**NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

Interim Guidance for Election Voting Locations
(August 13, 2020)

Governor Cooper has implemented a phased approach to slowly lift restrictions while combatting COVID-19, protecting North Carolinians, and working together to recover the economy.

This guidance, adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Considerations for Election Polling Locations and Voters, provides steps that should be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in election voting locations.

Guidelines for Voting Locations: Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Election officials should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at all voting locations, where groups of people gather in an enclosed space. The guidance below will help election voting locations reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

It is also strongly recommended that additional voting locations be added and hours for one-stop early voting be increased as much as possible. Spreading out the time and locations that individuals can vote is critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19. Strategies like these, that reduce crowd size, can help reduce voters' risk of exposure and keep our communities safer.

This guidance covers the following topics:

- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Communications and Combatting Misinformation
- Additional Resources

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Social distancing is one of the few tools we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing ("physical distancing") means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of

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your home. Stay at least six feet (about two arms' length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

Elections officials at all voting locations are required to:
- ✈ Post signage at each voting place reminding voters and workers about social distancing (staying at least six feet away from others). Know Your Ws sign templates are available in English and Spanish on the NC DHHS COVID-19 response site, and NC DHHS recommends use of these or similar posters.
- ✈ Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls to ensure that voters remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times.

It is recommended that election officials at all voting locations:
- ✈ Ensure sufficient space for social distancing and other measures, including identifying larger facilities for use if possible.
- ✈ Consider increasing the number of voting locations available for one-stop early voting and extending hours of operation.
- ✈ Maintain or increase the total number of voting places available to the public on Election Day to improve ability to social distance.
- ✈ Remind election workers and voters upon arrival to leave space between themselves and others. Encourage election workers and voters to stay at least 6 feet apart.
- ✈ Install a plastic barrier between the voter and the election worker where feasible.
- ✈ Have plans to manage lines to ensure social distancing can be maintained.
- ✈ Limit the number of voters in the facility by moving lines outdoors if weather permits.
- ✈ Clearly mark designated entry and exit points and provide signage to ensure voters move in one direction while in the voting location; if a voting location has only one entry/exit point, try to stagger entry and exit times if possible.
- ✈ Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes).
- ✈ Increase distance between voting booths to ensure that voters remain 6 feet apart.
- ✈ Use a dispenser or pre-cut individual "I Voted" stickers and place on table for self-service, rather than having the poll worker hand them directly to a voter.
- ✈ Place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least six feet apart (e.g., registration desks, voting stations).
- ✈ Ensure that workers and voters can be separated from other facility users (e.g., designated entrances, exits, and restrooms that are separate from other facility users).
- ✈ Limit nonessential visitors. Election workers and voters should be discouraged from bringing accompanying persons (e.g., family members, friends) to the voting location.
- ✈ Encourage voters planning to vote in-person to arrive at off-peak times.
- ✈ Ensure changes in voting operations do not limit accessibility to voters with disability.

Cloth Face Coverings
There is growing evidence that wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.

County boards of elections shall <u style="color:red">require</u> that:
- ✈ Election workers wear face coverings when they are or may be within six feet of another person, unless the worker states that an exception applies.
- ✈ Election workers encourage all voters to wear face coverings, including offering face coverings to voters who are not wearing them, unless the voter states that an exception applies.
    - o If a voter states that an exception applies, the election worker should try to make an accommodation by providing curbside service or by allowing the customer to enter without a face covering. Voters should not be turned away if they do not have or cannot wear a face covering.
- ✈ Election workers encourage any observers or electioneers to wear face coverings, including offering face coverings to observers or electioneers not wearing them unless they state that an exception applies.
- ✈ Voting places have sufficient face coverings for all election workers, voters, observers, and electioneers who do not have one.

It is recommended that all voting sites have:
- ✈ Signs posted providing instruction on proper removal and handling of face coverings. Visit the NC DHHS COVID-19 response site for more information about face coverings and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.

Cleaning and Hygiene
Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

Election workers at voting locations are <u style="color:red">required</u> to:
- ✈ Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails, tables, chairs) with an EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increase disinfection during peak voting times.

