur additional costs.

If you are looking to hire team members, you can tap into a pool of hospitality professionals who have been laid off in sectors strongly impacted by the coronavirus such as retail restaurants, hotels, casinos, etc. Sign-on/retention bonus, healthcare benefits and robust training will help in hiring quality staff.

COMMUNICATION

With changes in regulations and the way we operate, being transparent about the situation in your hospital and the measures adopted to keep patients and team members safe is critical. Educating your team on proper use of personal protective equipment and sanitation protocols will reassure them and demonstrate how we keep them safe.

TEAM MEMBER APPRECIATION

Your dining team has been your behind-the-scenes heroes, leading the department and working countless hours to feed your patients and employees. Support them by providing training, resources and system innovations and also by showing appreciation for their efforts:

- Temporary pay increase or gift cards
- Van service to get to your hospital and not be dependent on public transportation
- Treats such as a pizza lunch, bagels for breakfast or grab-and-go meals to take home
- Branded products such as water bottles, mugs, etc.



Safety and sanitation

As dining venues start to reopen, safety and sanitation will continue to be of the utmost importance. We are anticipating new regulatory requirements and decrees from the CDC and state and local governments. Beyond adhering to these guidelines, dining leadership will need to enforce safety and sanitation in order for patients, employees and visitors to feel safe. It is paramount to adapt the practices, procedures and workflows of your operation to protect everyone dining in your hospital. Never before will the health and safety of our patients, team members and visitors be so important, as well as scrutinized.

We have developed guidelines and best practices in our operations to ensure a safe environment and recommend the following:

- **Personal protective equipment**
- **inventory increased** – PPE – masks, gloves, aprons, etc. – Must be available for at least one week of meal service at all times.”? I did not make a change.
- **Social distancing measures** within the food production and dining area – Rearrange the production tables; spread out tables; six-feet rule with coworkers and delivery personnel; avoid unnecessary employee meetings or interactions.
- **Increased hand washing and glove procedures** – Hand washing at least every half hour; gloves changed frequently; limit cash handling and wear gloves; mandate gloves for trash removal and highly touched surface contact.
- **Increased cleaning and disinfecting procedures** – Highly touched surfaces cleaned and sanitized at least hourly; all surface areas to be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected with professional chemical disinfectants; countertop equipment covered while not in use.
- **Frequent audits and checks** by the management team – Daily test and sanitation logs.
- **Retail areas with heightened level of traffic and exposure** (e.g., salad bars, condiment stations, etc.) to transition to served stations and packaged alternatives.
- **Ongoing training of the team** to reinforce the importance of the safety and sanitation procedures – Hand washing; HACCP procedures; COVID-19 protocols; etc.



Operations support

Having a stable back-of-house operation, with the ability to flex to evolving business needs while maintaining the utmost in health and safety protocols, is an essential part of a successful dining department in our new era. There will be more and more emphasis placed on a fiscally responsible dining department as censuses remain volatile and federal reimbursement amount, timing and loan qualifications are uncertain.

COST CONTROL

Measures in the past that may have been overlooked, such as food cost control, waste management, streamlined inventories, smart ordering and a competitive supply chain, will take a position of new importance. In some hospitals, implementing these types of measures can reduce dining costs by double-digit percentages while maintaining high quality. Production management systems, operational tools (HACCP manager, Prep-n-Print, etc.), robust training and comprehensive playbooks will need to be implemented to achieve measurable results.

SUPPLY CHAIN

With economic shutdowns lifting in various stages across different regions of the country, demand for products and commodities such as ground beef, chicken, produce and dairy will ramp up and down as the country reopens. Communities will need support in managing their purchasing and protection from product shortages. Having a supply chain that can directly coordinate with a vast network of partners on the availability of supplies of any kind that you may need will ensure immediate fulfillment of orders.

Monitoring daily the availability, capacity and demands – which continue to evolve day by day – will ensure that you have rapid solutions for any immediate needs.

Areas where a strong supply chain can support your community:

- **PPE sourcing** – Within days of the onset of a crisis, PPE such as masks, gloves, goggles, gowns and thermometers can be secured for your community.
- **To-go meals for labor surges and emergency feeding** – Grab-and-go salads and sandwiches and fully cooked heat-and-serve meals can be available quickly as staffing levels flex up and down. A meal contingency plan is in place for serious labor issues.
- **Product availability** – Faced with challenges such as meat packaging plant closures, surges in retail volumes due to hoarding, foodservice and restaurant demand, and fresh product becoming frozen product, communities need a level of protection to get access to backup products and have access to proprietary inventories secured just for you.



