

Special Voting Opportunities

At a Glance

For most voters, the elections generally mean voting in one of three ways: at the polls during Advance Voting, at the polls on Election Day, or perhaps by mail as an absentee voter. Each of these three may pose problems for particular voters and thus a number of other ways to cast the ballot have been developed that may be used in your jurisdiction. Each of these methods is unique and the COVID-19 related risks of each should be carefully considered.

What are Special Voting Opportunities?



Not so long ago, Election Day Voting was the only time in which voters could cast their ballots. Over time, election administrators and legislators have come to realize that providing only one mode of voting service delivery can effectively disenfranchise a number of voters who

cannot come to the polls due to their unique situations.

As a result, a number of new methods of administering the vote have been developed. Below is a list of special voting opportunities, some of which may be available in your jurisdiction.

- ◆ Hospital Voting: Bringing the vote to residents who are currently in hospitals.
- ◆ Personal Care Facility Voting: Bringing the vote to residents of personal care homes, mental health facilities, residential facilities and group homes.
- ◆ Remand/Correctional Facility Voting: Generally handled through absentee voting, it allows residents in these facilities to vote.
- ◆ Temporarily Displaced Voting: This form is for those who have been displaced (often due to a natural disaster) and are for a time living in other facilities or shelters.

- ◆ Homebound Voting: Voting is administered in the homes of voters who may not be able to travel to the poll.
- ◆ Quarantine Voting: Bringing the vote to those who are quarantined either because they have COVID-19 or because they have had contact with those who have COVID-19.
- ◆ Personal Care Facility Voting: If your jurisdiction provides this service, you should contact the local facilities and authorities to better understand the measures that are required to safely provide voting services in these facilities.
- ◆ Remand/Correctional Facility Voting: As this is generally handled through absentee voting, there are unlikely to be any special COVID-19 related measures that are needed.

What are the Main risks from COVID-19 for Special Voting Opportunities?

COVID-19 is primarily spread through the air and to a lesser extent on surfaces. The main vulnerabilities in providing Special Voting Opportunities are voters and workers being in direct contact with each other and with surfaces. Each of the potential Special Voting Opportunities needs to be evaluated in terms of these vulnerabilities to understand if or how it can be administered safely.

- ◆ Hospital Voting: Local hospitals should be contacted to understand the measures that are required to safely enter their hospitals to administer the vote. This should be done well in advance of election day.
- ◆ Temporarily Displaced Voting: Depending upon the size of the population involved, accommodating this group may be a significant undertaking involving special polls set up at the shelter. Such a poll would need to follow all of the COVID-19 measures required of any other poll. If your election has a population in these circumstances, contact any appropriate authorities.
- ◆ Homebound Voting: Given the risks associated with COVID-19, this form of voting is likely not practicable at the present time. Measures should be designed to service this population through absentee voting.

- ◆ **Quarantine Voting:** While voters who have contracted COVID-19 and their contacts will generally be able to avail themselves of vote by mail provisions, it is possible that some voters may only become quarantined after vote by mail deadlines have passed. Provision should be made to provide voting opportunity for these voters that is safe for them and for workers.

Where can I find more information?

Information regarding municipal elections can be found from the Ministry of Government Relations.

306-787-2680

Further information on electoral best practice during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found here:

<https://www.ifes.org/publications/guidelines-and-recommendations-electoral-activities-during-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/elections-and-covid-19>

About Elections Saskatchewan

Elections Saskatchewan is the province's impartial, independent, election management body. Given a mandate from the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, it organizes, manages and oversees provincial electoral events

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