Poll Worker Manual for Poll Site Managers and Inspectors

Revised date 08/23/2024

Work Hours

For both Primary and General Elections: Poll Site Managers and Inspectors will arrive at 5:00 am. Poll Sites are open for voting from 6:00 am-9:00 pm.

Both Poll Site Managers must be present before opening and entering a poll site and for setting up the site and voting machine(s).

Missing Workers

Call the Board of Elections at (607) 274-5522 immediately if any worker fails to show up at the scheduled start time.

Poll Site Worker Duties

In general, the division of responsibilities at a poll site is divided into two broad categories.
1. Voting Machines – handled by Poll Site Managers.
2. Processing voters – handled by Inspectors.

However, no two poll sites run exactly alike. Poll Site Managers have autonomy to choose how responsibilities and tasks are delegated to the poll site Inspectors.

Poll Site Managers and Inspectors must sign an Oath of Office and participate in one training session annually in preparation for Election Day.

Poll Site Manager's duties typically include (but are not limited to):
- Start up and close down the voting machine(s).
- Print the Polls Opened and Polls Closed Report Tapes.
- Greet voters arriving at the poll site.
- Direct voters with voting process questions to the "How to Vote" poster in the voting booths.
- Assist voters using the ClearMark All-In-One-Unit (BMD).
- Process voters who need to vote by Affidavit ballot.
- Direct voters who are in the wrong poll site to their correct poll site.
- Assist/support Inspectors as needed throughout the day.
- Determine the best time(s) for Inspectors to take breaks.
- Reassign Inspector(s) work assignments throughout the day to make the best use of resources, worker strengths, etc.
- Scan emergency ballots (if any) at poll closing.
- Return yellow ballot privacy folders to the poll site greeter.
- Notify voters that they must insert their own ballot into the voting machine scanner.
- Check the poll site for abandoned ballots.
- Take care of abandoned ballots.
- Discourage voters from loitering at the poll site.
- Engage with persons to stop electioneering (See page 6 for more information on electioneering)

Inspector's duties typically include (but are not limited to):
- Assist with setting up the poll site
- Processing Voters
- Completing end of day paperwork
- Assist with closing the poll site

Work Payment Requirements – to be paid, poll workers MUST sign in and out of work using the Poll Pad.

Poll Site Managers must sign:
- Security Seal Report
- Must sign in and out on the Poll Pad

Inspectors must sign:
- Poll Opening and Closing Certification/Ballot log (both sides) or Ballot Reconciliation Form
- In and out on the Poll Pad
- Challenge Report

How Long Will It Take to Get Paid?
The Board of Elections does not process poll worker paychecks. Poll workers should allow three weeks after the election to receive payment.

Poll Worker Breaks
Poll Site Managers are expected to take their breaks at the poll site. Issues often arise during the day requiring immediate input and decision making; therefore, it is important for Poll Site Managers to remain on site and accessible.

Inspectors should plan to take individual breaks that are scheduled and approved by their respective Poll Site Manager(s).
It is important to remember that you may be needed during an influx of voters.
Meal breaks are 30 minutes and should be scheduled around peak voter turnout times.

Voting Options for Poll Site Workers
Poll workers can cast their own vote in four ways:
1. **Early voting** - Starts 10 days before Election Day.
Early voting locations- Please check www.tompkinscountyny.gov/boe for Early Voting locations and times.
2. **Poll Site** - If a Poll Site Worker has been assigned to work at the poll site where they are registered to vote, they may vote at this poll site on Election Day.
3. **Early Vote by Mail** – Poll workers may request an Early Vote by Mail ballot by submitting an application to the Board of Elections.
4**. By Special (Absentee) Ballot** - Poll Site Workers may vote at the Board of Elections (128 E. Buffalo St., Ithaca) Mon-Fri from 9:00 am-5:00 pm prior to Election Day.

