



General Guidance for County Boards of Elections regarding COVID-19

The New York State Board of Elections developed the following guidance by researching documents produced by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED). The guidance appendix provides informative fact sheets.

General Guidance on Protecting Yourself Against COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating.
- Wear a face covering when unable to maintain a social distance of six (6) feet or out in the public.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Stay up to date by visiting
 - The NYS Department of Health www.ny.gov/coronavirus ; or
 - The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>
 - The National Association of State Election Directors. www.nased.org

Preventive Actions and Considerations for County Boards of Elections:

Poll Sites

- Create site specific plans for poll sites to implement social distancing, communication to voters, cleaning and disinfection. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Try to relocate polling places from nursing homes, long-term care facilities, and senior living residences, to minimize COVID-19 exposure among older individuals and those with chronic medical conditions.
- Plan the flow of traffic through your poll site. Utilize markers on the ground to ensure that voters are minimally six feet apart.
- If possible, try to hire additional staff to handle traffic flow, remind voters about masks and social distancing

- Ensure that facilities are cleaned and disinfected prior to the start of early voting and election day and every night after the close of polls by additional staff.
- Ensure that facilities are periodically cleaned and disinfected during poll site hours. Hire additional staff dedicated to this function if needed.
- Ensure that facilities that provide polling sites have bathrooms at the polling station supplied adequately with soap, water, and drying materials so visitors and staff can wash their hands.
- Incorporate social distancing strategies, as feasible in poll site layout.
 - Six foot social distance between individuals decreases the frequency of contact among individuals to reduce the risk of spreading a disease. Use signage before entering and in the poll site. Utilize markers to indicate the six (6) foot distance throughout the poll site. Feasibility of strategies will depend on the space available in the polling station and the number of voters who arrive at one time.:
 - Increase distance between voting booths.
 - Limit nonessential visitors.
 - Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes). Include this reminder on signs about social distancing.
- Ensure that doors are propped open, as applicable, so people don't have to touch door handles to reduce a common contact.
- Ensure that there is a garbage can upon exit of the facility. For the disposal of any gloves or tissues.
- Provide Personal Protective Equipment to all staff, including but not limited to face coverings, gloves, hand sanitizer.

For Voters

- Update your early voting communication plan to include COVID-19 communication to voters.
 - Tell voters they must wear face coverings and social distance at poll sites
 - Encourage voters to use voting methods that minimize direct contact with other people and reduce crowd size at polling stations such as
 - absentee voting due to COVID-19.
 - early voting, where voter crowds may be smaller throughout the day.
 - vote in-person on election day at off-peak times like mid-morning and mid-afternoon.
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use before entering the poll site and/or after using the voting machine or the final step in the voting process. Consider placing the alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks and exits.
- Provide personal protective equipment to voters before entering the poll site, as applicable.

Voting continues to remain accessible.

- The absentee ballot application in accessible format is available on the State Board’s website at www.elections.ny.gov/VotingAbsentee.html.
- County Boards are required to have a BMD available for the absentee ballot period; and
- BMDs must be provided during early voting and on election day

Recommendations for Processing Mail-in Ballots

- Workers handling mail in ballots should practice hand hygiene frequently.
- Clean and disinfect facilities where mail in ballots are stored.

Poll Worker Guidance

Every County Board must update poll worker training to include guidance on precautions to take to protect against COVID-19 and must create site specific plans to implement social distancing precautions.

Preventive action poll workers can take:

- Stay at home if you have fever, respiratory symptoms, or believe you are sick.
- 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.
- Wear a face covering.
- Maintain a social distance from others of six (6) feet.
- Practice routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces: including tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.
- Clean and disinfect voting associated electronics (e.g., voting machines, laptops, tablets, keyboards) routinely using products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims (examples can be found here: [this link](#)). Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
 - The New York State Board of Elections has consulted with election technology vendors requesting their guidance on products appropriate for disinfecting voting machines and touch screens. Copies of their responses follow:

Voting Machines

ClearBallot - The Clear Ballot system is used in New York for post-election audit scanning/absentee processing and therefore has minimal public-facing impact. The vendor is recommending to all clients that handle Election Day/Absentee paper ballots to wear disposable gloves when touching the ballots as a precaution. Additional recommendations include a regular wipe down of computer and scanner surfaces with a disinfectant wipe during use and frequent handwashing by the users.

Dominion – Although no specific guidelines document exists, the vendor recommends using damp anti-bacterial wipes on any hand-touch component of the system between uses including: Audio Tactile Interfaces on the Ballot Marking Devices, ballot marking pens, security and administrative i-buttons, and keys.

ES&S – To clean any screens, lightly dampen (do not soak) a soft, lint-free cloth with Isopropyl alcohol. Using gentle pressure and circular motions, wipe the center of the screen surface until clean. Be careful not to scratch the screen. Avoid the edges of the screen.

The vendor also warns: to not use full-strength, harsh detergents, liquid cleaners, aerosols, abrasive pads, scouring powders, or solvents, such as benzene, unless otherwise noted; disinfectant sprays, such as Lysol, are not permitted and may damage the screen; do not allow cleaning solutions to come in contact with ballot stock; liquids should never be applied directly to the unit; and do not soak the cloth with solution so that moisture drips on or lingers on the external surface.

Electronic Poll Book Systems

KNOWiNK – Recommends the use of Sani-Cloth CHG 2% wipes to effectively disinfect iPads, with a residual antibacterial effect and without causing damage.

Tenex – Recommends keeping hand sanitizer close by for Inspectors and voters, wiping the screen and stylus with a disinfectant wipe or cleaners as needed/possible throughout the day, wiping dry the screen and stylus with a microfiber cloth to avoid touch errors on the screen and recommending that Inspectors wear latex gloves to minimize their skin contact with items.

Robis – No official guidance documents available but the vendor recommends that customers: wipe down the signature pad and stylus with isopropyl alcohol (the CDC recommends at least 60% concentration); keep hand sanitizer at the check-in station for voters to use before/after signing; and wipe down the computer keyboard/touch screen with isopropyl alcohol wipes or cloth dampened with isopropyl alcohol when they switch users. Never spray cleaner directly on the screen or keyboard.

If no guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 60% alcohol to clean voting machine buttons and touch screens. Use of alcohol-based products may reduce risk of damage to sensitive voting machine components.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

County Boards of Election should not wait in the procurement of PPE (gloves, masks, sanitizer, wipes, disinfectants, gowns, plexiglass, and other items) for Early Voting, Election Day and through the canvass process.

The State Board recommends seeking procurement assistance for PPE through NY Responds at <https://nyr.dhSES.ny.gov> via your County Office of Emergency Management. Please report any inability to procure PPE to the State Board immediately.

The CDC does not have specific guidance for what would be considered adequate PPE and supplies within the community. CDC has developed a [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Burn Rate Calculator](#) for use in healthcare settings to track use of PPE and estimate how long supplies may last that may be helpful for tracking in community settings.