Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic in New Hampshire

Election Polling and Voting Locations

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Symptoms of COVID-19

- Fever or chills (including subjective fever)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

People at Increased Risk of Severe Illness

- See CDC information on **people who are at increased risk for severe illness** from COVID-19
- Risk for severe illness increases with age
- People with certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD
  - Immunocompromised (e.g., solid organ transplant)
  - Obesity (BMI \( \geq 30 \))
  - Diabetes mellitus
  - Heart disease
  - Etc.

How COVID-19 is Transmitted

• Person-to-person: Primarily through respiratory droplets
  – Close physical proximity (within 6 feet highest risk)
  – Prolonged duration of contact (longer duration increases risk)
  – From a person who is symptomatic or asymptomatic

• Person-to-person: respiratory aerosols (airborne spread)
  – Not the primary means of spread
  – Certain circumstances can increase risk:
    • Aerosol-generating procedure in the medical setting (airway suctioning, intubation, high-flow oxygen, nebulizer administration)
    • Singing?

How COVID-19 is Transmitted

• Fomites (contaminated surfaces)
  – Theoretical risk - not the main way the virus spreads
  – In laboratory controlled conditions, the virus causing COVID-19 has been found to be able to survive for up to 72 hours on plastic & stainless steel. No survivable virus found after 24 hours on cardboard.
    • Median half-life: steel (5.6 hours), plastic (6.8 hours)
    • Reference: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32511427/

• Animals-to-people?
  – Person-to-animal transmission has been documented (cats, dogs, tigers, mink, etc.)
  – Animal-to-person transmission still being studied (some anecdotal reports)
Cloth Face Coverings/Masks


- Cloth face coverings are intended to keep the wearer from spreading the virus to other people (“source control”)

- Cloth face coverings are NOT personal protective equipment (PPE) – while they may offer some protection, they have not been evaluated for effectiveness as PPE

- COVID-19 PPE is intended for healthcare providers caring for patients with suspect or confirmed COVID-19, and generally NOT recommended for public use

- Who should NOT wear cloth face coverings: children < 2 years of age; or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
Cloth Face Coverings/Masks Work!

Absence of Apparent Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from Two Stylists After Exposure at a Hair Salon with a Universal Face Covering Policy — Springfield, Missouri, May 2020

M. Joshua Hendrix, MD1; Charles Walde, MD2; Kendra Findley, MS3; Robin Trotman, DO4

• Two hair stylists in Missouri developed respiratory symptoms and were subsequently diagnosed with COVID-19, but continued to work for 8 days (stylist A) and 5 days (stylist B) after developing symptoms

• Stylists worked for a combined 17 days while considered infectious; Exposed 139 clients

• Very high compliance with face mask use by stylists and clients

• Zero people developed COVID-19 (tested about 48% of exposed clients)

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6928e2-H.pdf
Guidance for Election Polling Locations

• See CDC’s Considerations for Election Polling Locations and Voters

• This guidance should be adapted to your specific location and voting station
Layers of COVID-19 Protection

• Symptom and risk factor screening of workers
• Sick/symptomatic people/voters should not enter the voting location facility
• Hand hygiene
• Cloth face coverings/masks (PPE not needed)
• Social distancing
• Frequent cleaning and disinfection
People With Symptoms or Risk Factors Should Not Enter the Voting Facility

• Educate poll workers about symptoms of COVID-19 and to stay home if having new symptoms or new exposure

• Post Signs and messaging at entrances and throughout facility to inform voters they should not enter the facility they have symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19

• Recommend actively screening voting location staff and volunteers at the start of each day

• See Employee Illness and Risk Screening Questions for current recommended screening questions

Screening Questions for Staff & Volunteers

Current Illness and Risk Screening Questions:

1. Do you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher? Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:
   - Fever, or feeling feverish;
   - Respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath;
   - General body symptoms such as muscle aches, chills, and severe fatigue;
   - Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; and
   - Changes in a person’s sense of taste or smell.

2. Have you had close contact with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 in the prior 14 days? (Note: healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients while wearing appropriate personal protective equipment should answer “no” because they are not considered to have a COVID-19 exposure)

3. Have you traveled in the prior 14 days outside of New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, or Rhode Island?
Hand Hygiene

• Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) should be placed at entrances, exits, and throughout the voting facility.

• Staff should consider carrying pocket supplies of hand sanitizer

• Voters should sanitize hands:
  – Before entering facility
  – After exiting facility
  – Before handling ballot (hand sanitizer should fully dry)
  – After submitting ballot
  – After using the restroom
  – Before/after touching face or face covering
Cloth Face Coverings/Masks

- Staff and voters should wear cloth face coverings or masks over nose AND mouth while within the facility and in areas around other people.
- Avoid having voters pull down face masks, if possible (e.g., for voter identification/verification).
- Hand hygiene should be performed BEFORE a person touches their face covering.
- Hand hygiene should be performed AFTER a person touches their face covering.
- For people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing: Lip reading can be supported with clear face coverings, face shields, or Plexiglas barriers.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

• PPE recommended for healthcare workers includes: gown, gloves, eye protection, mask (surgical vs. N95)
• PPE is generally not needed nor recommended for polling/voting location staff
• Face shields can be used to supplement/augment face mask use in certain circumstances (e.g., when face masks need to be lowered), but face shields are not a replacement for face coverings/masks
• Gloves should be on-hand for cleaning/disinfection
• Gowns not needed
• Recommend AGAINST use of N95 or KN95 face masks
Social/Physical Distancing

