



Election Officials Manual

Chapter 11: Early Voting

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I. Introduction

Early voting (EV) is defined in the Michigan Election Law as the process of “casting a ballot in person before Election Day in the same manner as a ballot is cast on Election Day, including depositing the ballot into a tabulator.” Following the passage of Proposal 2 of 2022, the Michigan Constitution now guarantees Michigan voters the right to early voting in every statewide and federal election. This chapter explains the process of administering early voting. Questions about the content of this chapter should be directed to Elections@Michigan.gov.

II. General early voting guidance

Early voting must be provided for all statewide and federal elections for nine consecutive days before Election Day for at least eight hours each day, beginning on the second Saturday before Election Day and ending on the Sunday before Election Day.¹

Early voting sites

Early voting sites are established by local legislative bodies in the same manner as Election Day polling places. For more information on establishing early voting sites, see *Chapter 15: Establishing Voting Precincts, Polling Places, and Early Voting Sites*.

III. Conducting early voting

In order to provide early voting for voters, municipalities must do one of the following:

- Conduct EV as a **single municipality** as described in MCL 168.720e.
- Enter into a **municipal agreement** and jointly conduct EV with one or more other municipalities in the same county as described in MCL 168.720f.
- Enter into a **county agreement** and authorize the county to conduct EV as described in MCL 168.720g.

¹ Beginning in 2026, early voting may be offered on the Monday before an election.



Single-municipality early voting

Municipal clerks that do not enter into municipal or county agreements are responsible for conducting early voting for their jurisdiction. Every municipality conducting its own early voting must have at least one early voting site available, and if there are multiple sites, every registered voter in the municipality must be able to vote at an early voting site.

If a municipality has 250 or more precincts, each ballot form with the same offices and names may be considered a single precinct for the purposes of early voting.

Municipal or county agreements

If a municipality chooses to work with other municipalities and/or the county to offer early voting, two options are available. First, clerks of multiple municipalities can jointly offer early voting at shared sites for their voters. Multiple municipalities within the same county can sign a municipal agreement to jointly conduct early voting. Second, interested municipalities and the county clerk can sign a county agreement authorizing the county clerk to conduct early voting for those municipalities in conjunction with those clerks.

The Bureau of Elections has created templates for [municipal agreements](#) and [county agreements](#) that are available in eLearning. Early voting agreements must include at least all of the following provisions:

- Names of each municipality (and the county, if applicable) involved in the agreement
- Number of precincts in each participating municipality
- Name of the early voting coordinator (and QVF controller if it is a different person)
- The communication strategy for informing voters of early voting and publicizing the location and hours of operation for early voting sites
- Name of the election commission that will test voting equipment
- Name of the early voting site supervisor for each day of early voting
- How the early voting closing board of election inspectors will be appointed for canvassing early voting results on Election Day
- The processes for the following:



- Approving early voting site locations, days, and hours
- Developing the early voting budget and any cost-sharing procedures between the parties to the agreement
- Determining how many tabulators and early voting pollbooks will be necessary and which municipality will provide them
- Withdrawing from the agreement

Early voting coordinator roles

The participating municipal clerks (or county clerk if applicable) are responsible for appointing an early voting coordinator to monitor early voting requirements for all participating municipalities. The coordinator may be a county clerk, a member of the county clerk's staff, a participating municipal clerk, or a member of the municipal clerk's staff. Early voting coordinators develop the early voting plan and early voting budget for each election and ensure that sufficient resources are provided for each early voting site. The early voting coordinator develops the early voting plan in consultation with participating municipal clerks.

Municipal or county agreements must also designate a QVF controller. This will often, but not always, be the same person as the early voting coordinator. The QVF controller will create the early voting region and configure the Early Voting Electronic Pollbook (EV EPB) in the QVF.

