

Phase Two Guidance
Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Voters and Election Workers
in the 2020 General Election

In-person early voting in the District of Columbia begins on October 27, 2020. November 3, 2020 is Election Day in the District of Columbia and across the United States. This guidance contains information on how the public and election workers can exercise their right to vote and support election activities while staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or who was recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, should explore other options than entering a Vote Center on Election Day due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Tips for Staying Safe if Voting In-Person

DC Health and The District of Columbia Board of Elections (BOE) strongly encourage all registered voters to vote by mail in the 2020 General Election. DC Health recognizes that voting is an essential activity, and some residents may choose or prefer to cast their ballot in-person. Below are tips on how to stay safe while exercising your right to vote in person.

- The more people that interact in any setting increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission, so take steps to avoid polling sites at busy times.
- Vote early at an Early Voting Center to avoid the larger crowds expected on Election Day (see dcboe.org for more details).
 - Vote during off-peak times to avoid crowds (such as mid-morning).
 - Plan ahead to help minimize the amount of time you spend at a Vote Center (e.g., fill out any forms you may need in advance, review or complete a sample ballot in advance).
 - **Mail in ballots can be dropped off at polling locations without waiting in line.**
- Bring hand sanitizer with you.
 - NOTE: Voters and poll workers should be cautious using hand sanitizer when handling paper ballots or electronic voting equipment as it could damage these items. Use hand sanitizer after handling or allow hands to dry completely before handling these items.
 - ALSO: Voters should not disinfect or wipe down the voting equipment themselves: electronic voting equipment can be damaged by certain cleaners and disinfectants
- Avoid shaking hands and other physical contact with people outside of your household. Wave or verbally greet people instead.
- Avoid shared items as much as possible, for example bring your own pen.
- Don't bring extra people with you who are not voting (e.g., children or friends).

Everyday Prevention Measures for Voters and Poll Workers

- **Stay at home if you are sick or were recently exposed** to someone with COVID-19. If you must vote in-person, please use the curbside option, and make sure to keep your mask on and minimize interactions with others at the voting site. For more information see the District of Columbia BOE website at dcboe.org/Voters/How-to-Vote/Voter-Assistance.
- **Practice social distancing.**
 - Stay at least 6 feet away from people who are not in your household, while in line and inside the voting center.

- **Wear a mask or cloth face covering at all times** when you leave your home or are around people who are not in your household.
 - Your mask should completely cover your nose and mouth, and fit snugly on your face with no gaps.
 - Masks are not required for children 2 and under. If possible, **avoid bringing small children with you if you vote in-person.**
 - For more information about mask wearing see Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- **If you are unable to wear a mask or cloth face covering**, we strongly recommend voting by mail. If you are planning to vote in person, please use the curbside voting option. For detailed information about voting in DC see the District of Columbia BOE website at dcboe.org/Voters/How-to-Vote/Voter-Assistance.
- Polling locations will be supplied with hand sanitizer.
 - Perform **frequent hand hygiene** (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer). Allow hands to dry completely after hand hygiene.
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene while voting include:
 - At arrival to and after leaving the Vote Center,
 - After using voting machines and depositing paper ballots,
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings,
 - After handling items used by other people,
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing,
 - After using the toilet, and
 - For poll workers: After handling mail-in or paper ballots, before and after breaks and shifts.

For voters and election workers at higher risk of serious illness with COVID-19

- People with certain medical conditions and older adults (65 years and older) are at higher risk of developing serious illness if they contract COVID-19.
 - For more information, see DC Health guidance for People with Chronic Health Conditions at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- We strongly recommend voting by mail, but you are planning to vote in person, please use the curbside voting option. For detailed information about voting in DC see the District of Columbia BOE website at dcboe.org/Voters/How-to-Vote/Voter-Assistance.
- People at higher risk for developing serious COVID-19 illness should avoid working as poll workers, unless they can be assigned to job tasks with minimal direct contact with the public and other workers.

Voting by Mail: The Safest Option

- As with other activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, voting in-person puts individuals at substantially higher risk for contracting or spreading COVID-19 than voting remotely. BOE has mailed every *active voter* a ballot (aka absentee ballot) for the November 3, 2020 General Election. Ballots have been sent to voters registered address as part of their Vote Safe DC campaign. Ballots were mailed out the first week of October. Voters do not need to request a mail-in ballot. Ballots can be dropped off at 55 area official drop boxes, by mail or at polling locations during early voting and election day. For more information visit dcboe.org.

Mayor Muriel Bowser encourages DC voters to take advantage of early voting options and not wait until Election Day to make their voice heard. The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov regularly for the most current information.