Service models

From the moment dining venues had to shut down, healthcare foodservice providers had to quickly find ways to pivot and create modified experiences for their patients, staff and guests. From take-home meal kits, delivery, takeout and other grocery services, dining leadership had to adapt to the new requirements and comply with social distancing measures. As states are rolling out plans to reopen the economy, it seems like food and nutrition services as we know it may be changed forever, providing operators with a tremendous opportunity to innovate and reinvent durable service models. Reimagined venues, adjusted/expanded hours of service, technology solutions and pickup and delivery options are here to stay. Thoughtful guidance will help providing an exceptional dining experience.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Dining venues' layout and customer flow will require careful consideration and modification.

- **Spreading out dining rooms** and keeping space between team members and guests while allowing for socialization will call for planning and creativity.
- **Consider available spaces for additional dining venues** and keep all venues open to ensure social distancing.
- **Utilize eye level and floor signage or stanchions** to remind all to maintain proper distancing both while waiting to enter dining spaces and enjoying meals.

Be safe



SERVICE

Beyond the reopening phase, we anticipate that residents will still want access to several dining options: dining in, takeout and delivery. Operators should continue to deliver these services focusing on flexibility, variety and hospitality.

Ensuring a safe and enjoyable dining experience could require physical layout adjustment and several operational modifications.

Here are some recent changes:

- Converting a patient delivery model to call center-based ordering. Adjust to possible short-term census surges due to postponed elective surgeries.
- Converting salad bars into grocery stores for staff and guest. Providing items such as toilet paper, paper towels, grab-and-go items.
- Installing safety shields between customer and cashier.
- Limiting outside guests and eliminating self-serve stations.
- Offering meal replacements to take home. Designed for single or family of four or more. These can be done by online ordering and pickup.

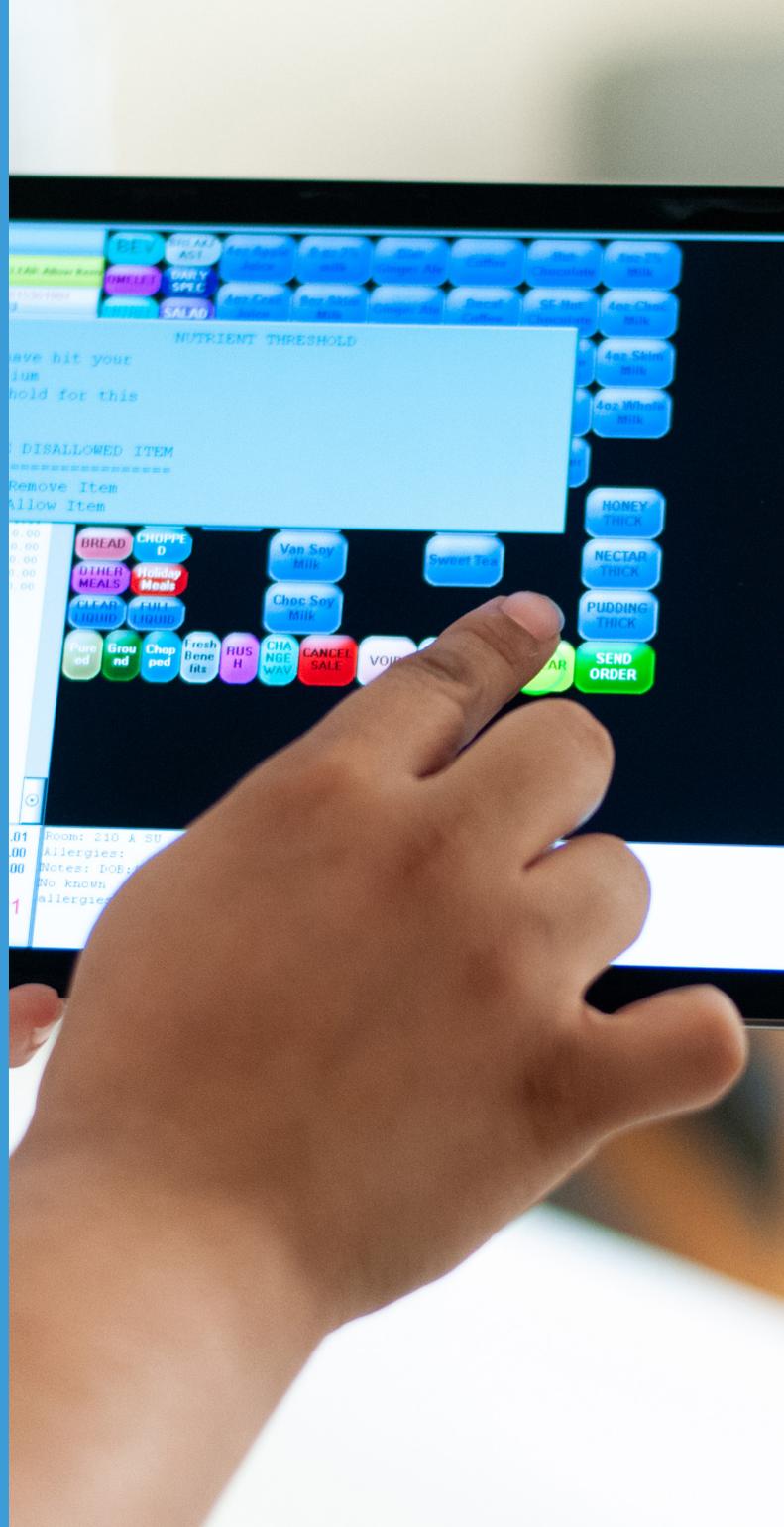
Healthcare facilities will need to implement a takeout/delivery model that is as appealing as the customary dining option, turning convenience into a real hospitality experience. From menu development based on local preferences and products that can withstand delivery, to branded packaging options, hospitality elements and ordering/delivery process, operators will need to invest in tools and resources to bring the dine-in experience home.



