

COVID-19 Guidance for Utah Election Polling Officials

Who is the guidance for?

This document provides interim guidance during the outbreak of novel coronavirus disease 2019 (abbreviated “COVID-19”) to protect the health and safety of Utah election polling employees, volunteers and voters. This guidance provides considerations for traditional “in-facility” polling sites and also at drive-through and curbside polling sites. Recommendations will be revised as more information becomes available. Refer to the following resources for the most current information.

- Monitor the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website regularly:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>.
- Specifically, see CDC’s Recommendations for Election Polling Locations at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations.html>.
- Additional guidelines for opening public facilities can be found here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>.
- List of products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims:
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- Information about heat injuries for polling workers who are working outside:
<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.html>

Why is the guidance being issued?

This guidance is intended to help polling site employees, volunteers and voters take appropriate steps to protect themselves from potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The guidance includes considerations to help policymakers and local communities make decisions about how to best reduce the potential for exposure to COVID-19 while still operating polling sites.

General Guidance

Each polling site and operation presents unique challenges. County election officials should work with their local health department to discuss and plan for situations and conditions not addressed in these guidelines.

In-facility Polling Sites

Recommendations for Informing Voters Prior to Accessing Polling Sites

The following recommendations for informing voters should occur BEFORE the Election Day. County election officials are strongly encouraged to consider the following recommendations:

- Promote the convenience, reliability, and safety of mail-in ballots. This may include developing messaging responsive to past and ongoing concerns about mail-in ballots.
- Provide public information about the symptoms and risks associated with COVID-19 infections on election information websites and mailed information. Include **recommendations that persons with a fever, respiratory symptoms, or who believe they are sick to stay home**. Additionally, provide options such as curbside voting for voters who are sick on Election Day and notify voters of that information prior to Election Day.
- Notify voters about recommendations to wear a mask while at the polling site and that all polling workers will also be required to wear a mask, gloves, and eye protection (e.g., face shield, or safety goggles, or other eye barrier that prevents wrap around currents) and disinfect polling equipment on regular intervals.
- Encourage early voting, where voter crowds may be smaller throughout the day, especially for high-risk individuals like older adults and those with serious medical conditions. This minimizes the number of individuals with whom voters come in contact h.
- Encourage voters planning to vote in-person on election day to arrive at off-peak times or consider staggering voting times For example, if voter crowds are lighter mid-morning, advertise that information in advance to the community or establish varied voting times
- Encourage moving election polling sites away from long-term care facilities and facilities housing older persons to minimize COVID-19 exposures among older individuals and those with serious medical conditions.

Polling Workers

- All polling employers and workers should stay home if they are experiencing a fever, respiratory symptoms, or believed to be sick.
- Assess each polling worker's symptoms before the start of the workday.
 - Check all polling workers' temperatures before the start of each workday and dismiss all workers with a temperature of 100.4° F or who answer yes to any of the screening questions.
 - Ask the following screening questions:
 - Have you come in contact with someone known or suspected to have COVID-19 in the past 2 weeks?
 - Have you had a fever in the past 24 hours?
 - Have you taken any medications that would reduce a fever in the past 24 hours (e.g., Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen)
 - Have you had a cough in the past 24 hours?
 - Have you had difficulty breathing in the past 24 hours?
 - Have you had unexplained body aches in the past 24 hours?

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Polling Place Set-up

- Ensure bathrooms at the polling site are adequately supplied with soap, water, and drying materials so voters and staff can wash their hands.
- Provide touchless hand sanitizer for voters to use immediately upon entering and leaving the polling facility.
- Consider providing disposable masks for voters who come without a mask, but are willing to wear one.
- As much as possible, only use equipment and furniture with hard, easily cleanable surfaces. Disinfect surfaces, voting equipment, pens, etc., at regular intervals.
- Maintain a well-ventilated polling site by keeping doors propped open, if possible, to increase air flow and eliminate unnecessary touching of doors and door handles. Utilizing fans in windows blowing out of the facility can increase air flow.
- Consider using a Plexiglas barrier (or similar device) to provide a sneeze shield for polling workers at the registration area.
- Consider rescheduling all non-election activities at the polling site to minimize crowding and close personal contact.

Voting Booths

- Locate voting booths six feet or more from each other and all facing the same direction.
- Polling workers assisting at voting stations should wear more protection (face shield, or safety goggles, or other eye barrier that prevents wrap around currents, mouth-nose mask, gloves).
- While working with a voter, polling workers should position themselves as much as possible to the side or slightly behind the voter (not in the direct front in the breathing zone).
- Polling workers should avoid touching any of the voting booth equipment, as much as possible.
- Polling workers should disinfect the voting station equipment after each voter (specifically the parts observed to have been touched or likely to be touched by the next voter).
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use before and after using the voting machine and the final step in the voting process.
- Limit nonessential visitors. For example, polling workers should be encouraged not to bring children, grandchildren, etc., with them to the polling sites.

