



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Elections Division

## Election Advisory #20-03

Regarding Health & Safety Guidelines for Conducting Voting in Person

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COVID-19 has and continues to dramatically affect life in Massachusetts and presents a unique threat to the safety and administrative responsibility of conducting free, fair, and open elections within the Commonwealth. As a result, the General Court has made changes to certain provisions of the election laws to preserve the integrity and safety of the 2020 State Primaries and General Election.

All voters in Massachusetts can vote by mail in 2020 in addition to in-person voting options which will still be available for all elections, both at early voting locations and at polling places on Election Day. Voters are encouraged to determine the most safe and convenient way for them to participate in the upcoming elections.

In the current environment, the Elections Division wants to ensure that all election officials are prepared to protect the health and safety of poll workers and voters during in-person voting, both during the early voting period and on Election Day.

According to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), public places can be made safer through the use of:

- Measures to separate people from one another by encouraging social distancing;
- Administrative measures to change the way people work;
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect workers;
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces; and
- Adherence to the state's face covering requirements.

Decisions about procedures and policies affecting upcoming elections should, to the extent possible, be made as soon as possible to facilitate a safe election and minimize the risks and confusion associated with changing procedures at the last minute.

This document provides guidance, consistent with recently promulgated regulations, were developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and include changes to how elections are to be conducted this year, due to COVID-19.

The procedures in this document will help mitigate and minimize potential poll worker and voter exposure to COVID-19. While this guidance provides basic health and safety information, the situation concerning COVID-19 is fluid and elections officials are strongly encouraged to stay current on changes to public health guidance and state and local orders in order to increase safety protocols as necessary. At no point, however, shall such election officials be permitted to implement policies or procedures which do not comply with the minimum requirements of this document.

This guidance is not intended to revoke or repeal any employee rights, either statutory, regulatory or collectively bargained, nor is it a substitute for any existing safety and health-related regulatory requirements such as those of OSHA or the Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards, but must be implemented in addition to such standards.

### **POLLING PLACES & EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS**

This section details changes that must be made to or around Polling Places and Early Voting Locations (collectively referred to as “voting sites”) to comply with state requirements and other applicable public health guidance and to minimize risk to voters, poll workers and observers to the greatest extent possible.

#### **VOTING SITE LAYOUT**

All voting sites must be configured to encourage social distancing, minimize the risk to the safety and health of all persons using or working at the site, and comply with all applicable regulations and public health guidelines.

#### **General Requirements**

Voting booths and/or other privacy screens must be spread out within the voting site and may not be less than six (6) feet from the next nearest booth or privacy screen. Booths which contain spaces for multiple voters must be altered to prevent voters from using such spaces which are less than six feet from the next nearest available space, except that spaces which are positioned on directly opposite sides of the booth and include a solid barrier in between may be used. Spaces on such booths which are not available for use by voters due to these guidelines should be marked as unavailable, either with signage, colored tape, or some other designation.

Check-in tables should be placed as near to the entrance to the voting site as possible without presenting a safety risk to workers or voters. Check-out tables, if their use is not being waived by the local election official, should be placed as near to the exit of the voting site as possible without presenting a safety risk to workers or voters. Tables of both types may seat a maximum

of two poll workers, provided those workers are spaced a minimum of six feet from one another. When such spacing is not possible at one table, poll workers should be seated at separate tables. Check-in and, if applicable, check-out tables should be turned sideways or two tables placed next to each other to provide maximum distance between the poll worker and voters.

Tabulators or other permitted ballot boxes should be placed as near to the exit of the voting site as possible and must be positioned to ensure voters need not pass by voters who are entering the voting site. AutoMARK machines must be placed as normal, provided that an additional three (3) feet of empty space must be provided on all sides of the machine, except those sides which directly adjoin a wall or physical barrier, and that the AutoMARK is immediately and directly accessible from the entrance to the voting site. Sites must maintain a clear and direct path between AutoMARK machines and both the tabulators or ballot boxes and the exit.

### **Barriers and Partitions**

Where space is extremely limited and safe social distancing cannot be maintained, physical barriers or partitions such as acrylic, plexiglass or other materials that separate airspace should be used to provide additional safe guards and prevent exchange of air between individuals. Barriers should be installed at check-in and, if applicable, check-out tables. Such barriers should not be used in place of adequate distancing measures when such distancing is possible, though they may be used in addition to distancing measures in any case for added protection.

