

Guidance for Voters in Virginia

to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

October 14, 2020

The [Virginia Department of Elections](#) encourages voters to consider alternative options for voting in the November 2020 elections. In general, the more closely people interact with each other and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. **The best way to avoid becoming infected is to avoid being exposed to the virus altogether. This is particularly important for people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.** There are many options for voting this year that can reduce your interaction with other people, including absentee or early voting. Consider the recommendations below when you are making a plan to vote this year. More recommendations about safer voting can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#).

Tips for Voting During the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. **Make a plan:** visit the [Department of Elections website](#) for more information on options for voting in Virginia.
2. **Wear a cloth face covering/mask**, if you are able, at all times while voting.
3. **Exercise proper social distancing** by maintaining at least 6 feet of separation from other voters and poll workers.
 - a. Consider staying more than 6 feet away from people who are not wearing cloth face coverings.
4. **Practice good hygiene.**
 - a. Do not use physical greetings, such as handshaking.
 - b. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before and after voting. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer to clean your hands.
 - c. Avoid touching your face and face covering.

Individuals under isolation or quarantine during Election Day are strongly encouraged to vote absentee in order to comply with isolation/quarantine and reduce risk to others. If absentee deadlines have been missed, there is an option to pursue **emergency absentee voting**:

1. You may cast an **emergency absentee ballot** if you were unable to meet the "vote by mail" application deadline for any of the following reasons (Va. Code § 24.2-705):
 - a. Your hospitalization or illness;
 - b. The hospitalization, illness, or death of a spouse, child, or parent; or
 - c. Other emergency found to justify receipt of an emergency absentee ballot
2. **Requirements for emergency absentee voting:**
 - a. You may request to vote emergency absentee at any time prior to 2:00 pm on the day preceding the election
 - b. If you are approved for an emergency ballot, your general registrar shall provide the absentee ballot to your designated representative for delivery to you
 - c. You shall mark the ballot in the presence of your designated representative (*all parties should be masked and maintain distancing*)
 - d. The ballot shall be counted only if the ballot is received by the general registrar prior to the close of polls