Professional Conduct
1. Treat others with respect - always.
2. Address each person in a courteous and professional manner, both verbally and non-verbally. Non-verbal communication has as much (or more) impact as verbal communication. If voter or any other person continues to be disruptive and you feel threatened, call 911.
3. Do not make comments or have discussions concerning race, color, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, alienage, disability medical condition, military status, familial status, ex-offender status, or any other characteristic protected by law of voters or co-workers. Tompkins County has a zero-tolerance policy for expressions of discrimination, bias, harassment, or negative stereotyping toward any person or group.
4. Do not discuss candidates or issues at a poll site. This is considered electioneering.

Perfumes and Colognes
Out of courtesy to your co-workers and voters who may have allergies, please refrain from wearing perfumes, colognes, or aftershave lotions when you are working on Election Day.

Nut Allergies

In order to accommodate students with nut allergies, many schools now have designated nut-free rooms and areas. If your poll site location is in a school, we strongly recommend that you do not bring any nut (especially peanut) foods (e.g., peanut butter sandwiches) with you to eat.

Emergency Procedures

Call the BoE promptly at (607) 274-5522 if you experience or observe the following at your poll site.

1. Anything that makes the polling place unsafe or uncomfortable. This may include anything from poor lighting to the presence of weapons.
2. A voter or any other person who is abusive or threatening to others. Call the BoE immediately and encourage the person to speak with us on the phone.
3. Any situation that may necessitate moving or closing the poll site or evacuating the building.

   If a poll site must be vacated, it is the duty of the Poll Site Managers to lead others to safety.

Accessible Voting

Any voter may use the ClearMark All-In-One-Unit. Do not ask why a voter wants to use the ClearMark. At a pre-printed site, the inspector will check in the voter. The inspector will give the voter an index card that has ClearMark written on it and is located in the front pocket of the Inspector binder. The voter takes the index card to a PSM. The PSM assists the voter with starting a voting session on the ClearMark and advises the voter when they are done to cast the ballot on the ClearCast.

At a print on demand site, the inspector checks in the voter, hands the voter their poll pad ticket and index card that says "ClearMark" and tells them to go to the PSM. The PSM takes the ballot from the cabinet, folds it in half and writes "Spoiled BoE-CM", both PSM's initial it. The spoiled ballot is placed in the B Bag.

Disability Awareness – General Guidelines

Never assume a voter requires assistance, even though they appear to have different abilities.
If you think a voter may need assistance, ask the voter how you can be helpful. Listen carefully and respect the voter's responses.

If a voter is assisted by an aide, make eye contact and speak directly to the voter - not the aide.
Be patient. Take as much time as is necessary so the voter does NOT feel rushed.

Assistance Guidelines for Specific Disabilities

Hearing impairment:

1. Make eye-contact and speak directly to the voter (not to the voter's companion).
   Speak clearly and use short, simple sentences. Do not shout at the voter.
2. Rephrase, don't repeat your statements. Sometimes different words are heard or understood
   better than others.
3. Have a pad of paper available for written communication.
4. Keep your hand and other objects away from your mouth.
5. Do not chew gum.

Speech impairment:

1. If you do not understand something, do not pretend you did.
2. Ask the voter to repeat what they have said. Repeat it back to the voter to make sure you
   understand. Try to ask questions requiring short answers or a nod of the head.
3. Do your best to understand the needs of the voter.
4. If uncertainty exists, ask if the voter will suggest another way of communicating. The voter may

often write their question, but don't assume that is what the voter should do.

5. Do not become impatient, or finish sentences for the voter.

Mobility impairment:

1. Try to place yourself at eye level; do not hover over the voter.
2. Never lean or pat on a wheelchair or other assistive device.
3. Do not assume a wheelchair user wants to be pushed. Poll workers should not push voters or physically assist them.
4. Keep the poll site free of clutter or barriers in the path of voters.

Visual impairment

1. Identify yourself to the voter (your name, role, and how you can assist the voter). Verbalize what you are doing to help (example: I'm locating your name on the Poll Pad).
2. Let the voter locate you by the sound of your voice. Do not touch the voter.
3. Offer all instructions and assistance verbally. Tell the voter about any obstacles in his/her/their path.
4. Notify the voter if you are leaving him/her/them alone.

