



10/19/2020

Guidance for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Election Polling Places

Under the Public Act 101-0642 Section 2B-35(a), the Lake County Clerk's Office is to take every measure available to comply with Early Voting and Election Day safety and health practices outlined in communications provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health and Governor J.B. Pritzker's office on August 26, 2020.

I. Background

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). COVID-19 spreads easily from person-to-person via respiratory droplets. Key measures to prevent transmission include the use of face coverings, maintaining social distance of 6 feet or greater, and frequent hand washing.

II. Purpose

This guidance provided a framework for safe operations of election polling place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Definitions

Community settings (congregate settings) are mostly non-health care settings visited by the public. Examples include election polling places, households, daycares, and businesses.

Host Site / Hosting Organization is the business or community entity which owns the building and signed the *Voting Site Contract* with the Lake County Clerk's Office.

Cleaning is the removal of dirt and germs from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs, but it does decrease the number of germs and spread of infection.

Disinfecting uses chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. Disinfecting after cleaning further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

Noncompliant voter is a voter who either refuses or for other reasons does not wear a face covering within or around the polling place.

Vulnerable populations are people at higher risk for COVID-19, and this group includes older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.

IV. Polling Location Plans

- a. Under Illinois Guidelines, the Lake County Clerk's Office has named the Lake County Clerk's Office polling site coordinator as the COVID-19 Safety and Compliance Officer. The Safety and Compliance Officer will oversee the implementation of all COVID-19 safety plans for each of 17 Early Voting and 123 Election Day polling places in Lake County's jurisdiction.

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- ii. *Working Elections During COVID-19* safety training was created and implemented to all election judges, site managers, and technical representatives. Training was not issued to state's attorneys, poll watchers, or the media, who may occupy the polling place with valid credentials issued by the Lake County Clerk's Office. Topics included:
 - i. Cleaning and disinfection protocols.
 - ii. Configuration for social distancing, supplemented by traffic flow guidelines and placement of physical barriers where distancing is not possible.
 - iii. Behaviors required of election workers: self-monitoring to make sure they do not have symptoms of COVID-19, wearing face coverings, and social distancing.
 - iv. Procedures to ensure compliance with requirements for social distancing, wearing a face covering, and disinfecting all touched surfaces during the entire voting process.

V. Physical Environment for Polling Locations

- a. The Lake County Clerk's Office under state guidelines has relocated polling places previously stationed in nursing homes, long-term care facilities, and senior living residences, to minimize COVID-19 exposure among the most vulnerable individuals, including older individuals and those with chronic medical conditions.
- b. Each Hosting Organization should place signage at entrances to encourage voters to wear face coverings. Under state guidelines, no voter may be refused the opportunity to vote if they are unable to wear a face covering for any reason.
- c. Election judges will be required to wear face coverings. Since signature verification by two election judges is required by Illinois election law, stationing election judges 6 feet apart will not allow for the procedure to take place. The verification process will be best achieved by election judges sitting approximately 3 feet apart, wherever possible.
- d. Voting booths will be placed at least 6 feet apart. Due to varying shapes and sizes of our polling places, the number of booths available to voters may be reduced which may impact the wait times of voters. This follows the IDPH (Illinois Department of Public Health) guidelines, and we will make every effort to minimize the voters' wait time and possible disruption. All voters have the option of Early or Election Day voting at the Lake County Fairgrounds or the Lake County Main Courthouse Lobby, which have been set up to serve all voters regardless of precinct. These two large polling places have the capability of offering extended indoor queuing space should longer lines of socially distanced voters result.
- e. Visual cues to ensure social distancing of 6 feet, including:
 - i. The entrance and exit will be clearly marked, where possible, along with signage to safely direct voters in and out of the polling place. The Lake County Clerk's Office will make additional signage available to all Hosting Organizations for their placement on doors throughout the building indicating doors not to be used by voters. Any site which uses a room not located on the main floor and cannot be accessed under American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines should have a ramp or elevator available for voters in need. Signage should not interfere with such ADA equipment.

