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October 30, 2015

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Cynthia A. Harding, M.P.H.
Interim Director

SUBJECT: **FOOD FACILITY GRADING SYSTEM (ITEM NO. 64-A, AGENDA OF JUNE 9, 2015 AND ITEM 59-A, AGENDA OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2015)**

In a motion by Supervisor Antonovich on June 9, 2015, the Department of Public Health (DPH) was directed to (1) conduct a thorough review of the retail food facility grading system in Los Angeles County, including an assessment of current grading factors, methodology, and a review of grading systems used in other jurisdictions and (2) provide a report of its findings and recommendations to the Board within 30 days. Reports were provided to the Board on July 8, 2015 and on August 18, 2015. In a subsequent motion by Supervisor Antonovich on September 1, 2015, DPH was instructed to provide monthly progress reports to the Board on the restaurant grading recommendation implementation activities. This October 2015 report is the second progress report in response to the motion.

The Implementation Plan for Restaurant Grading Recommendations, which was developed to report on the progress or status of each recommendation, was updated for this report (Attachment A). Some recommendations have already been completed, and the remainder of the recommendations are on track for completion by the established target dates in the plan.

In addition, since the last report, DPH met with the Food Safety Advisory Committee and updated them on the proposed changes to the restaurant grading system. Volunteers were solicited to participate in a working group to assist with the evaluation and implementation of the recommendations. Once the volunteers have been identified, a follow-up meeting with this group will be scheduled for late 2015. DPH will also meet on November 17, 2015 with representatives from the California Restaurant Association to discuss the recommendations and to solicit their input.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let us know.

CAH:dc
PH:1508:006

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer
Interim County Counsel
Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Implementation Plan for Restaurant Grading Recommendations - Status Report of 10-30-15

A. AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION	Target Date	STATUS
RECOMMENDATION A1: Environmental Health (EH) should ensure that all restaurant closures, whether resulting from routine inspections or public complaints, are made publicly available on the EH website.	Completed	As of 10/21/15, all restaurant closures, including those as a result of a complaint, are now posted on the EH website.
RECOMMENDATION A2: EH believes that when a comprehensive foodborne illness investigation is conducted and it is determined that the outbreak is "associated" with the restaurant, this information should be disclosed as well. Additionally, EH will confer with County Counsel, Acute Communicable Disease Control, and Community Health Services to consider appropriate criteria for public disclosure of foodborne illnesses which are potentially associated with a particular restaurant.	4/1/2016	In progress. Discussions continue with the Environmental Health Directors of surrounding California counties and cities.
RECOMMENDATION A3: EH will seek input from the public to determine what additional information should be included on the grade card. The public will be given the opportunity to provide input through an online survey and suggestion boxes at local district offices.	2/1/2016	In progress. On 10/1/2015, the grading survey was made available to the public at the local district offices, online on the EH website, and through a pop-up ad on the EH website. The online survey is also available in Spanish. The survey has been translated into Chinese and will be available in the local district offices by early November 2015. As of 10/21/15, DPH has had 271 respondents complete the survey: 269 online and 2 at the local district offices. The survey will continue until November 30, 2015.
B. METHODS OF SCORING AND GRADING	**Target Date**	**STATUS**
RECOMMENDATION B1: Because the County of Los Angeles grading system is well-recognized and valued by the public, DPH recommends continuing with the A,B,C grading, but working to improve the rating method on which the grades are based.	Completed	DPH will keep the current A, B, C grading system and will make improvements as referenced under Recommendations A3 and B2.
RECOMMENDATION B2: EH proposes changes to the point value deductions in the inspection report to preclude the issuance of an "A" grade if, upon inspection, the facility is ordered closed or is found to have two major violations.	4/1/2016	In progress. Discussions continue with Environmental Health Directors of surrounding California counties and cities. These issues will also be discussed with representatives of the California Restaurant Association (CRA) during the scheduled November 2015 meeting and at the follow-up meeting with the working group from the Food Safety Advisory Committee (FSAC).

C. OPTIMIZE INSPECTIONS THROUGH GREATER USE OF DATA	Target Date	STATUS
RECOMMENDATION C1: EH should conduct trend analyses of EC inspection data to develop informational material on food handling practices and behaviors targeting restaurant operators.	3/1/2016	In progress. Data from Fiscal Year 2014/15 was analyzed as to the most frequently observed violations related to food handling practices and behaviors, in particular those related to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) top five risk factors for food borne illness. Based on the results of the data, informational materials will be developed to address hand washing, food temperature requirements, food contact surface sanitation, vermin, and personal hygiene. In addition, EH will seek input from representatives of the CRA during the scheduled November 2015 meeting, and from the FSAC working group at the follow-up meeting, on any other food handling practices that may require the development of educational materials for the industry.
D. CHANGES IN POLICY AND PROCEDURE	**Target Date**	**STATUS**
RECOMMENDATION D1: EH should revise policy and procedures to strengthen the effective use of permit revocations so that businesses with chronic unsafe practices are precluded from operating without remediating these conditions.	4/1/2016	In progress. DPH has drafted a revised EH internal policy setting criteria that will allow for the expanded and consistent use of permit revocations. EH will seek input from CRA representatives at the scheduled November 2015 meeting, and from the FSAC working group at the follow-up meeting, prior to finalizing the procedures.
RECOMMENDATION D2: EH should assess whether other conditions warrant a minimum time period for closure.	Completed	After internal discussions, it was determined that the existing closure policy is consistent with State law in protecting public health. As such, we do not recommend changing the closure policy.
RECOMMENDATION D3: EH proposes to change its internal policy to allow a graded inspection to occur at any time under specified conditions.	4/1/2016	In progress. DPH has drafted a revised EH internal policy to change the time requirements in between graded routine inspections to allow for the facility to receive a complete, graded inspection when a complaint is investigated. EH will seek input from CRA representatives at the scheduled November 2015 meeting, and from the FSAC working group at the follow-up meeting, prior to finalizing the policy.
RECOMMENDATION D4: EH should review the owner initiated inspection (OII) process and determine what modifications should be implemented to prevent restaurant operators who have chronic unsafe food practices from using the process to improve their grade. An analysis of EC inspection data related to OII's will assist in determining the factors EH should target for modification.	3/1/2016	In progress. EH completed a historical data analysis. Although the data provided limited information, EH is moving forward with developing criteria to determine when an operator is eligible for an OII, including past critical violations.