

## Scoring of Food Service Establishments

### Background

The Flathead City-County Board of Health desires to establish a program that confers a placard to food service establishments in Flathead County. This placard would provide a score that indicates to the public the level of risk associated with the operation of the food service establishment at the time of inspection. The score is based upon the results of the routine inspection.

Inspection of food service establishments is required to determine compliance with applicable Montana Code provisions and the Administrative Rules of Montana. Montana Code Annotated § 50-50-101 states that food service establishment regulations are “required to prevent and eliminate conditions and practices which endanger public health.” Inspection services are considered to be risk-based. Inspections that result in noted violations of the Code or Rules represent an elevated risk associated with conditions or practices found within the establishment at the time the inspection was conducted.

Various scoring methodologies for food service establishment are used throughout the country. The Board has already authorized the use of an alphabetic scoring system to be reported on the inspection form and provided on the Health Department’s web site and to the news media. For consistency, the same system will be utilized for placard scoring.

### Policy

The Board believes that conveying the score of the food service establishment to the public through a placard is good public health policy as it may indicate the risk associated with consuming food from the establishment and provides incentive for food service purveyors to reduce the number of violations observed by Health Department staff during an inspection with a resultant higher inspection score.

### Procedure

Routine inspections are unannounced and performed at regular intervals throughout the year based on risk category. Risk levels range from one to five. Risk level one and two establishments generally have the least risk and are inspected once per year. Risk level three through five have increasingly higher risk and are inspected two times per year or more depending upon inspection history.

Establishment scoring is based on specific violation values assigned to each violation. There are two violation types: **Critical and Non-critical** violations. **Critical violations** are improper practices and actions that directly contribute to food contamination and temperature abuse that may pose an immediate risk to public health resulting in a foodborne illness or injury. Critical violations must be corrected immediately or as directed by the Health Department. **Non-critical**

**violations** are unacceptable practices that normally relate to the physical condition of an establishment including equipment, cleaning and storage. Non-critical violations must be corrected before the next routine inspection or as directed by the Health Department.

The Flathead City-County Health Department staff employs an electronic inspection, reporting and scoring system. Specific violations noted during an inspection are linked to a violations library consistent with the State of Montana's administrative rule. Department staff has created a scoring system based upon the number of violations observed during an inspection.

Restaurant scores may range from a letter grade of an "A" to "F"

**Grade A** - These facilities typically exhibit very good to acceptable levels of sanitation during an unannounced routine inspection.

**Grade B** - These facilities typically exhibit acceptable to marginal levels of sanitation during an unannounced routine inspection.

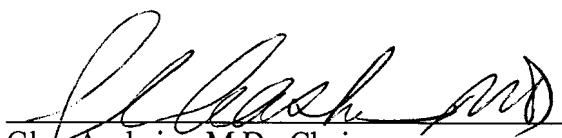
**Grade C** - These facilities typically exhibit poor to marginal levels of sanitation during an unannounced routine inspection.

**Grades of D and lower** - These facilities pose considerable risk to the public and immediate steps must be taken or closure proceedings will be implemented.

After the routine inspection is conducted, Health Department staff will provide a placard to the establishment with their earned grade and the date of inspection. It is the expectation of the Board that the score will be displayed in such a fashion that consumers will observe the score. The placarded score shall remain in effect until the next inspection at which time a new placard will be provided and the outdated placard will be surrendered. The placard is the property of the Flathead City-County Health Department and must be surrendered to Health Department staff upon request.

In the event a facility receives a low grade they may be able to have another routine inspection conducted in an expedited fashion depending upon staff availability.

Adopted by the Board of Health on April 15, 2010

  
Glen Aasheim, M.D., Chair  
Flathead City-County Board of Health