- ii. Based on structural elements, all polling places will be laid out with a pattern to move voters through a one-directional, circular flow.
 - iii. Election Judges will guide voters and poll watchers with visual cues, barriers, props, and signage.
 - iv. Mini orange construction cones will be placed on the floor to designate 6-foot intervals. Where allowable by the polling places, adhesive labels and lines may be deployed. Consideration is to be taken to avoid damage to any polling place which could pose a liability for the Lake County Clerk's Office. The Lake County Clerk's Office will take responsibility for visual cues, barriers, props, and signage within the voting room and a reasonable distance beyond may have markers as well. Some polling places may be open for normal business in addition to offering voting and may have visual cues as well.
- f. The Lake County Clerk's Office is requesting a specific area for election judges and site managers to take breaks that allows social distancing when eating or drinking. If a separate room for judges near the voting room is not possible, workers should be provided an area in the voting room which is away from the voters by at least 15 feet on all sides. If partitions are available from the Hosting Organization, partitions should be used around the election judges' and site manager's break area where possible.
- g. The Lake County Clerk's Office is unable to provide outdoor enclosures (i.e., tents, awnings, or canopies) for those waiting outside in case of inclement weather. Many of the polling places do offer vestibules, hallways, awnings, and other means which can be used for queuing voters while still maintaining social distancing of 6-foot intervals. If a Hosting Organization wishes to place tents, awnings, or canopies outside on their property for voters, they may do so. The Lake County Clerk's Office assumes no liability for damages which may result from the usage of such equipment. For reimbursement of such enclosures email a copy of the invoice to Bruce Zifka (bzifka@lakecountyclerk.gov) no later than November 5, 2020.
- h. The Lake County Clerk's Office is unable to staff judges for the parking areas to encourage voters to wait in their vehicles if the line is long. Under Illinois guidelines, all voters are to be in line when the polls close at 7 PM. Voters still in their cars at 7 PM and not in line are ineligible to vote under such guidelines. Due to anticipated election judge cancelations in response to changes in the COVID-19 statistics, the consideration of the health and safety of election judges, and the high possibility for inclement weather, the Lake County Clerk's Office is unable to allocate additional manpower to work outside.
- i. All Lake County polling places have a large enough voter population which would make curbside voting for all voters an impractical option. If voters are unable to enter the polling site, voters should call the Lake County Clerk's Office at least 24 hours before polling place arrival to arrange for curbside voting. This advance notice allows the Lake County Clerk's Office to notify judges, minimize voter disruption, and decrease exposure to the weather.
- i When a voter arrives to curbside vote, two election judges will exit the polling place with the voter's pre-printed application for the voter to sign. They will re-enter the polling place to verify the voter's signature against the signature on file in the EPollbook. If the voter's application signature matches the voter's record, the election judges will acquire the voter's ballot, a clipboard, and a privacy sleeve, and a pen, if requested. If the voter's signatures do not match, the election judges will have to return into the polling place to print the necessary affidavits and provide them to the voter for completion.

Voter will mark the ballot, which is on a clipboard and return it to the election judges. Election judges will return to the polling place and cast the voter's marked ballot in the ballot bin. An election judge will return to the voter's car with a receipt

and sticker to confirm that the ballot was accepted by the tabulator. Should the tabulator indicate any over- or under-votes, the ballot will be returned to the voter via under a privacy sleeve, and the voter will need to decide how to proceed. If the voter wishes to spoil the ballot, all materials necessary to spoil the current ballot and issue a new ballot will be collected and brought back to the voter's car by two judges.

- ii. Scheduled curbside voting which allows the election judges to return to the inside of the polling place after short exposure to the elements will be in place. To minimize exposure to the elements, election judges will rotate duties when serving scheduled curbside voters.
- j. In consideration with the technology presently available within the Lake County Clerk's Office, signage must be in English and Spanish for all voters as required by law. The Lake County Clerk's Office is unable to supply Braille signage or audible messaging except on Express Vote machines.
- k. The Lake County Clerk's Office asks all Hosting Organizations to ensure ventilation systems are properly operating and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible. Polling places may open windows and doors, if needed, only if doing so does not pose a safety or health risk to poll workers, voters, or children accompanying voters.