It is recommended that election workers at voting places:
- ✈ Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, paper towels, tissues, and hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol).
- ✈ Encourage poll workers to wash their hands frequently (e.g., before entering the polling location, before and after breaks or shifts, after touching or handling cloth face coverings or PPE, after using the restroom, after touching shared surfaces or objects) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- ✈ Encourage voters to wash hands or use hand sanitizer. Provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use at each step in the voting process where voters interact with workers, after using the voting machine, and as the final step in the voting process. Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, particularly where the voter enters and exits the voting, place. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers may not be compatible with electronic voting equipment and may damage paper

ballots. Election workers and voters should ensure their hands are completely dry before handling these items.
- ✈ Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers.
- ✈ Encourage election workers and voters to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- ✈ Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely, and allowing for adequate ventilation when workers use such products.
- ✈ Where possible, replace shared objects, like pens, with single-use objects.
- ✈ Decrease the amount of shared objects, where possible. For example, election workers could use only one pen all day and not share.
- ✈ Items to be reviewed, such as pollbooks or identification, should be placed on a table for examination to minimize handling.
- ✈ Shared objects, like pens for voters or voting machines, should be disinfected between users or disposed of.
- ✈ Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk or if humidity levels may cause tabulators to jam.
- ✈ After the voting place closes, clean and disinfect all facility areas and items, including all tables, chairs, door handles, and restrooms, used by workers or voters.
- ✈ Voting machines, laptops, tablets, keyboards, and other reusable items should be disinfected routinely.
- ✈ Follow the equipment manufacturer's instructions for appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures for voting machines and associated electronics.
- ✈ Consider use of wipeable covers for laptops.
- ✈ If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to clean computers or other electronics. Dry surfaces thoroughly.

Monitoring for Symptoms

Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure to COVID-19. Election workers should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath and be aware that a person can become infectious before they become ill, or without becoming ill. If they develop symptoms, election workers should stay home. More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

County boards of elections are required to:
- ✈ Ensure that election workers who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day, are immediately separated from other workers and voters and sent home.
- ✈ Prior to opening the voting place each day: Conduct daily symptom screening (standard interview questionnaire English|Spanish) of workers and immediately send symptomatic workers home to isolate.

- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms flyers (English - Color, Black & White; Spanish - Color, Black & White).

It is recommended that county boards of elections:
- Educate election workers about when they should stay home and when they can return to work.
- Ensure that voting locations are adequately staffed to cover any sick election workers who need to stay home.
- Per CDC guidelines, if an individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the individual should isolate until: o No fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND o Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND

  o At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms
- Per CDC guidelines, if an individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should isolate until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. Anyone who develops symptoms should follow the criteria for when symptomatic individuals can end isolation described above.
- Offer alternative voting options for voters with symptoms, those who are sick or known COVID19 positive. Alternative voting options should minimize exposure between election workers and voters, such as curbside voting for sick voters. Election workers assisting voters with symptoms should be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protection, face shields, gowns, and gloves, and trained in the appropriate use of this equipment.
- Ensure voting options are accessible to voters with disabilities.
- Visit NC DHHS COVID-19 response site for more information about the face covering guidance and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the CDC and NCDHHS.

Additional recommendations for voting locations:
- Assign election workers at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 tasks that minimize direct contact with voters and other election workers. These workers should be encouraged to practice preventive actions, such as social distancing and handwashing.
  o Consider new or additional efforts to recruit workers who are lower risk to serve as poll workers.
- Ensure that any changes to operations do not limit accessibility to voters with disabilities.

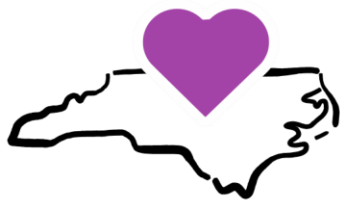## Communication and Combatting Misinformation

Help ensure that the information election workers and voters are getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the CDC or NCDHHS to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is recommended that county boards of elections:

➔ Provide election workers with signs, posters, and flyers at main entrances and in key areas throughout the voting location such as those found on the Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19 to remind election workers and voters to use face coverings, wash hands, and stay six feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).

    o Know Your W's signs are available in English and Spanish.

➔ Include messages about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with voters (such as on websites, in videos, in emails, and on social media accounts).

➔ Notify voters of changes to voting operations, including the availability of alternative voting options that minimize contact, as allowed.

Additional Resources

- NCDHHS: North Carolina COVID-19
- CDC: Considerations for Election Polling Locations and Voters
- CDC: Recommendations for Voters
- EPA: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2
- HHS/OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19
- DHS: Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce

#StayStrongNC

**Staying apart brings us together.
Protect your family and neighbors.**

Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.

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