### **Ventilation**

All possible measures should be taken to increase ventilation and the flow of fresh outside air within and throughout voting sites. Absent inclement weather, doors and external windows should be opened, and propped as necessary, to increase airflow. When available, fans should be placed near doors and windows to the extent possible to increase airflow both into and out of the voting site. If possible, building ventilation and HVAC systems should be programmed to consistently and continuously draw outside air into the voting site. Air should not be mechanically recirculated within the site.

### **Signage**

To properly convey requirements and health measures at voting sites, new signage will be required in all voting sites. This section provides for the types and minimum requirements of such signage, though local election officials may post additional signage as they deem necessary and appropriate.

Signage should be displayed at entrances and other appropriate areas to remind voters and observers at every opportunity of physical distancing and face covering requirements and updated foot traffic patterns.

Signage should be visible at appropriate points within voting sites. Such signage should display each of the following messages, with no more than one message per sign:

- Please wear a face covering over your nose and mouth.
- Maintain physical distance of 6 feet from others.
- Use hand sanitizer at the check-in station.
- Place your own ballot into the tabulator or ballot box.
- Use hand sanitizer again after you vote.
- Your ballot is fragile; make sure your hands are dry and your sanitizer has evaporated before handling your ballot.

Large posters should be created, including in all mandated ballot languages in the municipality, which are broadly visible within each voting site and contain clear, declarative statements. Posters should include infographics, to the extent possible, depicting the expected behavior. Such posters should include the following language:

- Poll Workers Must...
  - Stay 6 feet away from other poll workers and voters.
  - Wear a face covering.
  - Wash or sanitize their hands frequently.
  - Sanitize items such as pens and poll books regularly.
  - Sanitize voting booths regularly.
- Voters Should...
  - Remain 6 feet away from other voters and poll workers.
  - Wear a face covering.
  - Wash or sanitize their hands before voting and after casting their ballot.

**Note:** *Hand sanitizer can damage scan ballots and make them unreadable, so voters should not use hand sanitizer while handling, or immediately before handling, their ballot. Encourage voters to make sure their hands are completely dry after they use hand sanitizer and before handing them a ballot.*

Additional signage should be posted throughout voting sites directing voters and poll workers to nearby handwashing stations and/or hand sanitizer dispensers. Any restrooms made available at the voting site should display signage encouraging proper hand-washing.

Any municipality with language requirements must ensure that signage is posted in the appropriate language(s) as well.

### **Floor Markings**

Foot traffic both within and outside all voting sites should be designed in a one-directional fashion to minimize interaction and proximity between individuals as much as possible.

Six foot intervals should be marked on the ground outside and leading to the entrance to the voting site, using chalk or another material, to encourage proper physical distancing while voters wait to enter the site.

Guidance should be placed on the floor of the voting site using arrows made from painters tape, adhesive decals, or another material to guide voters through the voting site, from the entrance to any established line, to the check-in stations, to the voting area, to the check-out (if applicable), to the ballot box, and finally to the exit from both the voting site and the building where the voting site is located.

In lines and other potential points of congregation, floor tape or decals should be used to mark 6-foot intervals. Some locations may require stanchions with belting, such as high traffic sites and to segregate different precincts. In voting sites with multiple precinct and high-traffic sites, a welcome staffer should be available to direct voters to the appropriate location and deliver verbal messages about face coverings and distancing in order to prevent voters and observers from congregating.

All voting sites should be set up ahead in advance of voting. If the voting site cannot be set up ahead of time, adequate supplies (e.g., painter's tape, chalk, etc.) and specific instructions as to placement should be provided to poll workers to ensure the voting site clearly indicates where voters should stand and along what routes foot traffic should flow.

### **Additional Required Postings**

Signage, posters, and other cues required by this document do not replace other postings still required by the General Laws, including specimen ballots, instructions to voters, penalty notices and the Voter's Bill of Rights. Such postings must still be made as normal.