VI. Shared objects

- a. The Lake County Clerk's Office has provided many press releases, social media campaigns, email messages to voters, and print ads to encourage voters to bring their own pen (BYOP). Single-use disposable ballot privacy sleeves and ballot marking stylus will be available to voters.
- b. Reusable ballot privacy sleeves will be laminated to allow for better sanitization between voters. All reusable materials requested by voters will be sanitized after use by Ballot Box Judges before they are made available again to another voter.
- c. Headphones on the ADA ballot marking equipment will be disinfected by Ballot Box Judges between each usage.
- d. "I Voted" stickers will be separated and available for pick up near the ballot box for all voters who would like one.

VII. Preventative Actions in Election Polling Location

- a. A supply of face coverings for voters that arrive at the polling place without one will be available. Due to the absence of outdoor election workers, face coverings are unable to be placed outside the voting room. The Hosting Organization may provide representatives stationed outside the voting room to offer face coverings to patrons entering the building but may not force anyone there for voting to wear one.
- b. The Lake County Clerk's Office and its commissioned elections team members are prohibited from preventing a noncompliant voter from casting a ballot for refusal to wear a face covering outside or inside a polling place. Hosting Organizations are also being prohibited from preventing a noncompliant voter from casting a ballot for refusal to wear a face covering outside or inside a polling place. The Lake County Clerk's Office will not be screening voters inside or outside the polling place for COVID-19 symptoms. No Hosting Organization is authorized by the Lake County Clerk's office to conduct any kind of COVID-19 health screening or temperature checks of voters.
- c. Election judges under the guidance of the Lake County Clerk's Office will take every reasonable action to separate noncompliant voters from those wearing face coverings by increasing the space between compliant and non-compliant voters by an additional 6 feet.

- d. Plexiglas barriers between election judges and voters will be used in all Early Voting and Election Day polling places across Lake County.
- e. Where possible, the Lake County Clerk's Office has deployed large print instructions on laminated cards to allow voters to maintain distance and to facilitate communication through face coverings.
- f. Election judges will monitor and remind voters to maintain social distancing to the best of their ability. The most important duty of the election judge is to administer a safe and secure election. Leaving the voting room may not always be possible while upholding the duties. The Hosting Organization may provide representatives to monitor lines outside the voting room.
- g. Routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched objects and surfaces in at the polling place should be the responsibility of the Hosting Organization. (e.g., tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.).
 - i. Routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched elections materials within the voting room shall be the responsibility of the election judges working within the polling place. (e.g., ballot privacy sleeves, ballot marking pens, signing pads, grace registration clipboards, etc.)
- h. The election judges will routinely clean and disinfect the frequently touched screens and buttons of all ballot marking and tabulating equipment using alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol.
- i. The Hosting Organization will ensure bathrooms at the polling place are adequately supplied with soap, water, and drying materials for handwashing.
- j. The Lake County Clerk's Office will provide voters with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use before or after the use of any voting equipment.
- k. The Lake County Clerk's Office asks all Hosting Organizations to place signage in high traffic areas outside the voting room encouraging all building occupants, whether voters or patrons of your organization, to practice proper hygiene.

VIII. Preventative Actions for Polling Location Workers

- a. The Lake County Clerk's Office is requiring all election judges, site managers, and technical representatives to always wear a face covering in the polling place.
- b. The Lake County Clerk's Office is requiring election judges, site managers, and technical representatives working within the polling place to self-screen for possible COVID-19 symptoms prior to performing their official election duties during Early Voting and on Election Day.

The screening will include the following questions:

- i. Health screening questions.
 - i. Do you have a fever, chills, runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, new loss of taste or smell, or sore throat?
 - 1. Any polling personnel reporting a temperature of greater than 100.4°F (38°C) or symptoms of COVID-19 should be instructed to go home and be evaluated by a medical provider. They should not return to the polling place until symptoms have resolved, it has been a minimum of 10 days from onset of symptoms, and at least 1 day from the last fever without fever reducing medications.
 - ii. Within the last 14 days, have you had close contact (within 6 feet for greater than

15 minutes) with someone who has COVID-19?

1. Any polling personnel who reports close contact with someone who has COVID-19 should not return to the polling location until 14 days from the last exposure.
- c. Practice hand hygiene frequently throughout the day. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- d. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Coughing or sneezing must be contained by an appropriate face covering.
- e. Stagger breaks so polling place workers are socially distanced when eating or drinking.