

We look forward to working with you as you begin planning your food or lodging establishment. Our new partnership is an essential part of protecting public health in Vermont. This guide will help you determine which license(s) you will need, which regulations apply to your business, who you may need to contact, and how long it will take to get your license.

First Steps for Licensing

- Decide which license is appropriate for you based on your business proposal. Use the table on page 2 to learn about the license categories. Home-based businesses should refer to the [Guide to Opening a Home-Based Food Business](#).
- Review applicable regulations. You can find them on our website at healthvermont.gov/food-lodging or request a paper copy be mailed to you.
- Submit a plan for review, if applicable (new construction, commercial facilities that have never been licensed for food service, major renovations, expansions to kitchens). There is no additional fee for a plan review.
- Apply at least 30 days before you would like to open. You can [apply online](#) or [print](#) and mail an application.

A [Public Health Inspector](#) will contact you after your application is processed to discuss your business details. You can schedule a preliminary or opening inspection at that time if you are ready. Inspections can usually be scheduled within 10 business days.

Get Permits from Other Agencies

When you open a new business, there are requirements from other state, local, and sometimes federal, agencies that you must comply with. Some permits can take weeks or months, so you need to contact them early in the process of starting your business. Use the table on page 3 to find out who you may need to contact.

Approvals from these agencies must be in place before scheduling an opening inspection.

Schedule and Complete an Inspection

Review the regulations again to decide if you are ready for an inspection. If you have a retail food establishment, you can use the [Facility Requirements for a Retail Food Service Establishment](#) guide to evaluate your readiness.

When you are ready, contact your [Public Health Inspector](#) to schedule an opening inspection.

You cannot have any critical violations left uncorrected to pass an opening inspection. The opening inspection report serves as your license temporarily until the actual license is emailed to you within 10 business days of final approval.

License Categories and Health Regulations

License Category	For establishments that:
Restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare and serve food for on-premise consumption. - Offer prepared food at lodging facilities. <p>Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments</p>
Commercial Caterer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are based out of a store, food stand, mobile unit, pushcart, or other commercial establishment, or a home-based kitchen equipped with commercial equipment. - Prepare and sell food for takeout. - Are restaurants that also do off-site catering. <p>Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments</p>
Limited Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare and serve hot dogs and/or cold sandwiches for off-premise consumption, and whose major business is not the preparation and service of food. <p>Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments (Section 5-204 through 5-219)</p>
Food Processor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process food such as jams, jellies, candies, chocolates, salsa, sauces, salad dressings, etc. for retail or wholesale markets. - Are processed food warehouses and/or distribution centers. <p>Manufactured Food Rule</p>
Bakery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process bread, cakes, muffins, cookies or other food products made either wholly or in part of flour, that do not require refrigeration or temperature control, and are intended for sale. <p>Manufactured Food Rule (Wholesale) Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments (Retail)</p>
Seafood Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sell seafood products, such as fish and shellfish, on a retail basis. <p>Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments</p>
Shellfish Reshipper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase shellfish and either process or break the product down into small lots for wholesale or retail operations. <p>Shellfish Sanitation Rule</p>
Lodging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer lodging to the traveling or transient public including hotels, bed and breakfasts, motels, tourist homes, etc. - Offer three or more rooms, or any lodging facility offering rooms that also prepares food. <p>Licensed Lodging Establishment Rule Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments</p>
Children’s Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are seasonally operated (open no more than 90 days per year) and offer a camping program that includes providing food and/or lodging to vacationing youth or family groups. <p>Licensed Children’s Camps Rule Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments</p>
Temporary Food Stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are disassembled and moved between uses, such as at a farmers market, street fair, or sporting event. (If food is prepped at another site, a separate license is required for that location.) <p>Summary of Temporary Food Stand Requirements Temporary Food Stand Application</p>

Other Agency Contacts

A new food or lodging business may require permits from multiple agencies. Use this table to determine which agencies and offices you may need to contact.

Office	Service	Contact this office if you are:	Contact Info
Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	Drinking water, wastewater, and Act 250 requirements and approval <i>Permitting can take up to 90 days.</i>	Planning new construction, changing the current use of a space, or increasing seating or lodging capacity	Regional Office or 802-828-1556
Department of Health Lab or other certified drinking water lab	Water testing for private water systems <i>Testing of private water systems is required and must show an absence of Total Coliform and E. coli bacteria and acceptable levels of nitrites and nitrates.</i>	Need to test your private drinking water system. You must be able to show negative test results that are less than one year old.	healthvermont.gov/lab 802-338-4724 or list of certified labs
Town Clerk's Office	Local land use, development, and zoning for commercial and residential properties	Starting any food or lodging establishment <i>Towns may have their own permits or requirements for food or lodging establishments.</i>	varies by town
Office of the Secretary of State	Business name registration <i>You must register a business name if you will be doing business using anything other than your own name.</i>	A new business or changing ownership of an existing business	sos.vermont.gov 802-828-2386
Department of Taxes	Business tax accounts and licenses to collect and pay applicable taxes	A new business or changing ownership of an existing business	tax.vermont.gov 802-828-2551
Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets	Meat inspections, regulation of the sale or manufacturing of ice cream or other dairy products, regulation of packaging and labels, and scale inspections	Manufacturing ice cream, frozen desserts, or a food containing any meat or products of animal origin	agriculture.vermont.gov 802-828-2430
Department of Public Safety	Public building inspections for fire safety hazards and electrical and plumbing compliance	Planning new construction or changes to existing fire safety, electrical or plumbing systems	dps.vermont.gov 802-244-8727
Department of Liquor Control	Licenses for selling beer, wine or liquor <i>Liquor licenses are non-transferable.</i>	A new business or changing ownership of an existing business	liquorcontrol.vermont.gov 802-828-2345
U.S. Food and Drug Administration	Registration for facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for consumption in the U.S.	A food processor, packer, warehouse or distributor	fda.gov

Questions? Please call the Food and Lodging Program at 802-863-7221 or email