TECHNOLOGY

The technology revolution has been integrating through healthcare for the past several years, and COVID has reinforced this even more. Healthcare facilities are constantly looking to gain access to the latest state-of-the-art technology solutions. This statement includes dining and should encourage leadership to adopt technology if they haven't already.

- A fully automated in-room dining management system that links the menu ordering and patient information systems with dining operations. This system should allow for “call down” ordering to minimize number of people entering patient rooms.
- Smartphone and tablet applications make it easy for all preorder meals and groceries and provide contact-free payment.
- 100% cloud-based technology systems supported by in-house team for ongoing system maintenance.
- Digital menu displays in dining spaces eliminate the need for printed menus.





Engagement

Now more than ever, it's important for health systems and healthcare organizations to create and ensure there is a solid infrastructure and adequate resources available to support physicians, nurses, caregivers and certainly patients. As the coronavirus outbreak forced hospitals to close retail dining rooms and other social gathering spaces, dining operators have had to rethink their traditional methods and delivery models. Shifting away from high-touch, interactive, communal dining has meant operators have to find new ways to connect with their customers. Safety and social distancing now takes precedence, so we have to find more creative ways of providing needed services that maintains the health and well-being of everyone. As several states begin lifting restrictions and providing guidelines on reopening retail dining rooms, we all need to be prepared for today and what tomorrow will bring with plans that are flexible and transitional.



Here are some examples of programs that can be implemented to create unique dining experiences for patients and staff in hospitals even during a time like we are all experiencing today. These dining solutions will help to provide variety, convenience, exceptional hospitality and maintain proper safety protocols for your patients and staff.

ONLINE ORDERING MADE SIMPLE

In these unprecedented times, everyone is looking for a better way to serve customers in their food and retail locations. Implementing Online Ordering has become a true necessity and will help address many of your concerns. Hospital staff can place orders anytime, anywhere from the web or mobile app, for all your retail locations during normal business hours and pick up their order at a predetermined time. Use of credit cards or other cashless methods of payment makes it easy for your customers to use.

VALUE AND FAMILY TAKE-HOME MEALS

Adding prepackaged value and family take-home meals provides your staff with an easy meal option for their families at home and limits trips to the grocery store. These meals will be offered at a reduced or value price as a reward to your hard-working employees.

POP-UP MARKETS

Implement the use of “pop-up” Markets in the operation that offers a tremendous amount of convenience for your employees. With employees working longer hours – and restrictive store hours – offering employees necessary items like milk, eggs, bread, toilet paper, etc., helps take away the stress of an added stop on the way home.

ENHANCED GRAB-AND-GO PROGRAM

As we see self-service stations like salad bars greatly reduced or even eliminated all together, enhancing the grab-and-go program to include a variety of sandwiches, parfaits, fruit cups, snack boxes and salads provides a safe and convenient option for guests.

THEME DAYS

Even with restrictions tied to the current pandemic and social distancing, culinary teams can produce meals-to-order for dining guests. Offering customer favorites and chef special theme days multiple days each week will maintain your customers’ interest in the program. With the use of safety shields at a cook to order station or mobile cart, you can continue to offer fresh-made meals in a safe and efficient manner.

