RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLL WORKERS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

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The following health guidance is based on the most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommendations for prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

Protect voters and election workers

- **Protect people at increased risk for severe illness.**
  - Polling locations (e.g., libraries, schools) should ensure that voters can be separated from other facility users. For example, poll workers and voters can use designated entrances, exits and restrooms that are separate from other facility users.
  - Poll workers at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be assigned tasks that minimize direct contact with voters and other poll workers. All workers should be encouraged to practice preventive actions, such as social distancing and hand-washing. **All election workers must wear masks covering their nose and mouth unless they cannot medically tolerate a face covering.**

- **Provide alternative voting options for voters with symptoms.**
  - Voters required to quarantine can request an "emergency" absentee ballot if they cannot attend the polls because of personal injury or illness, a family death or illness that requires them to leave their community for the entire time the polls are open on Election Day.
  - The emergency must have occurred at a time that made it impossible for the voter to apply for an absent ballot by the statutory deadline for regular applications. Therefore, requests for an emergency ballot must be submitted after 5 p.m. the Friday before the election (the deadline for applying for a regular absent voter ballot), but before 4 p.m., on Election Day. Contact your local clerk to obtain an emergency absent voter ballot. Emergency absent voter ballots must be returned to the clerk's office by 8 p.m., on Election Day.

- Post signs to discourage anyone with symptoms from entering the polling location buildings and provide voting options for those with symptoms. Ensure signage is accessible to voters with disabilities, for example by providing large print or Braille versions or having audible messages with the same information.

- **Spread out crowds on Election Day.**
  - Encourage voters planning to vote in-person on Election Day to arrive at off-peak times. For example, if voter crowds are lighter mid-morning, advertise that in advance to the community.

- **Safely process absentee ballots.**
  - Workers handling mail-in ballots should practice hand hygiene frequently and avoid touching their face or frequently used items like phones until hand hygiene is performed.
  - Machines used to process mail-in ballots should be cleaned and disinfected routinely. Follow the equipment manufacturer's instructions for appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures for voting machines and associated electronics.
  - Ballots can be stored as usual without additional precautions.

- **Ensure poll workers stay home when sick or after recent close contact with a person with COVID-19.**
  - Educate election workers about when they should stay home and when they can return to work.
    - Election workers who are sick, have tested positive for COVID-19, or have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19 should stay home. Ensure that poll locations are adequately staffed to cover any sick workers who need to stay home.
    - CDC's criteria can help inform when poll workers may return to work:
      - If they have been sick or are sick with COVID-19.
      - If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19.
      - If they have tested positive for COVID-19.
  - Encourage (and consider requiring) election workers to be tested for COVID-19 within five to seven days of Election Day.
  - Encourage election workers serving during early voting to be regularly tested (based on the guidelines for workers working in person with members of the public).

Utilize best health practices

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
    - o Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use at each step in the voting process where voters interact with election workers, after using the voting machine, and as the final step in the voting process. Place in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks, where "I Voted" stickers are dispensed and at exits. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers may not be compatible with electronic voting equipment and may damage paper ballots. Poll workers and voters should ensure their hands are completely dry before handling these items.
    - o Encourage election workers to wash their hands frequently (e.g., before entering the polling location, before and after breaks or shifts, after touching or handling masks or PPE, after using the restroom, after touching shared surfaces or objects) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
    - o Encourage workers and voters to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
        - ▪ If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
        - ▪ Ensure trash cans are readily available for disposal of potentially contaminated tissues and other items.
    - o Encourage voters to use masks while in the polling location. When voters' masks may need to be temporarily lowered to support identification procedures, alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be provided at the station so voters can sanitize their hands before and after removing their masks. A plastic barrier between the voter and the poll worker can provide additional protection. Ensure at least 6 feet of distance between the voter and poll worker, especially while mask is removed. Post signs providing instruction on proper removal and handling of masks.
        - ▪ Note that masks should **not** be placed on:
            - ▪ Babies and children younger than 2 years old.
            - ▪ Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
            - ▪ Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
    - o Have masks available at the entrance for voters who may arrive without one. Station a staff member at each entrance to encourage voters to wear a mask at all times inside.