## **PROCEDURES FOR VOTING SITES**

### **Protecting Election Workers**

Local election officials should offer training to election workers on COVID-19 safety. Training can include:

- Information on COVID-19, how to prevent it from spreading and which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible.
- Procedures for self-screening at home, including temperature and/or symptom checks.
- The importance of not coming to work if:
  - A worker has any symptoms of COVID-19 as described by the CDC, such as a fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, OR

- A worker was diagnosed with COVID-19 and has not yet been released from isolation, OR
- If, within the past 14 days, a worker has been identified as a close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and has not been released from quarantine.
- To return to work after a worker receives a COVID-19 diagnosis only if 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, their symptoms have improved, and the worker has had no fevers (without the use of fever reducing medications) for the last 24 hours. A worker without symptoms who was diagnosed with COVID-19 can return to work only if 10 days have passed since the date of the first positive COVID- 19 test.
- Seeking medical attention if symptoms become severe, including persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, or bluish lips or face.
- The importance of frequent hand-washing.
  - Scrubbing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% ethyl alcohol (preferred) or at least 70% isopropyl alcohol (a neurotoxin and eye irritant) where soap or running water are unavailable. Ensure that it does not contain methanol, which can be life-threatening.
- The importance of physical distancing, both at work and away from work.
- Proper use of face coverings, and their benefits and limitations.

Election workers should be instructed to report any and all COVID-19 symptoms they have experienced in the ten (10) days immediately preceding their scheduled work at a voting site to the local election official as soon as possible. Workers who report experiencing any symptoms listed by the CDC, or a temperature greater than 100° Fahrenheit, within the ten days before their scheduled assignment must not be allowed to report to work.

Prior to working at a voting site, the local election official should inquire of the election workers the following questions and record the worker's responses:

- Are you currently experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, like fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?
- Have you experienced any of these symptoms within the last 24 hours?
- Within the past 14 days, have you had contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
- Have you tested positive for an active COVID-19 infection in the past 10 days?
- Within the past 14 days, has a public health or medical professional told you to self-monitor, self-isolate, or self-quarantine because of concerns about COVID-19 infection?

If the worker answers yes, or otherwise in the affirmative, to any of the above questions, the worker cannot be allowed to work, must be sent home, and should be advised to seek medical attention.

### **Preparing the Voting Site**

Local election officials, if possible, should have voting sites deep-cleaned before and after use including early voting and both the September 1<sup>st</sup> Primaries and the November 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election. Regardless of deep-cleaning, election officials must also take the following proactive measures to prepare voting sites prior to both the early voting period and Election Day:

- Turn off public drinking fountains and cover them with a bag, tape, or other cover and post signs or other notice stating that they are inoperable;
- Work with facility management and election workers to improve fresh air intake and limit recirculation of air within the site to the greatest extent possible;
- Create layout templates for voting sites, designating placement of check-in tables, voting booths, tabulators, and other necessary elements of the voting site, making sure all elements are at least six (6) feet apart;
- Develop a plan for providing shelter or overhead protection for voters waiting outside the voting site in the event of inclement weather, if possible.

### **Interacting with Voters and Observers**

In order to minimize contact and proximity between poll workers and voters, the check-in process may require altering. If possible, station workers at point(s) of entry to communicate safety procedures and direct voters to check-in stations quickly to ease entry bottlenecks.

If possible, create and mark with tape or other methods a “neutral zone,” ideally 24” x 24” in size at the check-in table and any other tables used for processing inactive and provisional voters. Documents which are traditionally handed from voter to poll worker or from poll worker to voter should instead be placed in this neutral zone. This includes ballots and security sleeves, identification when necessary, and any documents needing to be signed by the voter such as affirmations of current and continuous residence and provisional ballot affirmations. This will prevent direct contact between poll workers and voters. These neutral zones should be regularly disinfected, not less frequently than after every tenth voter is checked in at a given table.

Poll workers should examine documents visually without physically taking or otherwise handling them where possible.

### **Sanitizing the Voting Site**

Local election officials should develop and distribute written disinfection protocols for voting sites which provide for the regular cleaning and sanitization of high-touch surfaces, shared items and technology, poll worker work areas, and all voting booths and equipment. Election officials must designate specific workers, who are not serving in a poll worker capacity, to perform such disinfection protocols to ensure the protocols are executed properly and without delay. When waiving the check-out table, if applicable, the Elections Division recommends re-assigning poll workers who would otherwise staff the check-out table to instead execute disinfection protocols and monitor social distancing, rather than eliminating the position

entirely. The remaining provisions in this section provide minimum mandatory requirements for such disinfection protocols.

High-touch surfaces, poll worker work areas, check-in table neutral zones, and voting booths should be disinfected a minimum of once every thirty (30) minutes using cleaning chemicals or other products approved for use against COVID-19 on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved list. Disinfectants labeled to be effective against emerging viral pathogens, diluted household bleach solutions (5 tablespoons per gallon of water), or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol that are appropriate for the surface should be used.