Additionally, the early voting agreement must designate a clerk, deputy clerk, or elections staff member to be the early voting site supervisor for each site on each day of the early voting period. The site supervisor fulfills the same role the clerk does on Election Day: being available to troubleshoot any issues happening at the early voting site.

Additional days of early voting

A municipal clerk conducting single-municipality early voting, municipal clerks in a municipal agreement, or the county clerk directing a county agreement can offer early voting for additional days beyond the constitutionally required nine-day early voting period. These additional days of early voting may be offered beginning on the 29th day before Election Day and early voting on these days may be offered for less than eight hours.

Additionally, municipalities may offer early voting for elections that are not statewide or federal elections—in other words, elections for which early voting is not required by the Michigan Constitution.



The legislative body of a municipality participating in a municipal or county agreement may adopt a resolution to conduct *single-municipality* early voting in elections that are not statewide or federal elections. For non-statewide or federal elections that involve multiple parties to the agreement, the legislative bodies of each municipality can adopt resolutions to jointly offer multiple-municipality early voting. Any early voting conducted for other elections must follow all the same requirements of single municipality or multiple municipality early voting, respectively, except that early voting may be offered for fewer than nine days and fewer than eight hours per day.

Withdrawing from an early voting agreement

Any municipality in a municipal or county EV agreement can withdraw by providing at least 30 days of written notice to the other municipalities and/or county, but cannot withdraw during the period beginning 150 days before a November general election and ending on the completion of the county canvass for that November general election. If any local or special elections are covered by the agreement, a municipality cannot withdraw during the period beginning 150 days before that election and ending on the completion of the county canvass for that election. If a party withdraws from an agreement, they must conduct single-municipality early voting for the rest of that election cycle.

Municipal and county early voting agreements can also have no fixed termination date and cover all statewide and federal elections moving forward until the agreement is amended or withdrawn.

A jurisdiction that conducted single-municipality early voting for a presidential primary may enter a municipal or county agreement by April 15 of that year that will cover at least the remaining statewide and federal elections in that year and the next year, as well as any other elections included in the agreement. This agreement may be a new agreement or an amendment to an existing agreement if all parties to that agreement concur.

IV. Early voting plans

Each clerk conducting single-municipality early voting and each early voting coordinator of a municipal or county agreement must complete an early voting plan. Early voting plans outline the actions that will be taken to conduct early voting for the municipalities covered.



Early voting plan templates are available in the eLearning center for single-municipality, multiple-municipality, and county-run early voting. All early voting plans must contain at least the following information:

- Whether the plan covers **single-municipality**, **multiple-municipality**, or **county-run** early voting
- Name of each municipal clerk (and county clerk, if applicable) involved in executing the early voting plan
- If the early voting plan covers a municipal or county agreement, the following:
 - Name, position, and contact information of the early voting coordinator
 - A copy of the municipal or county agreement
- Number of precincts and registered voters in each covered municipality
- Number of early voting sites, location of each site, and which municipality or municipalities each site serves
- Any additional days of early voting beyond the required nine consecutive days, and the hours that early voting will be offered on those days
 - Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, whether early voting will be offered on the Monday before Election Day.
- Communication strategy for informing voters about early voting

All single-municipality and multiple-municipality early voting plans must be filed with the county clerk at least 120 days before the first statewide/federal election in an even year. County clerks participating in county-run early voting agreements must also prepare plans by this date.

Each county clerk shall review each early voting plan that they receive to verify that it contains all required information.

