



NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Numbered Memo 2020-12

TO: County Boards of Elections
FROM: Karen Brinson Bell, Executive Director
RE: COVID-19 Response Planning for In-Person Voting for June 23, 2020 election
DATE: June 1, 2020

We are issuing guidance to you to help you plan for in-person voting in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance in this memo is for the June 23, 2020 second primary in Congressional District 11 and new primary in Columbus County. We will issue updated guidance for the November 3, 2020 general election.

The guidance outlined in this numbered memo has been established according to *Recommendations for Election Polling Locations*, issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on March 27, 2020, as well as information provided by the CDC to the National Association of Election Directors (NASED) on May 12, 2020. We have also reviewed the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)'s *Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act*, updated on March 21, 2020.

As outlined in the Governor's Executive Order 141, the State is currently in Phase 2, which prohibits most mass gatherings of more than 10 people in a single indoor space. Elections are an essential government function and are exempt from the prohibition on mass gatherings. However, county boards of elections, elections officials, voters, and observers should follow social distancing recommendations and other health and safety measures as outlined in this numbered memo. We anticipate that this guidance may be supplemented or modified for the general election as conditions change, including if additional waves of the virus occur later this year.

County boards conducting elections on June 23 have already received information about the supplies they will receive. We will provide specifics about PPE for the general election once funding is allocated and we have additional information.

Use of PPE and Supplies

Pollworkers and Early Voting Workers

After reviewing guidance from the CDC, we have determined that it is necessary for pollworkers and early voting workers to wear PPE to reduce the risk of disease transmission as outlined in this memo. Use of PPE will protect voters and election officials and help ensure that voting places are able to remain open.¹

All pollworkers and early voting workers will be provided with and required to wear masks while on duty, in accordance with CDC guidelines. Pollworkers and early voting workers should wear gloves when the task allows and when necessary, such as when cleaning or disinfecting surfaces. The State Board will provide masks and gloves to county boards of elections. Counties may need to supplement if additional supplies are needed.

Pollworkers and early voting workers should wash their hands with soap and water, or use provided hand sanitizer, frequently. This includes after removing gloves. Hand sanitizer will be distributed to you, in 8-ounce or 1-gallon containers, as needed. We will also be providing disinfecting wipes to you.

Used PPE and cleaning supplies may be disposed of as regular trash.

Voters

Voters will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and will be provided with a face covering if they do not have one. A sufficient supply of masks will be ordered to make a mask available to each voter who wants one. **Voters will not be turned away if they choose not to wear a face mask.**

Voters should be encouraged to use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting the polling place. Hand sanitizer should not be located at the ballot table, voting machines, or voting booths.

Face Shields and Protective Shields

Pollworkers and early voting workers will be provided with face shields, protective goggles, or protective glasses. County boards of elections may opt to use tabletop protective shields, sneeze guards, or physical barriers such as partitions, where feasible. North Carolina Emergency Management provided face shields, which shipped directly to the county emergency management

¹According to the EEOC, where an employee with a disability needs a related reasonable accommodation under the ADA (e.g., non-latex gloves, or gowns designed for individuals who use wheelchairs), the employer should provide these, absent undue hardship. See <https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>.

warehouse. You should contact your county emergency management office if you are conducting an election on June 23 and have not yet received face shields. Counties may construct or procure protective shields or barriers, which will qualify as a reimbursable item, or the State may procure these for the counties.

Thermometers and Screening

Voters will not be screened for fever or other symptoms and will not be turned away. Individuals may have COVID-19 even if they do not have any symptoms, and the protective measures outlined in the memo are being put in place to help prevent the transmission of disease in the event contagious individuals present to vote.

We do not anticipate requiring that pollworkers or early voting workers have their temperature taken when they report for work, and we will not provide thermometers. **Pollworkers and early voting workers should be asked to self-screen for symptoms or exposure and report to the CBE if they are unable to work because of symptoms or exposure.**

Pens/Cotton Swabs

Each voter will receive a one-time use pen and/or cotton swab for use at check in and to mark their ballot while in the voting booth or on the voting equipment. Cotton swabs will be used as styluses for touch screen voting equipment in order to prevent the voter from having to touch the screen.

