



## For Building Owners & Administrators: Use of Facilities as Polling Places during COVID-19

This guidance addresses concerns for property owners or managers of buildings or facilities during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

### Election Day Precautions

The state and 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 protective supplies for the polling places including 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 or early in person at their county election offices. As part of this effort, the state sent mailings to every eligible voter household encouraging them to vote by mail and has undertaken a comprehensive bi-lingual TV, radio, and digital advertising campaign. Already, over 2.7 million applications for mail-in or absentee ballots have been submitted statewide, and the number of requests continues to rise every day.

Also, we are encouraging in-person voters to make the COVID Alert PA part of their voting plan. If you plan to vote in person, download the COVID Alert PA mobile app to your Apple or Google device to get a notification if you have been exposed to COVID-19. The app uses the same technology that your phone uses to connect to your car through Bluetooth. No personal information is collected. If another app user tests positive, you will be notified that you have come in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. The app will help you find testing resources and connect with public health experts to guide you through what you should do next. It is one more way you can stay safe while voting. More information is available at [www.pa.gov/COVID](http://www.pa.gov/COVID).

### 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.

#### Locations appropriate for use as polling places

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. However, long term care facilities and nursing homes are not able to serve as polling places on Election Day.

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	Recreation centers
Community centers	Schools	Gymnasiums or fitness centers
Municipal buildings	Colleges & Universities	Libraries
Township buildings	Music/performance venues	Maintenance facilities
Auditoriums	Stadiums or arenas	Hotel meeting or banquet rooms

#### Statutory Considerations

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.