Countywide early voting plans

After receiving early voting plans, the county clerks must compile them into a countywide early voting plan that summarizes the early voting options chosen by each municipality. The Bureau of Elections has created a countywide early voting plan template that is available in eLearning. All



countywide early voting plans must contain at least all of the following information:

- Whether the county clerk is participating in a county agreement, and if so, which municipalities in the county are parties to the agreement
- Which municipalities, if any, are conducting **single-municipality** early voting
- Which municipalities, if any, are conducting, **multiple-municipality** early voting
 - If applicable, which municipalities are party to each municipal agreement
- A copy of each early voting plan submitted by municipal clerks, and a copy of the county-run early voting plan prepared by the county clerk, if applicable

V. Preparing for early voting: Deadlines and posting requirements

Clerks and other officials should communicate as far in advance of elections as possible to allow municipal and county clerks and governments to make arrangements for early voting in the form of agreement that is chosen. To the extent possible, discussions and decisions should be made well in advance of the statutory deadlines listed below. At the latest, the following statutory deadlines apply:

At least **155 days** before the first statewide or federal election in an even year, each county clerk will notify all municipal clerks within their county whether they will offer county-run early voting.

At least **150 days** before the first statewide or federal election in an even year, each municipal clerk will notify their respective county clerk whether they intend to conduct single-municipality early voting, multiple-municipality early voting through a municipal agreement, or county-run early voting through a county agreement.

At least **125 days** before the first statewide or federal election in an even year, municipal agreements must be signed by all participating municipal



clerks, and county agreements must be finalized by each county clerk offering county early voting and the respective municipal clerks.

- These agreements must be signed and finalized at least **90 days** before a *special* statewide or federal election.

At least **120 days** before the first statewide or federal election in an even year, the following apply:

- A municipality conducting single-municipality early voting must file an early voting plan with its respective county clerk.
- The EV coordinator for the municipalities conducting multiple-municipality early voting must file an early voting plan with their respective county clerk.
- A county clerk offering county-run early voting must develop their early voting plan.

If a municipality does not file an early voting plan and is not party to an agreement, the county clerk must immediately contact the municipal clerk and attempt to determine their plan for conducting early voting.

At least **110 days** before the first statewide or federal election in an even year, all county clerks must submit a countywide early voting plan to the Secretary of State.

In the countywide early voting plan, county clerks shall certify that all voters from every municipality in the county are served by at least one early voting site. If any municipality is not party to a municipal or county agreement and has not filed an early voting plan for single-municipality early voting, the county clerk will indicate the name of that municipality as an exception to the certification and share the steps the county clerk has taken to determine that municipality's plan for early voting.

All early voting sites must be established at least **60 days** before the first day of early voting, in the same way as Election Day polling places.

VI. Early voting site configurations

For **single-municipality** early voting regions, every voter in the municipality must be able to vote at any early voting site established.

For **multiple-municipality** early voting regions, early voting sites can cover a combination of municipalities. There must be at least one early voting site



open to all voters of each municipality that is a party to the municipal agreement in each statewide and federal election.

For **county-run** early voting regions, sites can be configured to accept only voters in a single municipality, voters from multiple municipalities in the agreement, voters from anywhere in the county, or any combination of the above. There must be at least one early voting site open to all voters in the county agreement.

VII. Early voting electronic pollbook

The Early Voting Electronic Pollbook (EV EPB) is a web-based application with a secure, live connection to the QVF, that serves largely the same purpose as the Election Day EPB but for early voting instead of Election Day voting. Because early voting occurs on at least nine days prior to Election Day while voters may also be returning absentee ballots, and because some voters have the choice of using multiple early voting sites, the Early Voting EPB is connected to the internet to allow clerks and election inspectors to access and update voter records in real time. The Early Voting EPB is also password-protected, and requires several layers of authentication to access.

Early voting regions and sites must be configured in the QVF so that all voters in the early voting region are able to be checked in and have their voting records updated in real time.

Before the beginning of the early voting period, each EV coordinator (or QVF controller) must establish the early voting region and site information in the QVF early voting module. At least **30 days** before each election, the EV coordinator should follow the steps in Chapter 10 and the *Early Voting QVF Setup Guide* to set up the EV site locations and hours of operation. Inputting this information into the QVF will allow voters to check which EV sites are available to them at Michigan.gov/Vote.

