



Election Officials Manual

Chapter 14: Appointing and Training Election Inspectors

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I. Introduction

This chapter explains how election inspectors are appointed and trained. Questions about the content of this chapter should be directed to Elections@Michigan.gov.

II. Appointing election inspectors

Election inspector appointments must be made by the city or township election commission at least 21 days before each election. Election inspectors must be appointed at least five days prior to the last election inspector training session to be held in the jurisdiction. The election commission must notify each major political party's county chair of the names and political party affiliations of appointed election inspectors, as well as the polling place or AVCB in which each election inspector will serve, no more than two business days after the election inspector's appointment. This notification must be in writing and may be mailed, personally delivered, or emailed to the county chairs.

The election commission must appoint at least three election inspectors to serve at every in-person polling place on Election Day, at every early voting site, and at every absent voter counting board (AVCB) established by the city or township. The election commission must designate one election inspector assigned to each in-person precinct or AVCB as the chairperson of that polling place, early voting site, or AVCB.

If a county is conducting early voting under a county agreement, then the county election commission is responsible for appointing election inspectors.

The election commission determines who is appointed. No person is entitled to be appointed by the election commission to serve as an election inspector simply because they have applied.

Election inspector qualifications

Any person 16 years of age or older may serve as an election inspector. If the person is 18 years of age or older, the person must be registered to vote in Michigan, although they do not need to be registered to vote in the jurisdiction in which they are serving as an election inspector.



At least three election inspectors appointed to each precinct, early voting site, or AVCB must be 18 years of age or older. An election inspector less than 18 years of age cannot serve as the chairperson.

A person may not serve as an election inspector if any of the following apply:

- Has been convicted of a felony or an election crime
- Is a candidate for office on any ballot in that polling place, EV site, or AVCB (including Precinct Delegate and write-in candidates)
- Is the parent, child, sibling, or spouse of a candidate
- Is any other relative of a candidate and lives in the same household as the candidate

Application to serve as an election inspector

No person shall be appointed an election inspector unless the person has submitted a completed application to serve as an election inspector to the clerk of the city or township where the person wishes to serve. The application must include:

- The applicant's name
- The applicant's home address
- If the applicant is over 18 years of age, the precinct where the applicant is registered to vote
- The applicant's date of birth
- The applicant's political party affiliation
- The applicant's education, employment, and other qualifications to serve as an election inspector

Additionally, the applicant must certify on the application that they are not a member or advocate of any political party other than the party with whom they indicated an affiliation on the application.

The application to serve as an election inspector must be fully and truthfully completed. A person who submits an application that includes incomplete or false information is ineligible to serve as an election inspector.



Election inspector training requirements

No person may serve as an election inspector if the person has not either successfully completed an election inspector training within the prior two years or has passed an election inspector exam administered by the election commission of the city or township in which the person wishes to serve. A city or township election commission is not required to administer an election inspector exam unless an election inspector training has not been held in the prior two years.

A person fails to complete election inspector training if they do not attend the training, if they leave before the training is completed, or if they are asked to leave the training due to disruptive behavior or a similar reason. A person who fails the training requirement cannot serve as an election inspector.

Party affiliation requirements

The election commission should appoint at least one election inspector from each major political party to each precinct, early voting site, or AVCB. In addition, the election commission should, as nearly as possible, attempt to achieve partisan balance in the election inspectors assigned to each precinct, early voting site, or AVCB.

No later than May 15 of each year, the chair of the county for each major political party may submit a list of persons who are interested in serving as election inspectors to the clerks of the cities and townships within the county. Clerks may, but are not required to, select election inspectors from the lists submitted by the county chairs. A person included on a list submitted by a county chair must fill out an application to serve as an election inspector.

The election commission may appoint election inspectors who have expressed a preference for a minor political party. However, certain tasks in the election process must be performed by election inspectors of opposing major political parties.

Election inspector and chairperson vacancies

If a person appointed to be an election inspector or precinct chairperson by the city or township election commission cannot serve as an election inspector, the election commission must fill the vacancy with another qualified applicant. If the election inspector designated as the precinct



chairperson is not present on Election Day, the other election inspectors present at the precinct, early voting site, or AVCB should choose one of the remaining election inspectors to serve as chairperson.

