

**City of Evanston**  
**Department of Health & Human Services**

**Public Events vs. Private Events**  
*When and why is a permit required?*

Any food operation where consumable goods are made available to the “general public” requires a **permit or license** from the Health and Human Services Department.

In regards, to a public event it is defined as “ an event that is advertised with fliers, banners, newspaper articles, radio or TV announcements, on a website or social media, or by other means, (regardless of whether or not a fee is charged), is considered a public event and is subject to health code requirements of the regulatory authority”.

Places of worship, school groups and other non-profit groups often use food sales as a way to raise funds for their organization.

Several factors are evaluated to determine the food safety of food operations, such as:

- Proposed menu
- Condition of the facility where food is being prepared
- Equipment provided
- Food safety knowledge and handling

Food operations that propose menus which include “potentially hazardous foods” (PHF) such as eggs, meats, mayonnaise-based foods and other foods requiring temperature control, pose the highest risks and, therefore, must meet more stringent guidelines to insure food safety. **No foods for a public distribution should be made in a home kitchen** (the exception is approved baked goods such as cookies, brownies or cakes sold at Farmers Markets by registered Cottage Food vendors).

**Private Event:**

A private event is an exclusive group, which could include family, friends, neighbors or committee members meeting over a shared meal. In this type of situation, a temporary permit from the Board of Health is not needed. Food prepared in a home kitchen or unlicensed commissary is allowed **only** at a private event.

**Do I need a permit for a potluck?**

Potlucks are defined by the State of Illinois as the following by the public act appearing on the next page. In summary, no permit is required if the potluck event is on private property. If the event is on public property, then the event must meet the Temporary Food Event Standards and a permit must be applied for.