Cognitive impairment:

1. Be patient, flexible, and supportive. Take the time to understand the voter and make sure the voter understands you. Do not finish the voter's sentences.
2. Try to limit distractions and keep things simple; take one task at a time.
3. Offer assistance completing the form or understanding written instructions and allow extra time for decision making.

Service Animals:

People use service animals for reasons that may not be apparent. Dogs permitted to serve as service animals in New York State are not required to wear identification such as a vest or bandana. If a voter says an animal is a service animal, it is permitted in the poll site. Do not touch or interact with a service animal.

Voter Privacy

Voting with paper ballots has changed attitudes and ideas about poll site privacy, personal boundaries, and overall poll site etiquette. Election workers must be diligent and consistent in their approach to voter privacy. Best practices include, but are not limited to:

1. Offering yellow privacy folders to voters for covering their ballot.
2. Encouraging voters to insert ballots face down into voting machine scanners.
3. Voter privacy booths positioned (facing outward) against walls 2-3 feet apart. This ensures voters may access vacant booths without walking behind other voters.
4. Establishing privacy space between voting machines and voters standing in line to cast their vote. A 2-foot length of black and yellow floor tape, positioned about 5 feet (or more) away from the voting machine provides an ideal measure of privacy.
5. Always stand outside this line unless a voter cannot be helped from outside the 5-foot marker. Most questions can typically be answered from outside the marker.
6. Asking voters to fold a spoiled ballot in half before exchanging it for another. Poll workers should never see or know how a ballot has been marked.
7. Voters are responsible for inserting their own ballot, except in the rare instances where a voter is physically unable to insert the ballot, or the voter has asked for poll worker assistance, in which case the poll worker must take the Assistance Oath.

Poll Watchers

To ensure fair and honest elections, New York State law provides for appointing poll watchers to observe voting activity

at the polls. Poll watchers are designated by candidates, political parties, and independent organizations that have candidates on the ballot and/or political committees. **Candidates may not serve as poll watchers.**

Upon arrival, Poll Watchers must present a Poll Watcher Certificate to each election district within a poll site. This certificate is valid for the entire Election Day. This form should be placed in the B-bag.

Poll Watchers are permitted to:
1. Be present 15 minutes before the polls open and after the polls close, until the **Closing Certification and Ballot Log or Ballot Reconciliation Form** is signed.
2. Observe proceedings.
3. Request documentation regarding who has voted.
4. Challenge any person whom they feel is not qualified to vote.

Poll Watchers may not:
1. Electioneer
2. Disrupt proceedings
3. Speak with voters
4. Sit at the Inspector sign-in table or the Information table
5. Be a political candidate

News Watcher/Reporter Letter
Representatives (news reporters, news photographers, etc.) from news services (radio, newspaper, etc.) and others must obtain a letter from the BoE which entitles them to report on election activities at poll sites. The letter must be presented to a Poll Site Manager upon arrival. Representatives must request permission before interviewing, photographing, or filming any election worker or voter. Whenever possible, cooperate with news service representatives if their activities do not interfere with the election process.

Electioneering
Electioneering is defined as working in support of, against, or in the interest of or opposition to a candidate, party, or proposition. Electioneering is prohibited in all poll sites, and in the areas within 100 feet of any poll site.

Obvious forms of electioneering include:
1. Distributing political brochures.
2. Wearing hats, buttons, or clothing with a candidate's name on them.
3. Discussions relating to any local or national campaign.
4. Politically based books, magazines, or newspapers which include a candidate's name.

Poll Site Managers and Inspectors are required to ensure a "politics free" poll site. Any poll worker may engage with persons to stop electioneering. If the behavior or activity persists (or if you are not comfortable engaging with the person) call the BoE (607) 274-5522 to report the behavior.

Setting Up the Poll Site
Poll Site Managers (PSMs) and Inspectors alike are equipped with color-coded, role-specific binders and supply bags that guide you through the correct order of steps to open the poll site.
1. **PSMs** - white binders.
2. **Inspectors** – black binders.

These binders include Poll Opening Checklists for both PSMs and Inspectors. Carefully follow your respective checklist. Check off the boxes as you complete each opening step. This ensures no steps are overlooked.