III. Training election inspectors

The county clerk is responsible for training all election inspectors who serve in any city or township within the clerk's county. The county clerk must hold training within 20 days before each election and must notify every city and township clerk within the county of the location, date, and time of the training. Additionally, a city or township with more than 10,000 residents may hold its own election inspector training.

The election inspector training must consist of an explanation of rights and duties of election inspectors. The training must also include an explanation of common situations an election inspector might encounter during their service and instructions on how the election inspector should resolve those situations. Additionally, it should instruct election inspectors on procedures for asking questions or contacting the clerk for assistance resolving issues the election inspector cannot resolve on their own.

If the election inspector will be serving in a specific role, such as managing the electronic pollbook on Election Day or serving at an AVCB, the election inspector's training should include detailed information on how the election inspector should complete that specialized role. Finally, the training should summarize resources provided by the county clerk, the clerk of the city or township in which the election inspector is serving, and by the Bureau of Elections, as well as provide directions on how to locate and review those resources. In particular, training should highlight the Bureau of Elections publication *Managing Your Election Day Polling Place: Election Inspectors Procedure Manual*, which is available online¹ and in flipchart form at every precinct.

While a county may hold multiple election inspector trainings, the county should attempt to make those trainings as consistent as possible. When appropriate, training sessions may be tailored to the particular role a specific set of election inspectors may play (such as AVCB training, receiving board

¹ Available at <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/Election-Administrators/Managing-Your-Precinct-on-Election-Day.pdf?rev=099687d67e9249d98941ce03647543a3&hash=86B2799DC0E246E42596FAF6F720ACD0>.



training, or early voting training), but any non-specific materials presented at one training session should be presented at all training sessions.

If multiple voting systems are used in a county, separate trainings should be held for election inspectors depending on the voting system that the election inspector will be asked to operate.

Interjurisdiction coordination of election inspector training

While the county clerk is responsible for conducting election inspector trainings for all but the largest cities and townships in the state, the Bureau of Elections recommends that county clerks consult city and township clerks when developing the training curricula. So long as training is open to any person serving as an election inspector in the county, the county clerk may delegate some or all of the training presentation to one or more city or township clerks. The Bureau also encourages the county clerk to make use of all available training materials, including this manual and the *Managing Your Election Day Polling Place: Election Inspectors Procedure Manual*.

Clerks with questions about training, or who wish to learn more about the resources provided by the Bureau of Elections should reach out to Elections@Michigan.gov.

Supplemental training for election inspectors

Although state law only requires that election inspectors attend election inspector training every two years, local and county clerks may require that election inspectors attend training more often, or even before every election at which the election inspector will serve. If a clerk opts to offer or require more frequent training, the clerk may design the content of these supplemental trainings to act as a refresher on specific aspects of the election process rather than repeating the full content of a normal training.

Any person serving as an election inspector for the first time, or any person who has not attended a full election training in the last two years, must attend a full election inspector training before serving as an election inspector.



IV. Clerk authority over election inspectors

City and township clerks are responsible for managing and directing elections within their jurisdiction. While the Michigan Election Law requires election inspectors to fulfill certain duties—in particular, to uphold the oath of office they have taken—each city and township clerk has the authority to issue directions to election inspectors serving in the clerk’s jurisdiction, just as the clerk has the authority to issue directions to any other person managed by the clerk.

A clerk may require election inspectors to take particular actions or complete tasks in a specified manner, and the clerk may also require election inspectors to refrain from taking certain actions or behaving in certain ways. An election inspector who fails to follow the directions of the clerk of the city or township in which the election inspector is serving, or who violates any of the duties imposed on election inspectors by the Michigan Election Law, may be dismissed by that clerk.

Additionally, a clerk is not required to assign an election inspector if the clerk has reason to believe that the election inspector is not capable or is not willing to fulfill the election inspector’s oath to *“support the constitution of the United States and the constitution of this state, and [to] faithfully discharge the duties of the office of inspector of elections according to the best of [their] ability.”* An election inspector who does not seem able to discharge the duties of the office of election inspector, or who appears unwilling to faithfully discharge the duties of the office of election inspector, cannot fulfill their oath and should not serve.

