

March 1, 2023

To: Donated Food Distribution Organizations
From: Snohomish County Health Department

RE: Increase in shigellosis in Snohomish County

We are writing to let you know that staff, volunteers, and patrons of Donated Food Distributing Organization (DFDO) facilities may be at risk of exposure to *Shigella*. *Shigella* bacteria cause an infection of the intestines known as shigellosis. *Shigella* are spread through contaminated water and food, and by contact with infected people or contaminated objects. Snohomish County Health Department investigates cases of shigellosis and works to prevent further spread of this illness. Symptoms of shigellosis are listed below and can occur up to 7 days after exposure.

Shigellosis may be spreading among communities served at DFDO facilities. We are sending out this alert for situational awareness and recommend taking precautionary measures to help prevent staff and patrons from becoming ill.

Staff, volunteers, and patrons should not attend DFDO events, and should stay away from others, if they are ill with any signs or symptoms of a contagious illness. This includes vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and respiratory symptoms such as cough, runny nose, or sore throat.

Persons who are ill with the symptoms below should seek medical care and testing for possible shigellosis:

- **Diarrhea (can be watery or bloody)**
- **Abdominal cramps**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Fever**

If you become sick with the above symptoms, please take this information with you to your healthcare provider visit. It is important that your healthcare provider test and treat you if shigellosis is suspected.

The best way to prevent the spread of shigellosis is by proper hand washing and food handling. ***DFDO facilities should frequently clean and disinfect all kitchen, bathroom, water sources, and common use facilities.*** Read the attached fact sheet (available in English and Spanish) and links below for more information on shigellosis, how it is spread, and how it can be prevented.

[Shigellosis Fact Sheet | Snohomish County Health Department](#)
[Shigellosis | Washington State Department of Health](#)
[Information for Food Service Workers and Managers \(cdc.gov\)](#)

If you have further questions, please call the Snohomish County Health Department at **425-339-3503**.