• Avoid physical contact (e.g., no hand shakes)
• Poll workers should stay at least 6 feet away from others (including other staff)
• Voters should stay at least 6 feet away from others (facilities need to manage lines and promote social distancing).
• If possible, increase distance between voting booths to ensure voters remain at least 6 feet apart
• If 6 feet of separation between people/booths is unable to be maintained, then look to other protections
  – Physical barriers or shields between people less than 6 feet apart
  – Develop a process for directing people to voting booths that are not adjacent to ones already in use
Frequent Cleaning and Disinfection

• Review CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection

• Frequently clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, tables, chairs, counters, restrooms, etc.) using an EPA approved disinfectant that is effective against the COVID-19 virus
  – Follow manufacturer’s instructions, including application, contact time, use of personal protective equipment, storage, etc.
  – Implement routine cleaning and disinfection on a schedule (e.g., every 2 hours)
  – Cleaning and disinfection of voting booths does not have to occur after every use

• Avoid shared objects (use single-use items)

• Shared equipment/objects should be cleaned and disinfected between use

Additional Considerations for Facility Layout and Voting Process

- Limit non-essential visitors and people accompanying voters
- Avoid waiting areas and congregation
- Manage lines (mark at least 6 feet of distances between people)
- Have clearly labeled separate entrances and exits
- One-directional flow
- Arrange for drive-up or in-car voting for people who refuse to wear a cloth face covering, people who might be uncomfortable entering the facility, or those who might have mild symptoms or risk factors of COVID-19
Additional Considerations for Facility Layout and Voting Process

• Encourage people who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to vote remotely (mail-in ballot)
• Privacy booth curtains are fine – focus on routine frequent cleaning & disinfecting hard surfaces and frequent hand hygiene
• Increase and maximize building ventilation with outdoor air
  – Limit internal air circulation/re-circulation (discourage fan use)
  – Evaluate HVAC systems
  – Increase air exchanges with outdoor air
  – Improve central air filtration
  – As a secondary option: open windows
Question 1

• What suggestions can you offer about the transfer and handling of paperwork, and should the form become contaminated how long the virus might be viable. Can we be comfortable handling the paperwork the following day?
  – Fomite/surface transmission of COVID-19 has NOT been documented
  – There is a theoretic risk based on laboratory-controlled studies
  – Yes, you should feel comfortable handling paperwork
  – Voters should practice hand hygiene before/upon entering the voting facility
  – Staff/volunteers should focus on hand hygiene before/after handling objects from other people
  – Avoid touching face with un-washed/un-sanitized hands
Question 2

• What is your advice on food, line a normal “buffet” style for election workers?
  – See NH Food Services Industry guidance
  – No self-serve buffets & No self-serve utensils or plates
  – Recommend people bring their own lunches/dinners, or offer individually wrapped/served meals

• Should we allow pencils to be taken with the voters?
  – Avoid shared objects and utensils
  – The Secretary of State’s Office will issue each polling place with pens/pencils to issue each voter that the voter should take with them
Question 3

• Is it OK for poll workers and voters to wear just a face shield, or must a mask also be properly worn? How does this apply to various scenarios for poll workers (e.g., seated ballot clerk behind a sneeze guard)?
  – The recommendation is to wear cloth face coverings/masks
  – Face shields are not a replacement for face coverings/masks (they have different purposes)
  – Face shields can be used to supplement/augment face mask use in certain circumstances (e.g., when face masks need to be lowered)
Question 4

• We will be working long hours and I am concerned that, despite all of the precautions, I will contract the virus while at the polls. Should election officials and workers be tested for COVID-19 the day after the election?
  – There is no recommendation for election officials and workers to be tested before or after the election
  – Anybody who has symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested
  – Healthy people without symptoms can access testing if they want
  – COVID-19 specimen collection and testing if available at multiple locations throughout the State: https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/covid-testing-options.pdf
Question 5

• What about ventilation in polling places and airborne droplets? Some spaces used as polling places do not have windows that can be opened. I’m concerned about poll workers spending the entire day and evening together in such a space with poor ventilation.

• As registrants, we are required to be at our posts for 10+ hours in one room. Given that some of us work in buildings with outdated ventilation systems, how are we to stay safe given the likelihood of aerosol transmission? Are masks sufficient for the entire day?
  – COVID-19 is primary spread through non-airborne respiratory droplets that require a person to be within 6 feet of someone infected
  – Addressing building ventilation is one of many layers of protection (including screening of workers, mask use, social distancing, hand hygiene)
  – Maximize building ventilation to the extent possible
  – If there is concern about conducting voting in a closed space with poor ventilation, is it possible to host in an alternative location (outdoors, another building, etc.)?
Question 6

• What are the recommended intervals for breaks?
  – There is no specific interval recommended
  – Workers should be allowed periodic breaks, as needed, where people can/should go outdoors (away from other people) and can remove masks (practice hand hygiene before/after)

• Would you recommend placing small fans around tables where poll workers are sitting to make sure the air is moving?
  – Discourage fan use for this purpose
  – Increase building ventilation with outdoor air & limit internal air re-circulation
Open for Additional Questions & Concerns