Ballot scanners, poll books or poll pads, and tabulators should be disinfected a minimum of once per hour using cleaning chemicals or other products approved for use against COVID-19 and for use on the machine. Poll workers must ensure tabulators and ballot boxes are completely dry after each disinfection before allowing the next voter to insert their ballot, as scan ballots are fragile and may be damaged by harsh chemicals. Election officials should contact any and all vendors of such machines to inquire about approved disinfectants.

AutoMARK machines must be thoroughly disinfected after each individual use by applying a cleaner approved for use both against COVID-19 and on the machine by the vendor. Single-use disposable ear covers should be used for device headphones and should be replaced after each use if the voter has not provided their own headphones. The poll worker responsible for replacing such covers must wash their hands properly after touching used covers and before applying new covers.

Other shared technology should be disinfected a minimum of once every thirty (30) minutes using cleaning chemicals or other products approved for use against COVID-19 and approved for use on the technology by the vendor. Election officials should contact any and all technology vendors of such technology to inquire about approved disinfectants.

Shared items like pens, phones, keyboards, etc. which are used by more than one person must be disinfected after each use. This includes ballot markers. Such items should be collected after they are used, sanitized, and made available for use again. After each use, pens or ballot markers should be collected and disinfected before being provided to other voters. Consider the use of pen holders marked "USED" and "CLEAN," to help poll workers keep track of which pens need to be disinfected. To reduce the need to clean shared items used by voters, a new pen should be provided for each voter. Alternatively, all voters should be encouraged to bring their own black pen to the voting site.

All sanitization and disinfection tasks and protocols must be conducted in full view. All workers should be provided with training on manufacturer's directions and OSHA requirements for safe use for all products used at the voting site. Workers using cleaners or disinfectants should wear gloves and eye protection as required by the product instructions.



Check hand sanitizer dispensers periodically and refill them before they run out. Hand sanitizer dispensers should be touchless whenever possible. Ensure handwashing stations are well-stocked with soap before the voting site is opened and throughout the day.

The Elections Division encourages local election officials to explore options for third-party assistance to meet increased cleaning demands if necessary, including outreach to local businesses to inquire about partnership opportunities.

### **Troubleshooting & Emergency Maintenance**

In the event of a malfunction of one or more tabulators or AutoMARK machines which requires maintenance or troubleshooting, the person responsible for maintenance must be allowed into the voting site but must adhere to social distancing guidelines, face covering requirements, and any other local policies or public health guidance. Such requirements should, if possible, be communicated to the responsible person, vendor and/or technicians in advance of their arrival at the site.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS**

These guidelines are directed toward municipal election officials and their workers as they prepare safe, clean environments for employees, election workers and volunteers (referred to collectively as “workers”), to ensure the September 1<sup>st</sup> State Primaries and November 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election can be conducted during the current COVID-19 pandemic while minimizing existing health risks and without creating new ones.

### **Action Plans**

Local election officials should develop site specific COVID-19 Infection Prevention Action Plan (“Action Plan(s)”) for every voting site after performing a comprehensive risk assessment of the voting site. In most cases, these action plans will consist of the procedures and precautions required in this document. Action plans should, at a minimum, contain the following elements:

- Name, title, and contact information of individuals at each site primarily responsible for implementing the plan.
- Specific COVID-19 safety instructions and training, including:
  - Cleaning and disinfection protocols;
  - Configuration for physical distancing and traffic flow guidelines, supplemented by placement of physical barriers where distancing is not possible;
  - Behaviors required of workers; and
  - Proper use of personal protective equipment.

Local election officials should provide workers with a copy of the action plan for the worker’s designated location in advance. Any action plans should be made available on the city or town’s website prior to the start of the Early Voting period for each election.

## **Training Poll Workers**

Poll worker trainings must be held in accordance with social distancing guidelines and any other applicable regulatory or public health guidance. The Elections Division encourages such trainings be modified from their usual format to create a safer learning environment. Online training can supplement and in some cases replace in-person training. Election officials may consider and implement any of the following options as alternative methods for training poll workers:

- Use of video conferencing software
- Use of pre-recorded video lectures which simulate up-close use of voting equipment
- Software that allows simulations of physical action using drag-and-drop actions (i.e., pulling a ballot across the screen to the scanner)

Written materials may be provided to workers for at-home review and study as a supplement to the required trainings. If provided, these materials should include examples of the forms the workers will use during Early Voting and on Election Day.

