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**City of Milwaukee Health Department Announces Food Sanitation Grading System to Launch in 2018**

*Letter grade placards to begin on voluntary basis at restaurants and food establishments, become mandatory in 2019*

MILWAUKEE – Beginning January 2018, the City of Milwaukee will join cities nationwide in launching a grading system for food establishments. Milwaukee’s Food Sanitation Grading System will result in letter grade placards posted at food service establishments citywide, improving how the City of Milwaukee Health Department rates the sanitation of food service establishments and how that information is made available to the public.

“Milwaukee is taking a significant step toward improving food safety for consumers while also working to assure that its system is fair to food service businesses,” said Alderman Michael J. Murphy, who has worked with the MHD to research, evaluate, and develop Milwaukee’s upcoming system. “The City has taken care to evaluate best practices from cities nationally and internationally. The system that has been developed will not only advance food safety and provide more transparency to the public on the result of inspections, but be equitable to food establishment operators.”

Milwaukee’s Sanitation Grading System has been in development for several years, and is the result of a partnership between the City of Milwaukee Health Department and the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Executive MBA Program. Students within the program researched existing systems to develop Milwaukee’s scoring criteria as well as the computer database to manage the system.

Milwaukee’s Sanitation Grading System will grade food service establishments on the existing Wisconsin Food Code under which inspections are currently conducted, assigning point values to each violation. Violations that most directly contribute to foodborne illness will result in higher deductions. Establishments will be awarded an “A” grade for a score of 80 points or more on a 100 point scale. Scores below 60 points will result in a “C” grade, and may prompt temporary closure of an establishment if an imminent health hazard exists.

“In 2016, 32 percent of food service establishments in Milwaukee received priority violations, a rate that has increased over the past several years, while rates of foodborne illness have not seen a significant decrease,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “In looking for innovative and effective methods to protect consumer safety and increase the compliance of food service operators, a grading system rose to the top as an effective system that has shown success in cities nationwide.”

The Sanitation Grading System will begin with the first inspections in January 2018, with posting of the Sanitation Grade placards voluntary for the first year. In 2019, posting of letter grade placards will be mandatory.

To help food establishments understand the system, information is being mailed directly and via email to those with City of Milwaukee Food Dealer licenses. In-person information sessions will be held in English and Spanish in November, and one-on-one consults will be available for establishments at their request.

For more information, visit [Milwaukee.gov/Health](http://Milwaukee.gov/Health).

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