



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Elections Division

Election Advisory #26-02

In-Person Early Voting

August 18, 2026

This Advisory contains information about in-person early voting for the September 1, 2026 State Primary and the November 3, 2026 State Election.

In-person early voting for the September 1, 2026 State Primary will be held August 22 through August 28. In-person early voting for the November 3, 2026 State Election will be held October 17 through October 30.

Location Setup and Staffing

Location Setup

Early voting locations must be accessible, with at least one accessible booth and at least one AutoMark at each location. You must also provide a sufficient number of marking shelves or compartments.

Staffing and Check Out

While a full complement of poll workers is not required, you must have sufficient staff at each location to verify voters, including processing inactive voters and asking for identification from voters flagged to show ID and/or listed as inactive. Staff must also ensure voters receive the correct ballot and envelope, collect voted ballots, and confirm the voter signed the EV-7 envelope. The total number of staff is at your discretion, but must be adequate to keep track of voters and ballots.

A check out is not required, but an election worker should monitor the box where ballots are deposited. They must also inspect the EV-7 before the voter leaves to confirm it is complete and signed.

Storage of Ballots

Voters must be provided a secure box to deposit their completed EV-7 in after voting early in person. Ballots must be securely stored at each early voting location during EV hours until transferred to your office, including having a covering over the container. One option is to use

the bottom box from your tabulator for the voter to insert their ballot envelope in the slot. Do NOT leave EV ballot envelopes unsecured.

Voters can also return vote by mail or absentee ballots to an early voting location during early voting hours. These ballots must be secured **separately** from ballots completed during in-person early voting, since they must be checked into VRIS upon return to the local election office as returned mail-in ballots.

Observers and the 150 Foot Rule

Observers must be allowed in the early voting location outside the “guardrail,” unless disorderly or obstructing voter access. Unlike observers at a polling place, observers at an early voting location may NOT challenge early voters. They can only challenge an early voter when the ballot is removed from the envelope, which could be at an advance processing location, a Central Tabulation Facility, or polling location on Election Day.

The 150 foot rule prohibiting campaigning around polling places applies to early voting locations as well. There can be no campaigning for or against or promoting or opposing a candidate or question to be voted for at that election within 150 feet of the entrance to an early voting location during early voting hours. Signature gathering of any kind is also prohibited during early voting hours within 150 feet.

In-Person Early Voting

All voters can vote early at any early voting location in the municipality where they are registered. The process for in-person early voting is similar to Election Day, but the voter is provided an envelope to place their voted ballot in before depositing it in the ballot box.

Early Voting List

Each early voting location must have an early voting list with ALL registered voters in the city or town. The list can be a printed list, the list in VRIS, or an electronic list (such as an electronic poll book). If using an electronic list, you must have a printed backup. It is also recommended to have a printed backup if using VRIS.

The early voting list can be arranged alphabetically by voter name, unlike the Election Day voter list in most municipalities. All lists (printed, VRIS, or electronic) must indicate if a voter is required to show ID or if they are inactive, as well as whether they applied to vote absentee or early.

Check-In

At check-in, the voter must state their name and address aloud and the election worker must repeat it loud enough for any observers to hear. The election worker must find the voter’s name and address on the list, then mark the list with the date the voter voted at the EV location. The voter must then be given an EV/AV ballot and an EV-7 envelope.

In a primary, the party ballot must also be stated aloud for observers. If a voter is enrolled in a party, they can only receive the ballot for that party's primary. Voters registered as unenrolled or in a political designation must declare which party ballot they want. The election worker should repeat the party ballot selection, then mark the selection on the voter list. Election workers should use "Democratic" and "Republican," not ballot colors. Once the party ballot selection has been recorded on the list, the voter **cannot** receive the other party's ballot.

Completing the Ballot

After marking their ballot, the voter must place the ballot in the EV-7 envelope and complete the required information on the envelope, including signing the ballot envelope. Before the voter leaves, the election worker **must** examine the envelope to make sure it is completed and signed.

Inactive Voters

Inactive voters will appear on the voting list with an *I* next to their name. Inactive voters are eligible to vote, if:

- They haven't moved from the address where they are registered
- They moved within the same city/town where they are registered
- They moved to a different city/town in Massachusetts in the last 6 months and haven't re-registered

Inactive voters **must** complete the Affirmation of Current & Continuous Residence and show identification before being given a ballot. After completing the affirmation and showing identification, the voter must be given an EV/AV ballot and EV-7 and be allowed to vote. If a voter does not have acceptable identification, they must still be allowed to vote but the ballot must be challenged.

- Inactive voters on the voter list **should not** be given a provisional ballot!

A roster style affirmation on which all inactive voters sign can be used instead of individual forms. A sample is on the S drive of your VRIS computer. You can modify the form for early voting and add a column for ward and precinct so all inactive voters can use one roster instead of separate ones for each precinct.

Challenged Ballots

If an inactive voter does not have acceptable identification, they must be allowed to vote but their ballot must be challenged at the early voting location before the voter marks their ballot. The election officer must issue the challenged voter's oath to the voter. On the ballot, the election officer must record the name and address of the voter and their own name as the challenger, as well as the reason for the challenge as "inactive- no ID." The election worker must mark the envelope and voter list with "CV."

