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Recommended Guidance¹ for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Election Polling Locations

When a novel virus with pandemic potential emerges, nonpharmaceutical interventions, also called community mitigation strategies, often are the most readily available interventions to help slow transmission of the virus in communities. Community mitigation is a set of actions that persons and communities can take to help slow the spread of respiratory virus infections.

IDPH is committed to protecting the health of the citizens of Illinois. In an effort to implement community mitigation and prevent the spread of COVID-19, IDPH is recommending that all Election Polling Places take the following steps:

I. Definitions

Community settings (congregate settings) are mostly non-healthcare settings visited by the general public. Examples include election polling locations, households, daycares, and businesses.

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.

Vulnerable populations are people at higher risk that includes older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.

II. Preventative Actions in Election Polling Location

- a. Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in election polling locations (e.g., tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.). After routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated with germs. See the list of products pre-approved by the EPA for emerging viral pathogens available here: <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel->

¹ Source: CDC's Recommended Precautions for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Election Polling Places
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[Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf](#). Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the label for all cleaning and disinfection products. Labels should contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and ensuring there is good ventilation during use of the product.

- b. Routinely clean and disinfect voting associated electronics (e.g., voting machines, laptops, tablets, keyboards) using products pre-approved by the EPA for emerging viral pathogens. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. For questions about products appropriate for disinfecting voting machines and touch screens, consult with the voting machine manufacturer and consider additional use of wipeable covers for machines, if possible. If no guidance is available from the manufacture, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to clean voting machine buttons and touch screens. Use of alcohol-based products may reduce risk of damage to sensitive voting machine components.
- c. Ensure bathrooms at the election polling location are supplied adequately with soap, water and drying materials for handwashing.
- d. Provide voters with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use before or after the use of a voting machine and after the voting process.
- e. Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations (e.g., registration desks and exits).
- f. Avoid using physical locations as election polling locations if vulnerable populations may be impacted. Examples might be community settings with older adults, long-term care facilities or senior living facilities.
- g. Use signage at the election polling locations encouraging voters to practice proper hygiene (see CDC Printed Resources under Resources).

III. **Preventative Actions for Polling Location Workers**

- a. Stay at home if you have fever, respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) or believe you are sick.
- b. 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.
- c. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or use your elbow.

IV. **Preventative Actions for General Public**

- a. Stay at home if you have fever, respiratory symptoms or believe you are sick.
- b. Practice hand hygiene frequently. 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.

- c. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or use your elbow.

V. Preventative Actions for Vulnerable Populations

- a. Stay home during a COVID-19 outbreak in your community or take extra measures to put distance between yourself and other people.
- b. Practice hand hygiene frequently. 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.
- c. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or use your elbow.
- d. . Consider voting by mail, if possible.

VI. Contingency Planning

The Illinois Board of Elections will provide information to assist local clerks with contingency planning. Additionally, review the checklist to prepare for community events located on the CDC website [here](#).

Monitor local and state public health sources to understand COVID-19 activity in the community to help inform evaluation of individuals with unknown respiratory illness. If there is transmission of COVID-19 in the community, facilities should also consult with the local health department for additional guidance.

VII. Resources

CDC [Recommended Precautions for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Election Polling Locations](#)

CDC [What to do if you are sick](#)

CDC [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)

CDC [People At-risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](#)

CDC [Print Resources](#)

IDPH Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-2019) [Website](#)

CDC Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-2019) [Website](#)