If in-person trainings are conducted, the class sizes should be limited to ensure all applicable guidance and regulation regarding social distancing, face coverings, and personal hygiene can be followed. . Hold such trainings in a location that allows poll workers to have hands-on practice with the equipment one person at a time. It may also be possible to have small groups in a large room, like a town hall auditorium or school gymnasium, where tabulators and AutoMARKs can be placed at least six (6) feet apart, with one person per piece of equipment.

In addition to traditional poll worker trainings, local election officials must provide training and information on COVID-19 safety and the specific measures required within this document as previously noted.

The Elections Division further strongly encourages training poll workers in basic conflict negotiation and de-escalation tactics in anticipation of possible conflict regarding physical distancing, wearing face coverings, and personal hygiene requirements. Suggestions for these tactics are included below.

## **Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment**

Local election officials are required to procure ample quantities of cleaning supplies required under “Sanitizing the Voting Site” well in advance of all elections. They are further encouraged to procure supplies of masks or other face coverings, gloves, and hand sanitizer to provide to all poll workers and to voters when possible.

The Elections Division will supply local election officials with Precinct Infection Protection Kits. These kits include equipment to keep both poll workers and voters safe, including disinfectant wipes, surgical masks, hand sanitizer, and gloves. These kits are intended for use in polling places on Election Day, but may be used to supply Early Voting Locations with necessary

supplies, provided that sufficient supplies remain for use on Election Day. Election officials are strongly encouraged to supplement these kits with outside procurements.

### **PPE & Hygiene Protocols for Workers**

Local election officials are required to provide face coverings to elections staff and poll workers. Elections staff and poll workers can utilize their own face coverings. All poll workers must properly wear a face covering at all times while in the voting site. Proper use of face coverings requires:

- Coverage of the mouth and nose,
- Washing hands before and after use or adjustment,
- Washing or replacing the covering after each shift,
- Avoiding touching the eyes, nose, or mouth,
- Avoiding touching the front of the mask when putting it on, adjusting it, or removing it.

Local election officials are required to provide workers with disposable gloves, especially in high traffic settings and areas where contact with items others have touched is routine. Some of these settings include ballot handling, customer service and voting locations, especially those with higher traffic. Workers should wear gloves in these settings and at other points of contact with items that others have touched.

Wearers should not touch their mouth, nose, eyes or face covering with gloved hands. They should wash hands before putting gloves on and after removing them. Gloves must be disposed of and replaced after washing hands, after using the restroom, after eating or drinking, or after any other activities that may contaminate the gloves, including touching unsanitized items.

Further, workers must properly and frequently wash their hands with soap and warm water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds. Where soap or a water supply is unavailable, use hand-sanitizer that is at least 60% ethyl alcohol or at least 70% isopropyl alcohol.

Gloves and hand sanitizer are being provided by the Elections Division.

### **Conflict Negotiation & De-escalation Tactics**

Experience suggests that face coverings can be a common if unfortunate point of conflict. While voters are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in the polling place, all polling places should be set up to be socially distanced and therefore voters must still be allowed to vote, even if not wearing a face covering. Accordingly, if a voter refuses to wear a mask, greater care must be given to maximizing physical distancing. However, voters who arrive expecting conflict may have difficulty recognizing their right to vote is being respected because of their stress level on arrival.

Workers should use de-escalation measures to lower the stress level of the voter and reach the best possible outcome. Since workers themselves may also find these encounters stressful, it

will be helpful to practice de-escalation measures beforehand, as well as those measures required when de-escalation fails, using role-playing.

De-escalation measures include:

- Speaking with a calm voice at a normal volume and communicating with a posture and expression of confidence that the voter will understand that their right to vote will be respected.
- Resisting the urge to engage on the underlying objection.
- Repeatedly reassuring the voter that they will be allowed to vote by using words such as “You’re going to get to vote. We will get you to the voting booth as quickly as possible.”
- Remembering that serving the voter quickly, with less conflict, will best ensure your safety and that of other workers and voters.

Local election officials should determine the appropriate response, including possible law enforcement involvement, when de-escalation related to face covering fails. Officials should have specific incident response plans for each voting site.

Election workers should role-play the possibility of a negative outcome to de-escalation and should be made aware of signs that de-escalation is failing, like changes in posture or tone from the voter that suggest they are getting angrier despite de-escalation attempts.