Greeters and Volunteers

- Greeters and volunteers should be required to wear masks, gloves, and eye protection (e.g., face shield, or safety goggles, or other eye barrier that prevents wrap around currents) during all interactions such as performing temperature checks at the entrance, line management duties, wiping down voting booths and equipment, etc.
- Greeters and volunteers should practice appropriate hand hygiene by frequently washing their hands with soap and water or by using hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Registration

- Polling workers at the registration desk should wear a mask, gloves, and eye protection (e.g., face shield, or safety goggles, or other eye barrier that prevents wrap around currents).
- Provide hand sanitizer at the registration desk that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Where possible, polling workers should maintain a distance of six feet between themselves and voters; close enough to fulfil their legal obligation to observe, but far enough to stay out of breathing zones.
- Polling workers should minimize interaction (the amount of time and verbal communications) that occur with the voters.
- Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes, hugs, high fives). Include this reminder on signs about social distancing.
- If requiring identification, polling workers should ask voters to hold it or place it where the worker can see it to copy appropriate information, but polling workers should not physically touch the ID.
- Disinfect registration tables, pens, pencils and equipment at regular intervals.

Voter Line-up

- Social distancing is essential to ensuring a safe voting experience for employees, volunteers and voters.
- Maintain at least six feet between voters.
- Use signs and visual cues to enforce social distancing. For example:
 - Use signs to indicate voter lines and waiting areas.
 - Use tape or other floor markings to designate appropriate spacing for lines and distance between polling workers and voters.
- Consider regulating entrance into the inside of the polling facility to accommodate social distancing. If possible, designate separate entry and exit ways inside the polling facility.

Voters

- Voters should clean their hands using soap and water or hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the facility or voting area.
- Soap and water can be used if a polling place has bathrooms or portable hand washing stations.
- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used if a facility does not have facilities available for hand washing.
- Polling workers or volunteers can help direct voters to hand washing or sanitizing areas.

Drop-off Ballots

- If possible, provide the drop-off ballot location at a separate location from the main part of the polling site. This may require an additional polling worker to provide security to the site. Examples may include: 1) the facility has two entrances on the same side of the building; one can be designated for drop-off ballots, and the other for in-person voting; 2) the facility has a protected area near the entrance, but outside; 3) the facility has multiple entrances; use signs to direct voters to the drop-off entrance or the in-person voting entrance.

- The polling worker at the drop-off ballot location should follow the same recommendations for the registration desk workers.

Closing the Polling Site

Facility custodial staff should follow CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting the polling site found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>.

In-facility Polling Sites with Wait-in-Vehicle Option

This option allows voters to wait in their vehicles until notified they can enter the polling facility. Notification may occur through text messages, an app, or a website. If electronic notification is not an option, follow the guidelines below for using a polling worker to notify voters they can enter the polling facility.

Polling Worker Protection When Notifying Voters to Enter Polling Facility

- Polling workers should wear masks, gloves, and eye protection (e.g., face shield, or safety goggles, or other eye barrier that prevents wrap around currents).
- Polling workers should maintain at least six feet from voters as much as possible.
- Polling workers should regularly communicate with the polling site registration desk.
- Polling workers should regulate entrance so that the maximum entrance rate is one individual at each registration desk station and/or each voting booth at a time. During slower voting times, a stricter regulation should be used (i.e., one person at a time, all the way through the voting process).

Drive-through Only Polling Sites

This option allows voters to vote while in the voter's vehicle. Polling workers go from vehicle to vehicle to assist all eligible voters in their vehicles.

Polling Worker Protection

- Polling workers assisting drive-through voters should wear full face and hand protection (face shield, or safety goggles, or other eye barrier that prevents wrap around currents, mouth-nose mask, gloves).
- Avoid touching vehicles or voters.
- Limit the amount of verbal communication as much as possible. If possible, consider using written or pre-recorded instructions to minimize the need for lengthy verbal communication.
- Identify pens, clipboards, or other devices as drive-through equipment only and sanitize after each use.
- Minimize face-to-face interactions by verifying information through the vehicle window.
- Polling workers should be close enough to the vehicle window to verify ID, but without handling it.
- Offer hand sanitizer to drive-through voters before they vote their ballot.
- Polling workers can slide the ballot through a window that has slightly been rolled down.

- Voters can slide the ballot back through the window into the privacy sleeve held by the polling worker, which will be transported back to the voting area by the polling worker. The privacy sleeve can be discarded after several uses.
- Polling workers should change gloves and wash their hands after interaction with each vehicle.
- Practice behaviors that minimize the risk of heat injury. For more information on heat injuries, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.html>.

Curbside Voting

Curbside voting should be offered to voters who are symptomatic or cannot enter a polling facility due to a disability. Social distancing should be enforced.

Refer to the Drive-through voting guidance.

Processing Absentee Ballots

- Although handling absentee ballots is an unlikely source of transmission, letter openers may be used to open ballot envelopes.
- High volume of absentee ballots may require some modification of Election Day processing.
- If using gloves to open absentee ballot envelopes, avoid touching your face, eyes or mouth before removing your gloves.
- Workers handling mail-in ballots should practice hand hygiene frequently.
- No additional precautions are recommended for storage of ballots.

References

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4. National Association of Secretaries of State. Issue Briefing: Election Emergencies & COVID-19. 2020. <https://www.nass.org/resources/issue-briefing-election-emergencies-covid-19> Accessed 22 May 2020.
5. TMJ4 News. Milwaukee’s last day of drive-up voting draws hundreds. April 6, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8B6didvi_s.