

Safety Measures to Prevent Against Transmission of COVID-19 at Polling Stations

On March 7, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo issued Executive Order 202, declaring a state of emergency in response to COVID-19. To minimize further spread and to ensure the health and safety of voters, poll workers and the general public, social distancing and frequent cleaning measures will be put in place at all polling stations. To help prevent spread of COVID-19 at polling stations, procedures and supplies will be in place to encourage proper hand and respiratory hygiene as well as routine cleaning and disinfection.

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 (NASSED). These considerations included, but were not limited to the following:

General Precautions:

- Any individual who displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be encouraged to stay at home. All Polling sites will provide alternative voting options for voters who may be sick (examples provided below).
- On April 12, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.16, directing essential businesses to provide Social Distancing. Signage promoting social distancing procedures will be posted in prominent locations.
- Poll workers and voters must maintain a distance of at least six feet to the greatest extent possible.
- Social distancing of at least six feet must be maintained while voters wait in line.
- Polling sites will have bathrooms that are adequately supplied with soap, water, and disposable hand drying materials to allow for individuals to wash their hands.
- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.
- Hand sanitizer will be placed at the entrance of the polling site, at each polling station, and at the exit of the facility.
- On April 15, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.17, directing that any individual who is over age two and able to medically tolerate a face-covering must cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face-covering when in direct contact with members of the public. Poll workers will be supplied with and wear appropriate personal protective equipment to assist voters and election staff.
- To ensure voter access, polling sites will be prepared to provide disposable face coverings to any voter who does not have their own face covering.
- Poll workers and voters will be reminded to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow, dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use, and perform hand hygiene.
- Poll workers will not share food or beverages. Adequate space will be reserved for workers to observe social distancing while eating meals and taking breaks.
- Polling sites will limit voter presence to 50% of the maximum occupancy for the area as set by the certificate of occupancy.

Considerations Before Entering the Polling Site:

Polling sites will have protocols and clear instructions at the entrance of the polling location. Poll workers will be screened before they enter the polling site and not be permitted to enter if they:

- Tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days,
- Have been in close proximate contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days,
- Are experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19.
- Have a fever greater than or equal to 100.0°F.

Voters will be provided clear instructions, before entering the polling station, about protocols concerning:

- Individuals who would otherwise be restricted from accessing public areas, including those who:
 - Have symptoms of COVID-19 including fever greater than or equal to 100.0°F, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pains, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
 - Have tested positive for COVID-19 and have not been cleared by a medical professional or the local health department to appear in public.
 - Had close or proximate contact with someone testing positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days.
- Alternative voting options for those restricted individuals, which will include acceptance of absentee ballots at the polling site consistent with Executive Order 202.15 and consistent with Election Law.

Hand Hygiene:

Hand hygiene stations will be provided and maintained at the polling site. Signage with hand hygiene procedures will be posted in prominent locations promoting good hand hygiene practices:

- Poll workers and voters should wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water:
 - Before and after handling and/or eating food;
 - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing;
 - After using the restroom;
 - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; and
 - After using shared equipment and supplies, including electronic equipment such as keyboards, mice, writing instruments, phones, and voting equipment.
- If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, hand sanitizer is not effective on visibly soiled hands therefore hands that are visibly soiled must be washed with soap and water.
- Hand sanitizing stations must be located near polling equipment with signage encouraging use before and after voting.

Respiratory Hygiene Signage promoting respiratory hygiene procedures will be posted in prominent locations.

Voting Equipment:

- Alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 60% alcohol will be used to clean voting machine buttons, and touch screens.
- Voting equipment including touch screens will be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- Disposable pens or pencils will be disposed of after each use.
- Gloves will be provided as requested.

More Information: New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage:

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

Centers for Disease Control and Preventing Webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

Special Ballots for Emergency Responders (Election Law Section 11-308):

<https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/law/2019NYElectionLaw.html>