Election workers should be provided with instructions to call the local election office, or the state Elections Division, if they feel threatened or intimidated, if voters feel threatened or intimidated, or if a disturbance of any kind occurs. Election workers should be instructed to call local law enforcement first if they believe the immediate physical safety of any person in the polling place is in jeopardy.

More than one election worker should be present in any situation of conflict, with one worker engaging the voter and the other standing back to assess whether the situation is capable of being resolved quickly and without further conflict or whether further intervention is necessary. When deciding to seek outside help in dealing with the situation, an election worker should consider whether time devoted to the upset voter is significantly delaying other voters or otherwise disrupting the voting process. Election officials should provide election workers with specific instructions and messaging for interacting with voters who are unwilling or unable to follow guidelines, including methods for defusing potentially difficult situations with voters who insist on not abiding by health and safety requirements.

**NOTE: All voters must still be allowed to exercise their right to vote regardless of face covering or distancing compliance.**

## **MEASURES PERTAINING TO VOTERS & OBSERVERS**

### **Requirements to Enter a Voting Site**

Face coverings are strongly encouraged for all individuals wishing to enter a voting site. Anyone entering a voting site should be informed of the social distancing requirements and be provided with instruction on how to vote safely.

### **Rights of Voters are Unchanged**

Though face coverings are strongly encouraged for entry to a voting site, a voter may not be turned away from the voting site, or denied the right to vote, for refusal to wear a face covering. If a voter refuses to wear a face covering, or responds with animosity or hostility to the request, follow the de-escalation protocols provided above, along with any additional such protocols devised and prepared by the local election official. Allow the voter to check-in and cast a ballot as quickly and efficiently as possible while minimizing the time the voter spends in the voting site and minimizing the voter's proximity to workers and other voters.

### **Disallowed Face Coverings**

Some voters may arrive at a voting site wearing branded face coverings that represent a candidate or ballot measure; this may be deemed electioneering. If this occurs, workers may politely request that the voter use a different face covering, or in the alternative, provide another face covering, if available. Notify these voters that such face coverings violate the "150-foot rule" and cannot be allowed inside the voting site.

### **Provision of PPE**

Election officials and municipalities may, but are not required to, provide PPE to voters or to observers. Supplies provided by the Elections Division in Precinct Infection Prevention Kits may only be provided to voters as quantities allow. Any PPE provided to voters and observers must comply with CDC recommendations but need not be of medical grade or quality.

### **Possible Restrictions on Observers**

Election officials may limit the number of observers at one time and may require observers to provide advance notice of the location where and time when they want to observe. With reduced capacity within a voting site because of COVID-19, the number of observers that can be accommodated may be effected and further limited.

Any limits and advance notice requirements must be determined and publicized prior to the beginning of the early voting period and must be posted on the municipal website and at each voting site.

Observers must use face coverings and must maintain a minimum physical distancing of six (6) feet from all other observers, voters, and poll workers. Observers must also be asked to take such other measures as hand hygiene, cough etiquette and general respect for cleanliness and sanitation. Where observers prove unwilling to comply with guidelines, election officials should

work with the party, candidate or organization to resolve differences or bring in alternate observers.

### **Messaging to Voters**

Local election officials are strongly encouraged to use all channels of communication, including municipal websites, official social media accounts, local and regional media outlets, and direct communication, to encourage voters to vote safely. Consider creating a COVID-19 safety page on your website and providing a link in all routine communication with voters.

Messaging to voters should include the following points:

- Voting by mail is a safe choice to avoid exposure to COVID-19 while voting.
- Mail-in ballots may be returned by mail, in person, or to secure ballot drop-boxes where available.
- If you must enter a voting location, please:
  - Wear a face covering.
  - Maintain physical distance of at least six feet from people not from your household.
  - Use hand sanitizer before approaching the check-in station and after voting.
  - Follow any additional guidance provided at the voting location
- Voting during traditionally lower demand times, like mid-morning and mid-afternoon, or lower traffic early voting days, can make the voting experience quicker.

Setting realistic expectations for voters is important. Communicate clearly with voters about what they can expect and what is expected of them to keep everyone as safe as possible. Tell voters what to expect in the polling place, including the following:

- Wait times are likely to be longer because of social distancing.
- Lines will look longer as a result of social distancing.
- Spaces for lining up may be marked with tape inside and chalk outside.