Only challenges to inactive voters without identification can be made at the early voting location. All other challenges must be made when the ballot is removed from the envelope.

Identification

Certain voters may be required to show identification. In addition to inactive voters, new voters who registered to vote by mail and whose identification number could not be verified will need to show identification. They will appear on the voting list with “ID” next to their name.

Valid identification must contain the voter’s name and address, such as a driver’s license, bank statement, government check, utility bill, rent receipt on landlord’s letterhead, etc.

If a voter is flagged on the voter list as “ID” and they do not have identification, they must cast a provisional ballot.

Only voters flagged as required to show ID or who are inactive should be asked to show identification. If using electronic poll books, make sure early voting workers are not systematically asking voters to show identification. While scanning voter driver’s licenses may make the check-in process faster, it must be clear to the voter that providing their license is optional. Any signs you may post must also clearly indicate showing their license is optional and not required. All voters must still state their name and address before being provided a ballot, even if they voluntarily provide their driver’s license to scan.

Early/Absentee Voters With Accepted Ballots

Any voter whose mail ballot has already been accepted cannot vote in person.

- On printed voter lists, early voters and absentee voters whose ballots have been accepted in VRIS will have an “X” printed in the box next to their name.

Early/Absentee Voters With Unreturned or Rejected Ballots

Early and absentee voters who applied for a ballot that was not returned or was rejected will appear on the printed voter list with “EV” or “AV,” but will not have an “X” in the box. **These voters can vote in person.**

These voters are not required to complete a form or return their mail-in ballot before voting. Check-in workers should verbally inform the voter that by voting in person, any previously requested ballot will not count.

If a voter did not return their vote by mail ballot and voted in-person early, you will need to reject their vote by mail ballot in VRIS before entering their in-person ballot information. Reject the first ballot as “ballot already accepted.” The received date would be the date the voter voted early and the method is in person. You can also select these options in EV Scan with the radio button set to “Receiving In.” Once the first ballot has been rejected, the in-person EV ballot can be entered as the second ballot in either EV Search or EV Scan.

Provisional Ballots

A provisional ballot must be offered to anyone claiming they should be listed on the voter list and whose name is not on the voter list, who claims their information is incorrect, or is flagged to show identification but does not.

If a voter's name is not on the list or there is a listing error and it is on or before the last day to register, they should be provided an opportunity to register to vote. Follow the procedures in *Election Advisory 26-01: Registering During In-Person EV and Pre-Registrants*. If the voter does not want to register to vote, they should be provided a provisional ballot.

A voter casting a provisional ballot must complete the Provisional Ballot Affirmation. After completing the affirmation, they should be asked for identification. Even if they do not provide identification, they must be allowed to cast a provisional ballot. The voter should be given a Provisional Ballot Information Sheet, an EV/AV ballot, an EV-7 envelope, and a provisional ballot envelope.

In a primary, the voter should be provided with the ballot of the party they believed they are enrolled in, or, if they believe they are registered as unenrolled or in a designation, with the party ballot of their choice. The party of the ballot must be included on the affirmation and should also be noted on the provisional roster. The election officer will complete the provisional ballot roster with the voter's name, address, party, reason for casting a provisional ballot, and provisional ballot number.

The election worker must write "Provisional" in the header of the ballot and write the EV provisional ballot number, ward and precinct on the Information Sheet (which the voter keeps) and the provisional ballot envelope. The voter should be instructed to complete their ballot, seal it in the EV-7, and sign the affidavit on the EV-7. The EV-7 must then be placed in the provisional ballot envelope, which must be stored in a secure area and NOT mixed with other completed early voting ballots. The election worker must keep the completed Affirmation and complete the Provisional Voting Roster with the voter's name, address, date of birth, and EV provisional ballot number as well as the reason code.

A voter casting a provisional ballot must complete the Provisional Ballot Affirmation. After the voter completes the affirmation, they should be asked for identification. Even if the voter does not provide identification, they must be allowed to cast a provisional ballot. The voter should be given a Provisional Ballot Information Sheet, an EV/AV ballot, an EV7 early ballot envelope, and a provisional ballot envelope.

The information on the provisional ballot affirmation and roster will be needed to conduct the investigation into the qualifications of the voter. Provisional ballots must be resolved within 3 days of the primary and within 12 days of the election. Provisional ballots must also be entered in VRIS. Provisional early ballots, however, may be investigated at any point prior to Election Day. If the disposition is resolved before Election Day, you may send the early ballot to be counted at the polls with all other ballots.

Assistance to Voters

A voter voting early in-person may receive assistance. An early voter who informs the election worker that they need assistance due to physical disability or inability to read their ballot is entitled to receive assistance. They may designate a person of their choice to assist them or request that the election official assist them in completing their ballot. The best option is to inform the voter about the AutoMark and provide them an opportunity to mark their ballot independently. If the voter is being assisted, the assisting person must add their name in the appropriate place on the EV-7 affidavit envelope. If the voter is not able to sign the EV-7 envelope, the assisting person must sign the voter's name on the voter signature line.