

# Vermont Secretary of State

## 2020 General Election COVID-19 Polling Place Health Guidelines

These recommendations and best practices were developed in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health to protect the health and safety of poll workers, voters and candidates at Vermont polling places on Election Day.

These guidelines are intended to keep everyone participating in the election process on Election Day safe. If we work together, we can prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Vermont and continue to set an example for how a community can protect itself. No one should have to choose between their health and their right to vote. Thank you for your commitment to democracy and to the health of all Vermonters.

The Secretary of State has issued a [Directive](#) that allows for additional polling place procedures for Vermont municipalities. Please bring any concerns about individual polling places on Election Day to the attention of the Town Clerk or presiding officer of the polling place.

Town Clerks and the Board of Civil Authority (BCA), per statute (17 V.S.A. [§ 2451](#) and [§ 2452](#)) are charged with overseeing the polling place.

### KEY RESOURCES

- Vermont Secretary of State Website: [sos.vermont.gov](https://sos.vermont.gov)
- [Election Procedures for Statewide Elections in 2020](#)
- Polling Place guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations.html).
- Vermont Department of Health COVID-19 Information: [healthvermont.gov/covid19](https://healthvermont.gov/covid19)

### Guidance and Recommendations

#### **For Everyone on Election Day**

Please follow all guidance and instructions at the polling place. Maintaining physical distancing and wearing a mask are required. If you need assistance, a poll worker will be available to help.

For the health and safety of community members and election workers, DO NOT go to a polling place if:

- you feel sick or have a fever,
- have tested positive for COVID-19
- are in quarantine
- have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19

If you are unable to come to the polls due to sickness or other emergency, contact your town clerk before Election Day to arrange for receiving a ballot at your home.

## For Voters Entering the Polling Place

Every eligible, registered voter should be able to vote on election day.

- Wear a cloth face covering when entering the polling place.
  - If you do not or cannot wear a facial covering, you may be asked to wait outside in a designated area, and a ballot will be brought to you.
  - You will not be asked for documentation for why you cannot wear a mask.
  - A poll worker will explain the process, including putting the ballot in the certificate envelope that you must sign.
- If possible, bring a black ink pen to mark your ballot.
- Wash hands prior to entering the polling place if possible. Hand sanitizer will be provided for use before and after voting.
- Be prepared before coming to the polls. If you were mailed a ballot but have not voted it, bring it with you to expedite the process. Review ballots ahead of time to speed the process and limit your exposure to others. You can log into your My Voter Page at [mvp.vermont.gov](http://mvp.vermont.gov) or check your town clerk's website to view ballots.
- On election day, if you have concerns, contact your town clerk or presiding officer.

## For Poll Workers and Polling Place Operations

Your support for Vermont's democratic process is greatly appreciated and essential.

### General Guidance

- Please ensure that polling locations are adequately staffed to cover any sick workers who need to stay home. Please contact the Elections Division if you anticipate a shortage of poll workers.
- If you are sick or have any symptoms, contact your town clerk as soon as possible so a replacement worker can be called in.
  - The Secretary of State's [Directive](#) allows the BCA to appoint poll workers who are not residents of the town or city, if necessary. All poll workers must be Vermont residents.
- Poll workers should wash hands frequently, including prior to entering the polling location and before and after any breaks. Hand sanitizer should be used after each contact with individuals.
- Hand sanitizer should be available, and its use encouraged, at each step of the process where a voter interacts with a poll worker. Consider placing hand sanitizer stations at poll entrances and exits.

- Poll workers should wear gloves whenever possible, particularly if manually counting ballots, and should avoid touching their face.

### Health Screening for Election Officials

The health screening is a reasonable assessment of the individual's health that day and of any possible exposure to COVID-19. This is important for the health of the individual and for others with whom they will come in contact during the day.

- Each polling place must maintain a list of election officials, workers and volunteers, in the event they need to be contacted by health officials. This list shall include:
  - Name and contact information
  - Work start and finish times
  - Role/position
- Designate a worker, or workers, to conduct health screenings of all election officials, workers, and volunteers upon arrival at the polling place. All poll workers should be informed in advance to check their temperature prior to arrival.

#### Poll workers should be asked:

- If they have experienced any COVID-19 symptoms (see below)
- If they have been in close contact in the last 14 days with a person who has COVID-19. A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes, starting from 48 hours before illness onset.
- If possible, poll workers should receive a temperature screening using a touchless thermometer. If this is not possible, they can attest to having conducted a temperature check prior to arrival.

#### Symptoms of COVID-19

- Fever (100.4 or greater); cough; shortness of breath; chills; fatigue; muscle pain or body aches; headache; sore throat; loss of taste or smell; congestion or runny nose; nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Healthy poll workers who are at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be assigned tasks that minimize direct contact with voters and other poll workers.
  - The risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with [older adults](#) at highest risk, and is higher for people of any age with [certain underlying medical conditions](#).

