ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
IDPH
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NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois Department of Public Health Provides Guidance for State Polling Locations

CHICAGO – In preparation for the 2020 elections, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued guidance to protect the safety and health of voters as they cast ballots at polling locations throughout the state during early voting and Election Day. The "COVID-19 Guidance for Election Polling Places" guidance can be found here.

"Voting is a right and a privilege," said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. "While the safest way to cast a ballot this year is voting by mail, we are and will continue to take the necessary steps to ensure that Illinoisans can exercise their right to vote in person, in the safest possible environments during this COVID-19 pandemic."

In accordance with the guidance, all local election authorities will be required to develop written COVID-19 prevention plans for all polling sites within their jurisdiction. Plans will contain specific COVID-19 safety and training instructions along with the names of individuals responsible for implementation of the plan.

Election authorities are being strongly encouraged to relocate polls previously housed in long-term care facilities and senior living residences to protect voters and residents – particularly those who are most vulnerable.

All locations will have signage to encourage voters to wear masks and maintain a distance of 6 feet, while inside the polling places. If voters show up to a polling place without one, election authorities are required to offer them a face covering outside of the polling place. Polling booths will be set up at least 6 feet apart and foot traffic will be one-directional.

Additional recommended preventative actions in the guidance include using Plexiglas barriers between election officials and voters, large print instructions to facilitate communication, routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, and polling place personnel to remind voters to maintain physical distance. While election officials are prohibited from preventing a voter without a face covering from casting a ballot, the guidance requires they take every reasonable action to separate noncompliant voters, ensuring they are socially distanced from those voters who are compliant.

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