PATIENT DINING

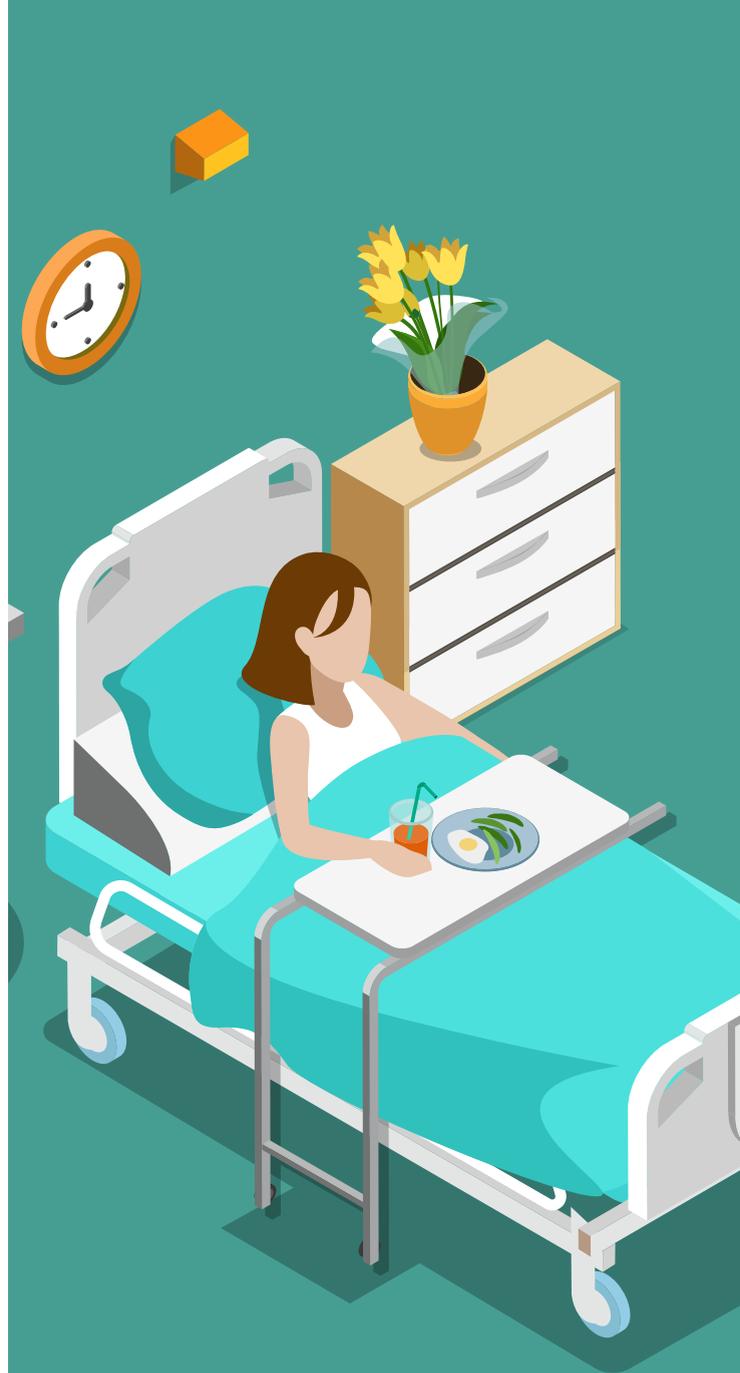
Being flexible with your patient dining program ordering process as well as delivery model is key to the patient experience. Ordering bedside may have to be placed on hold for now, with more traditional phone ordering and paper menus the way to go. Whatever makes the process work and keeps the foodservice department in touch with each patient – but ensures each patient’s safety and well-being – should be the focus right now.

PATIENT EDUCATION

As we all work our way through this pandemic, educating patients about the meal process when they are admitted is key to their comfort level with the program. Enhance their experience by placing a card on each patient tray explaining the meal process that also provides updates as changes occur.

SPECIAL DESSERTS

Culinary teams can prepare diet-appropriate special desserts for patients during this very challenging time. These are added to the patient’s trays often with a little note from the foodservice department, letting them know we are thinking about them and that the department is here for any questions or concerns during this difficult time.





We know these times are tough, but you don't have to fix everything on your own. You need a partner you can trust, someone who can help now when so much seems uncertain and into the future – in a new normal that has yet to be defined.

*Let Unidine be
that partner.*







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