### Masks and Facial Coverings

Vermonters shall wear masks or cloth facial coverings over their nose and mouth any time they are in public spaces, indoors or outdoors, where they come in contact with others from

outside their households, especially in congregate settings, and where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet.

- Every eligible, registered voter should be able to vote on Election Day.
- Voters who indicate that they are not able to wear a face covering inside the polling place will be provided the following accommodation:
  - A ballot will be brought to them outside the polling place with a certificate envelope in which to place the voted ballot.
  - The voter must insert the voted ballot into the Voted Ballot envelope and sign and complete the certificate so that they can be checked off the checklist.
  - The voted ballot enclosed in the Voted Ballot envelope will be returned to a poll worker who will bring it into the polling place for processing along with and in the same manner as other early/absentee ballots.

*Proof or documentation of inability to wear a mask or cloth facial covering is NOT required. DO NOT ask for such documentation*

#### **Guidance for Maintaining the Polling Place (all elections officials)**

- **Designate a poll worker(s) to conduct health screening of all election officials, workers, and volunteers** upon arrival at the polling place.
- **Post signs** at the entrance and exit and around the polling place to encourage social distancing and discourage people with any symptoms from entering the polling place. Examples of posters can be found at the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html>.
- **Use floor markings** (decal, tape, chalk, etc.) to mark the points 6 feet apart where people in line must stand, especially at check-in, check-out tables, or where any line of voters may form. Be prepared to have a line outside the polling place if necessary.
- **Monitor that voters waiting in line maintain 6 feet of social distance and wear masks.** Individuals in a household, such as parents with children or housemates, can be grouped together closer than 6 feet. If possible, assign a poll worker to monitor the line.
- **Designate a poll worker(s) who is informed of the alternative voting methods** available for persons who are not able to wear a mask/cloth facial covering. They will also help ensure that those without a mask or otherwise who need to vote outside the polling place have assistance to do so.
- **Limit nonessential visitors.** Poll workers and voters should be discouraged from bringing accompanying persons (e.g., family members, friends) to the polling location. Traffic into the polling location from those who are not voting should be limited if at all possible.

- **Minimize handling of items to be reviewed**, such as poll books or identification. These should be placed on a table for examination.
- **Modify the polling location layout** if possible, to ensure voters move in one direction while in voting locations, and to avoid bottlenecks, such as single doors for entry and exit.
- **Space voting booths** so that voters remain at least 6 feet apart while voting. The four person voting booths should only be used by a single voter at a time. If spacing the booths is problematic, consider numbering booths and assigning people to one that has space or a vacancy next to it when handing out their ballot.
- **Frequently disinfect surfaces** that are touched by multiple people. This includes voting stations, door handles, registration tables, clipboards, etc.
  - Disinfect frequently touched surfaces often. Consider wiping down voting booth surfaces between voters or as regularly as practicable.
  - Polling locations may also want to make disinfectant wipes available for voters to use.
- **Disinfect the Accessible Voting System** after each use.
- **Consider including “no-touch” options for frequently touched items**, like propping open doors, having trashcans with lids that have a foot-opening device, hand sanitizer stations that automatically dispense sanitizer, etc. If doors are able to be kept open to allow entry and exit without opening the door, notify poll workers of this so they can dress appropriately, bring blankets, etc.
- **Consider closing restrooms** to use by people other than poll workers.
- **Consider opening windows or doors** to increase air circulation in the polling place. Ensure that wind or weather will not impact any loose papers and be aware of any potential debris or other irritant in the air when doors or windows open.
- **Replace shared objects with single use objects if possible.** If they are to be used more than once, attempt to disinfect objects like pens in between use. Single use pencils or pens may be used to avoid the need to disinfect. These could be disposed of in a container to be disinfected after the election for continued use after that.
- **Discourage any physical interactions** between voters and/or election workers.
- **Tear off individual “I voted” stickers.** Consider handing them to voters when they get their ballot.
- **Candidates** or others who choose to be outside the polling place must observe all polling place rules in effect and must maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others and wear masks (if able to) if they are interacting with voters.

- **No voter should be blocked from entering or exiting** a polling place, including the ability to social distance from those campaigning upon entrance and exit of the polling place. Locate areas for campaigning more than 6 feet from any ingress or egress for voters to and from the polling place.
- **Poll watchers** inside the polling place must maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others and wear masks. Persons who cannot wear a mask due to health considerations should not serve as poll watchers.

### **Vote Counting**

- Cloth face coverings and/or face shields should be used when election officials are counting votes. Face shields may be worn in addition to a mask, but not on their own.
- Maintain physical distancing during the counting of votes. Space pairs of election workers 6 feet apart when possible and/or provide for physical barriers between election workers. If a BCA decision needs to be made, maintain as much distance as possible.
- In order to maintain distancing, each poll worker counting votes may be given their own stack of ballots and a Tally Sheet. They may count that stack individually and record the votes on the Tally Sheet. Each stack may then be passed to a second poll worker to count and affirm the vote totals on a second Tally Sheet before they are given to the clerk for recording on the Summary Sheet.