



Interim Guidance for Election Voting Locations (2021 Municipal Elections)

This guidance provides steps that should be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in election voting locations.

Guidelines for Voting Locations: Any scenario in which many people gather poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Election officials should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at all voting locations, where groups of people gather in an enclosed space. The guidance below will help election voting locations reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

Spreading out the time and locations that individuals can vote is critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19. Strategies like these can help reduce voters' risk of exposure and keep our communities safer.

This guidance covers the following topics:

- Vaccination
- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Masking
- Ventilation
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Communications and Combatting Misinformation
- Additional Resources

Vaccination

Vaccination is the most efficient control measure available to protect against COVID-19, particularly to prevent severe illness and death. It is therefore strongly encouraged that persons not yet vaccinated get vaccinated. Even if individuals have been ill with COVID-19 previously, getting a vaccine significantly reduces the risk of reinfection.

For more information go to [Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot](#). For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to the DHHS [Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19](#) and [Recommendations for Protecting Each Other](#).

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

[Social distancing](#) is an efficient tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. If you are not fully vaccinated, stay at least six feet (about two arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

It is recommended that election officials at all voting locations:

- Remind election workers and voters upon arrival to leave space between themselves and others.
- Encourage election workers and voters to stay at least 6 feet apart. Clearly provide 6 feet floor markings in lines, at voting booths, and other waiting areas.
- Limit capacity in all elevators, lobbies, restrooms, and other enclosed places to promote social distancing.

Masking

Wearing a [mask](#) can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.

It is strongly recommended that election officials at all voting locations:

- Encourage voters, observers, and electioneers to wear a mask when they are indoors as well as maintain physical distancing, unless they state an exception applies.

It is recommended that all voting locations:

- Post signage encouraging all election officials and voters to wear a mask if they are in a county of high or substantial levels of transmission as defined by the [CDC](#). English: [Option 1](#) | [Option 2](#), Spanish: [Option 1](#) | [Option 2](#)
- Provide disposable masks for voters to use while at the voting site.
- Visit the [NC DHHS Face Coverings and Masks page](#) for more information about current mask guidance.

Ventilation

SARS-CoV-2 viral particles spread between people more readily indoors; therefore, improvements to building ventilation are part of a layered approach to reduce exposure to the virus.

To help reduce the concentration of viral particles in the air, it is recommended that voting locations:

- If possible, use fans to provide for increased air circulation. Placement of fans can be important and are outlined in the CDC’s indoor use of fans. Care should be taken to position fans in clean to less clean areas. Ceiling fans may be set on low setting and reversed direction, so room air is pulled towards the ceiling.
- Turn off any controls for demand-controlled ventilation that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours. This means switching the thermostat from “auto” to “on” position, which will operate the fan continuously.
- [Increase air filtration](#) to as high as possible without significantly reducing design airflow and make sure air filters are properly sized and maintained.

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- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are operational and running while the building is occupied.
- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to enhance air cleaning.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

It is recommended that election officials at all voting locations:

- Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
- [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. If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer at least 60% alcohol at entrances and other areas in the voting place as needed.
- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers throughout the day and ensure soap and paper towels or hand drying devices are available.

Monitoring for Symptoms

Election officials should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or new loss of smell or taste. If they develop symptoms, they should notify the county board of elections and stay home, or return home if they were at the election site. More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

It is recommended that election officials:

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing election workers if symptoms develop while at the voting location. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at the voting site or become sick during their shift should immediately be separated from other workers and the public and be sent home or to their healthcare provider.
- Post signage at the main entrance, such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English - [Color, Black & White](#); Spanish - [Color, Black & White](#)), requesting that people who are or have recently been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter and instead vote curbside.
- Educate election workers about when they should [stay home](#) and when they can return to work.
- Ensure that voting locations are adequately staffed to cover any sick election workers who need to stay home.
- Have any symptomatic election workers wear a mask until they are able to leave the facility.
- [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the individual should [isolate](#) until:
 - No fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
 - Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
 - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms

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- ❑ [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should [isolate](#) until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. Anyone who develops symptoms should follow the criteria for when symptomatic individuals can end isolation described above.
- ❑ Offer alternative voting options for voters with symptoms, those who are sick or known COVID-19 positive. Alternative voting options should minimize exposure between election workers and voters, such as curbside voting for sick voters. Election workers assisting voters with symptoms should be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protection, face shields, gowns, and gloves, and trained in the appropriate use of this equipment.
- ❑ Ensure voting options are accessible to voters with disabilities.

Communication and Combatting Misinformation

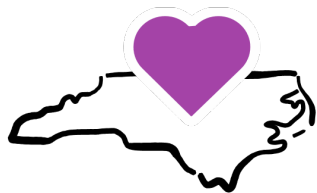
Help ensure that the information election workers and voters are getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is recommended that county boards of elections:

- ❑ Provide election workers with signs, posters, and flyers at main entrances and in key areas throughout the voting location such as those found on the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#) to encourage election workers and voters to wear masks, wash hands, and stay six feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).
 - [Know Your W's](#) signs are available in English and Spanish.
- ❑ 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).
- ❑ Notify voters of changes to voting operations, including the availability of alternative voting options that minimize contact, as allowed.

Additional Resources

- NCDHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)
- DHS: [Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)



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Protect your family and neighbors.**

Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.



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