Adding this information will also allow the QVF controller to prepare the EV EPB for use in early voting, including setting up the users, devices, and multifactor authentication that will allow election inspectors to use the EV EPB. For detailed instructions, election administrators should refer to the *Early Voting QVF Setup Guide* available in eLearning.



VIII. Early voting procedures

During the early voting period, election inspectors use the EV EPB to record every voter who votes at an early voting site and update their voting history in real time. For instructions on how the EV EPB should be used to record voters, refer to the *Early Voting Electronic Pollbook Manual*.

The procedures for processing voters and issuing ballots generally resemble the procedures on Election Day and can be found in *Chapter 12: Election Day and the Voting Process*. The initial opening procedures are also similar to those on Election Day. However, while the polls for an Election Day polling place open in the morning and close at 8 p.m. the same evening, the polls for an early voting site remain open from the beginning of the early voting period on the second Saturday before Election Day until the end of early voting on the Sunday before Election Day. This requires additional procedures to secure equipment and ballots and to run beginning-of-day and end-of-day reports during each day of early voting. For more detailed guidance on daily procedures specific to early voting sites, refer to the *Early Voting Site Administration Procedures* available to election administrators in the eLearning Center.

Initial opening of the polls during early voting

Generally, an early voting coordinator and election inspectors prepare for early voting in the same way as for voting at an Election Day polling place: the election inspectors are sworn in, signage is placed, the 100-foot perimeter where campaigning is prohibited is established, and voting stations, tabulators, and voter assist terminals (VAT) are placed and determined to be functional. An early voting site may also use a ballot on demand (BOD) printer instead of having preprinted ballots for every precinct at the site. This is most common if the voters from many municipalities are able to vote at that site and a large number of ballot styles must be available. If the site uses a BOD printer, it must also be powered on and checked the beginning of the day.

Additionally, as at an Election Day polling place, a *zero* tape is run from the tabulator and two election inspectors verify that the date and time on the tape are correct, all races are included on the tape, and all totals equal zero.



Suspending and restarting the polls during the early voting period

Instead of closing the polls and printing totals tapes from the tabulator as they would at the close of polls on Election Day, at the end of each day of early voting, the election inspectors “suspend” the polls. In order to suspend the polls, the election inspectors enter a code into the tabulator so that the tabulator is secured for the night and unable to tabulate additional ballots but is not closed out as it would be at the end of Election Day.

Next, election inspectors complete the daily reconciliation and ballot summary page in the physical pollbook. This document lists the cumulative number of voters in the EV EPB and the number of ballots cast according to the tabulator public counter, as well as the number of provisional ballots which were issued but not yet tabulated.

At the end of each day, all tabulated ballots must be removed from the tabulator, placed in an approved ballot container, and sealed and documented as described in the *Early Voting Site Administration Procedures*.

Finally, the tabulator, EV EPB laptops, and other voting equipment and materials must be sealed and securely stored in a locked container or room.

At the beginning of subsequent days of early voting, a *status* tape is run from the tabulator and two election inspectors verify that the beginning totals equal the totals from the previous day’s daily reconciliation and ballot summary. Status reports are also run from the VAT and the ballot on demand system if the site is using a ballot on demand system.

Election night closing of early voting

At some point between the suspension of polls on the final day of early voting and election night, the early voting coordinator will have the early voting tabulators moved to a central location where the final closing of polls will take place. If the location of the early voting site is available for use, the equipment can remain there.

No election results are accumulated or tallied during the early voting period. Instead, after the close of polls at 8 p.m. on election night, a pair of early voting closing election inspectors (one who affiliates with the Democratic Party and one who affiliates with the Republican Party) convene at the location where the early voting equipment is located and close out the tabulators. These closing inspectors will then generate the final totals tapes, complete the verifications and signatures necessary in the early voting



pollbook, and accumulate any write-in results made during the early voting period. Refer to *Chapter 13: Closing the Polls and the Precinct Canvass* for a detailed description of closing processes.

