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

I. **Background**

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about SARS-CoV-2, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (those within about six feet) via respiratory droplets. Transmission of SAR-CoV-2 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented yet, but current evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of material. One primary measure discussed in this guidance will be cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection – a best practice for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in election polling locations.

II. **Purpose**

This guidance provides recommendations for operations of election polling locations on preventative measures.

III. **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.

¹ Source: CDC's Recommended Precautions for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Election Polling Places
Version 1.0 (03.11.2020)

IV. 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-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 congregate facilities with older adults, long-term care facilities or senior living facilities. While this does not occur frequently, these sites should be avoided.
- g. Use signage at the election polling locations encouraging voters to practice proper hygiene (see CDC Printed Resources under Resources).

V. 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.

VI. 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.

VII. 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.
Consider voting by mail, if possible.

VIII. 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](#).

IX. 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](#)