

# Frequently Asked Questions about Schools Serving as Polling Places for November 2020 Election

The Department of State is providing the following information in response to questions from school administrators regarding the use of schools as polling places for the general election on November 3, 2020.

## **I received a request from my county to use my school as a polling place. Is this allowed?**

Yes, public schools are frequently used as polling places in Pennsylvania. This is in part because 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.<sup>1</sup> Schools are also commonly used as polling places because the location, size and accessibility of the facilities make them particularly convenient for voters.

## **Are there restrictions on schools serving as polling places due to COVID-19?**

There are no restrictions on schools serving as polling places during the November 3, 2020 general election due to COVID-19.

## **What precautions will be in place at polling places this year in light of COVID-19?**

The state and the county boards of elections are taking all reasonable measures to provide for a safe voting experience at polling locations.:

- Voters are urged to wear masks while in the polling place.
- Counties are expected to follow [guidelines from the CDC for communities, schools, and workplaces](#) and PA Department of Health guidance for social distancing and disinfection.
- The state has procured and is distributing to the counties protective equipment, including masks, face shields, tabletop protective shields (sneeze guards), disinfectant, and hand sanitizer. .
- Counties are also procuring additional protective equipment to ensure that voters, poll workers, and polling places are safe on election day. Counties also may access CARES Act funding for this purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> See 25 P.S. § 2727(a)



- The Department of State has directed counties to train poll workers on how to conduct elections during the pandemic.
- Voter turnout may be reduced due to the availability of mail-in ballots. .

### **What if my school is not currently open for in-person learning?**

Schools that are not currently open for in-person learning are well suited for polling since voting activities will not interfere with the regular school day, and enhanced cleaning may not be necessary. Schools also often have large areas such as lobbies, cafeterias, and gymnasiums that allow for social distancing and a safer voting experience.

### **Who will be responsible for cleaning and/or sanitizing the polling place after election day?**

County election officials are generally responsible for cleaning the location after election day. The Department of State recommends that polling places be cleaned following [guidelines from the CDC for communities, schools, and workplaces](#). Specific cleaning requirements can be arranged with the county as part of a polling place use agreement.

### **Who can I contact with questions or concerns?**

You can contact your county election officials to arrange for your school to serve as a polling place. If you are unsure who to contact in your county or have other questions, you may contact Rachel Boss, Community Impact Manager, at [rboss@pa.gov](mailto:rboss@pa.gov) or Sindhu Ramachandran, Voting Systems Analyst, at [sramaschand@pa.gov](mailto:sramaschand@pa.gov), at the Pennsylvania Department of State.