WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold. The risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or longer in a 24-hour period) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The best way to protect yourself and to help reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 is to limit your interactions with other people as much as possible and take precautions to prevent getting COVID-19 when you do interact with others. Those steps include wearing a face covering, maintaining social distance of 6 feet and washing your hands frequently. If you start feeling sick and think you may have COVID-19, get in touch with your healthcare provider within 24 hours.

PREVENTIVE ACTION POLLING WORKERS CAN TAKE

Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice measure for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in election polling locations. The following are additional actions that polling station workers can take to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by limiting the survival of the virus in the environment:

- **Stay at home.** Notify your supervisor of your illness. Do not go to polling place if you have fever, respiratory symptoms or believe you are sick.
- **Practice respiratory etiquette** (e.g., wearing a mask, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve).
- **Practice frequent, proper handwashing** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Workers handling mail-in ballots should practice hand hygiene frequently.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently-touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, countertops, work stations) with usual cleaning and disinfection products. Follow all instructions on the product label.
- **Clean and disinfect voting-associated electronics (e.g., voting machines, laptops, tablets, keyboards) routinely using products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims.** Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
  - Consult with the voting machine manufacturer about guidance on products appropriate for disinfecting voting machines and touch screens, and consider additional use of wipeable covers for machines, if possible.

- o If no guidance is available, 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.
- **Ensure bathrooms at the polling station are supplied adequately with soap, water and drying materials.**
- **Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol** for use before or after using the voting machine or the final step in the voting process. Consider placing the alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks and exits.
- **Incorporate social distancing strategies, as feasible.** Social distancing strategies increase the space between individuals and decrease the frequency of contact among individuals to reduce the risk of spreading a disease. Keeping individuals at least 6 feet apart is ideal based on what is known about COVID-19. If this is not feasible, efforts should be made to keep individuals as far apart as is practical. Feasibility of strategies will depend on the space available in the polling station and the number of voters who arrive at one time. Polling station workers can:

  - o Increase distance between voting booths.
  - o Limit nonessential visitors. For example, poll workers should be encouraged not to bring children, grandchildren, etc. with them as they work the polls.
  - o Remind voters upon arrival to try to leave space between themselves and others. Encourage voters to stay 6 feet apart if feasible. Polling places may provide signs to help voters and workers remember this.
  - o Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes). Include this reminder on signs about social distancing.

- For those under quarantine or isolation, during the election, there is no emergency ballot option in Indiana. However, voters can still request a traveling board up until noon (local time) the day before the election: https://www.in.gov/sos/elections/2402.htm.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 recommendations for preventing spread of COVID-19 in election polling station locations: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/election-polling-locations.html
- CDC COVID-19 recommendations for environmental cleaning and disinfection: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: https://coronavirus.in.gov