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- Masks can make it more difficult for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to lip-read, hear or understand what people are saying. Communication can be supported with written communication, posting information/instructions, and decreasing background noise. Lip reading can be supported with clear masks, face shields or plexiglass barriers. Consistent with applicable law, election officials should consider having supplies, such as clear face coverings available, to ensure that voting is accessible to people with disabilities.

- **Adequate supplies**
  - Ensure adequate supplies to support [healthy hygiene](#) behaviors. Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (placed at every station if supplies allow), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes and no-touch trash cans.

- **Signs and messages**
  - Post [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a mask](#).
  - Include messages about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with voters (such as on websites, in videos, in emails and on [social media accounts](#)).
  - To the extent consistent with applicable law, ensure that any signage and messages are accessible to voters with disabilities, for example by providing large print or Braille versions or having audible messages with the same information.
  - Find free CDC print and digital resources at the [communications resources main page](#).

- **Social distancing**
  - Remind voters upon arrival to leave space between themselves and others. Encourage voters to stay at least 6 feet apart. Polling places may provide [signs](#) or other visual cues such as floor markings, decals, or chalk marks to help voters and workers remember this.
  - Have plans to manage lines to ensure social distancing can be maintained, including considerations of whether long lines will back up into other parts of the building or outside. Have plans to manage outdoor lines if there is inclement weather.
  - Clearly mark points of entry and exit to avoid bottlenecks.
  - Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes). Include this reminder on [signs](#) about social distancing.

Maintaining a healthy environment inside the polling places

- **Disinfect surfaces**
    - Surfaces that are frequently touched by multiple people, for example door handles, registration tables, pens, and clipboards, should be disinfected frequently using products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims.
    - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, use of personal protective equipment, storage).
    - If the surface is dirty, it should be cleaned before disinfecting.
    - If public restrooms are available in the polling location, they should be cleaned and disinfected routinely.
    - After the polling location closes, clean and disinfect all facility areas and items, including all tables, chairs, door handles, and restrooms, used by poll workers or voters. The facility can be returned to normal use immediately with no additional precautions.

- **Clean and disinfect voting-associated equipment**
    - Voting machines, laptops, tablets, keyboards, ballot activation cards, and other reusable items should be disinfected routinely between each user.
    - Follow the equipment manufacturer's instructions for appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures for voting machines and associated electronics.
        - To prevent damage to the equipment, post signs nearby discouraging voters from disinfecting the equipment with their own wipes or touching the equipment with hands that are wet with hand sanitizer.
    - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
    - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to clean voting machine buttons and touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.
    - After the polling location closes, all equipment and transport cases should be cleaned and disinfected following the manufacturer's instructions prior to returning it to the election office.

- **Shared objects**
    - Where possible, replace shared objects, like pens or ballot activation cards, with single-use objects.
    - Shared objects, like pens or ballot activation cards, should be disinfected between users.

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- o Headphones for voters with disabilities should be single-use or [disinfected](#) between users.
- o Minimize handling of shared objects. For example, reusable ballot activation cards or ballot secrecy sleeves can be deposited into a container instead of handing them to a poll worker.

- **Ventilation**
  - o Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to poll workers, voters, or children accompanying voters (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).

- **Crowd and line management**
  - o Minimize lines as much as possible, especially tightly spaced queues in small indoor spaces. Use floor markings or decals and signs to remind voters to maintain social distancing while in line.
  - o Limit the number of voters in the facility by moving lines outdoors if weather permits or using a ticket system for access to the facility.

- **Modified layouts and procedures**
  - o Increase distance between voting booths to ensure that voters remain 6 feet apart.
  - o To ensure sufficient space for social distancing and other measures, identify larger facilities for use as future polling places.
  - o Modify the polling location layout to ensure voters move in one direction while in voting locations and to avoid bottlenecks, such as single doors for entry and exit.
  - o Items to be reviewed, such as poll books or identification, should be placed on a table for examination to minimize handling.
  - o Ensure that any changes to operations do not limit accessibility to voters with disabilities.

- **Physical barriers and guides**
  - o Physical barriers, such as plexiglass shields, can be used to protect workers and voters when physical distance cannot be maintained, for example at registration desks or between voting stations.
  - o Consider placing markings or decal on the floor to remind voters to maintain at least 6 feet of space from other voters and workers.

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