Pollworkers or early voting workers should provide the pen and/or cotton swab to the voter in a way that reduces unnecessary contact. For example, a pollworker or early voting worker might place pens on a table for voters to pick up or hand them to voters as they wait in line or check in. This worker should regularly change their gloves. Voters may dispose of the device in the appropriate receptacle after voting or keep it. You should plan to provide trash cans or receptacles at the exit of the polling place.

Pollworkers and early voting workers should be instructed to use the same pen the entire day and not share it with anyone. Pollworkers and early voting workers should use cotton swabs on touch screen voting equipment and dispose of the swabs as needed.

“I Voted” Stickers

Because health and safety are paramount, we are recommending against handing out “I Voted” stickers this election. While we are not prohibiting issuance of “I Voted” stickers, stickers should not be handed out unless this can be done in a way that minimizes unnecessary contact and exposure to disease. If your office determines that it will continue to issue stickers, pollworkers and early voting workers should not hand the sticker directly to voters. Instead, you may consider placing pre-cut stickers spread out on a table or using a machine that will automatically dispense a new sticker to each person.

Privacy Sleeves

Curbside voters will use a plastic privacy sleeve and clip board that the pollworker or early voting worker will wipe down with a disinfecting wipe or spray after each use. Voters will also receive a one-time use pen. Pollworkers and early voting workers should avoid sharing pens with the voter.

Social Distancing

It is important that you encourage the use of social distancing strategies to increase the space between individuals and decrease the frequency of contact among individuals to reduce the risk of spreading disease. Attempting to keep individuals at least 6 feet apart is ideal based on what is known about COVID-19. If this is not feasible, efforts should be made to keep individuals as far apart as practical based on the size and space of your facilities.

A best practice is for each voting place to be set up to allow pollworkers or early voting workers to be 6 feet away from each other and away from each voter. In some cases, this will require the use of larger polling places and additional tables and/or stations. For example, you might place two long tables together along their long edge to allow pollworkers or and early voting workers to be seated at one site and voters to approach at the other side. The distance between voting booths and voting equipment should be increased to account for social distancing if possible.

Voters should be encouraged to maintain social distancing from other individuals, with the exception of family or household members. Pollworkers or early voting workers should provide markings, cones, or other barriers to keep voters who are waiting in line 6 feet apart. The State Board will be providing rolls of painter's tape to mark off the floor if needed.

Voters, pollworkers, and early voting workers should be discouraged from greeting others with physical contact such as handshakes. If possible, you should also provide signage at each voting place regarding social distancing and sanitary measures.

You should also provide one-way directional signage throughout the precinct, as well as clearly marked signs for where voters should enter and exit.

Voting Equipment at the Voting Place

Pollbooks

During early voting and in some counties on Election Day, voters are checked in using electronic pollbooks. Electronic pollbooks should be sanitized according to computer manufacturer's instructions any time a new pollworker or early voting worker will touch the computer and regularly throughout the day. You may also consider using a changeable keyboard cover. Paper pollbooks may not be easy to sanitize, so precinct officials should change their gloves if they need to switch locations.

Voting Booths and Voting Equipment

Voting booths and voting equipment touched by the voter, such as touchscreen machines and the Automark, must be cleaned according to vendor-recommended guidance after each use. You must always follow the cleaning methods specified by the manufacturer. [ES&S](#) and [Hart Inter-Civic](#) have provided guidance for proper cleaning of their equipment. Please review the appropriate document carefully and ensure that your pollworkers and early voting workers have sufficient supplies and training to clean the equipment after each voter.

Manufacturer guidance is available on the EAC's website.²

Additional Roles Due to COVID-19

In addition to the usual roles assigned to precinct officials, consider the following if possible:

Interior Line Control Worker

Remind voters inside the room to maintain a 6-foot distance while in line.

Door Control Worker

Will regulate the number of voters allowed into the building to comply with COVID-19 restrictions.

Exterior Line Control Worker

Reminds voters in line outside the voting place to maintain a 6-foot distance while in line.

Sanitizer Worker

Will frequently wipe down tables, voting booths, voting machines, and other surfaces with cleaning supplies.

² <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/vendor-and-manufacturer-guidance-cleaning-voting-machines-and-other-election>