



For Building Administrators and Proprietors: Use of Facilities as Polling Places during COVID-19

This guidance addresses concerns for property owners or managers of buildings or facilities currently not in use due to closures during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These buildings may be used as polling places during the June 2, 2020 presidential primary election. In all counties the need for polling places is acute, regardless of their current designation under the Governor’s [Process to Reopen Pennsylvania](#). As an owner or administrator of a facility that may be suitable for use as a polling place, the Governor, the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and the Secretary of Health urge you to help your fellow Pennsylvanians by ensuring that the June 2 presidential primary election is administered safely and successfully. We ask that you work with county election officials to open your facility on a limited basis for use as a polling place in accordance with these guidelines. Counties may provide remuneration for the short-term lease of the facility to offset costs incurred.

Locations appropriate for use as polling places

For locations that will be used as a polling location on election day, the color-coded phases of the [Governor’s Process to Reopen Pennsylvania](#) do not apply. Locations that are not currently open to the public are, in fact, appropriate to designate as polling places, because the lack of daily public access will limit potential exposure risks and allow adequate time for cleaning and sanitizing before and after election day. For this reason, buildings may be opened as an exception for the purpose of serving as a polling place during the June 2nd Pennsylvania presidential primary election.

The Department of State is working with other Commonwealth agencies to make state-owned facilities available. In addition to certain state-owned facilities, the following locations are appropriate for consideration:

Churches	Fire Departments	Private banquet halls
Community centers	Schools	Gymnasiums or fitness centers
Municipal buildings	Colleges & Universities	Libraries
Township buildings	Private clubs with large common area	Membership organization facilities (Legion, VFW or social clubs)
Auditoriums	Stadiums or arenas	Hotel meeting or banquet rooms
Music/performance venues	Maintenance facilities	Recreation centers

Statutory Considerations

Act 12 of 2020 granted counties emergency relief to consolidate polling locations for the upcoming 2020 presidential primary election due to COVID-19. This allows counties to operate fewer polling places on election day by assigning more than one precinct to a given location. Consolidated locations must offer adequate parking and accessibility, areas that allow adherence to social distancing guidelines, and allow for adequate room, flow or configuration to maintain a voter’s right to privacy. Consequently, locations containing multiple rooms and/or entrances, and facilities with large spaces such as multi-purpose rooms, banquet rooms and gathering halls are in high need. Counties will be unable to consolidate polling places without the use of large, accessible, and strategically located facilities.

In addition, the Pennsylvania Election Code requires municipalities and school districts to make their buildings available to serve as polling locations upon request by the county board of elections. (See 25



P.S. § 2727(a).) The Election Code’s preference for these public buildings makes sense because they are often strategically located within local communities and they are also among the most accessible facilities for people with disabilities.

Election Day Precautions

The state and the county boards of elections are taking all reasonable measures to provide for a safe voting experience at polling locations. We are urging, per Governor Wolf’s [order](#), that voters wear masks while in the polling place. The Department of State has advised counties to follow social distancing and disinfecting guidelines in place in the region during the pandemic. The state has procured and is distributing to the counties thousands of precinct infection protection kits containing items such as masks, gloves, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, and floor tape to mark social distancing, and counties are procuring additional protective equipment as well, to ensure that voters, poll workers, and polling places are safe on election day.

We are also working diligently to encourage people to vote by mail. As part of this effort, the state sent mailings to every eligible primary voter household encouraging them to vote by mail and has undertaken a comprehensive bi-lingual TV, radio, and digital advertising campaign. Already, nearly one million applications for mail-in or absentee ballots have been submitted statewide, and the number of requests continues to rise every day.

Post-Election Day Cleaning Protocol

For locations used as polling places, we recommend a waiting period of at least 48 hours after election day or 24 hours after the last voting equipment has been removed (whichever is longer) before cleaning the facility.

Polling places should be cleaned following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When cleaning within 7 days of the election, follow [guidelines from the CDC](#) for communities, schools, and workplaces regarding cleaning and disinfecting your facility. The instructions, available on the [CDC website](#), are considered “enhanced cleaning and disinfection,” and include:

- Use disposable gloves when cleaning.
- Clean surfaces with soap and water, followed by disinfectant.
- Use [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#).
- Close off the area used as a polling place from other areas in the facility.
- Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area.
- Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection.

Locations within a campus of multiple facilities only need to close and clean the area of the facility that voters accessed. However, be mindful of bathrooms, hallways, and other areas accessed by the public and poll workers, in addition to the areas used for voting. Also pay special attention to high contact areas, such as doors, tables, countertops, and other surfaces that are touched by people who enter the building.

According to the CDC, if more than 7 days have passed since a person who is sick visited the business or facility, enhanced cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. However, the location should be cleaned according to routine procedures. Businesses can use an established or new vendor to comply with the above cleaning requirements.