Poll Opening Bag → Affidavit Ballot Bag

After the poll site has been opened the Poll Opening Bag becomes the Affidavit Ballot Bag.

Types of Problematic Ballots

Abandoned - An abandoned ballot is a ballot that has been left behind by a voter, and it cannot be determined who the voter is, or it is a ballot returned to an election official by the voter, who indicates they have no interest in casting the ballot.

If the ballot is found within the five-foot marker from the voting machine, the ballot will be cast by a bipartisan team of election workers.

If the ballot is found outside the five-foot marker:
- Fold the ballot in half and mark the ballot as abandoned by writing "ABANDONED" in large letters on the reverse of the ballot.
- Note on the ballot where it was found.
- Have an Inspector from each party initial the ballot.
- Place the ballot into the B-bag.

Election workers should never look at how an abandoned ballot is marked.

Blank Ballot – Means no votes have been cast. This may or may not be the voter's intention. If a blank ballot is inserted in the voting machine a warning will appear, asking the voter if they want to have the ballot returned, or if they want to submit it.

Overvote Ballot - An over vote occurs when a voter votes for more than the maximum number of choices allowed in a contest. If an over voted ballot is inserted in the voting machine a message will appear asking the voter if they want their ballot returned or submitted. If returned, the voter may request a new ballot from the sign-in table. If the ballot is submitted, over voted contests will not count, but other contests will.

Unreadable Ballot – try inserting ballot in another orientation, if that does not work, the voter should spoil the ballot and receive a new ballot (ask the voter to make sure that they colored in the ovals for their choices).

Ballot Jam – before releasing a ballot jam make sure that the ballot has been tabulated. If it has not been tabulated, place the ballot through the scanner once the ballot has been freed.

Notice to Voters handout

Prior to issuing a voter an affidavit ballot, show the voter the Notice to Voter handout**.**

Affidavit Ballots – when they should be used

An affidavit ballot may be used by any voter whose poll record is missing and who claims to be a registered voter in the election district. Affidavit ballots may also be used by voters who need to present ID at the poll site but are unable to provide the appropriate documentation.

Voters who need an affidavit ballot should be directed to the Poll Site Manager. The PSM will complete the process with the voter.

Early Vote by Mail and Absentee

If an Early Vote by Mail or Absentee Ballot is dropped off at your poll site, write on the ballot envelope the following:
1. Received at (name of poll site and Election District number)
2. Date and time
3. One Inspector from each party must initial the ballot envelope.

Place the ballot envelope in the B-Bag. **Do not open the ballot envelope**.

If a voter wants to vote and is flagged in the Poll Pad as Early Vote by Mail or Absentee, they **cannot** vote on the machine. They must be given an Affidavit ballot.

It Is Now 8 pm - Time to Begin Thinking About Closing the Polls
During the last hour of voting Poll Site Managers should review the Poll Closing Checklist inside the white Poll Site Manager Binder. Make sure you understand each step in the process for closing the polls. If you do not understand a step, now is a good time to get clarification by calling the BoE at (607) 274-5522.

Closing the Polls
At 9:00 pm the doors should be locked, and a Poll Site Manager should announce the polls are closed. Any voter in the poll site before 9:00 pm will be allowed to vote. A Poll Site Manager or Inspector will stand at the end of the line if there is anyone waiting to vote at 9:00 pm. After polls close only authorized persons may remain in the poll site.

Verify all seals are still intact and compare the seal numbers to those on the Security Seal Report. If a seal is not intact call the BoE immediately (607) 274-5521 and follow directions on how to proceed with closing the polls. If all seals are intact, proceed with closing the polls.

Poll Closing Checklist for Poll Site Managers
Follow the step-by-step Poll Closing Checklist, located inside the white Poll Site Managers binder. Check off the boxes as you complete each step. This ensures no steps are overlooked.

Emergency Ballots
Open the Emergency Ballot Bag and remove the ballots. As a bipartisan team cast the ballots through the scanner. Ballots that cannot be scanned should be placed in the Emergency Ballots Canvassed by Hand bag. Tell the Inspectors the number of ballots placed in the bag. Do not tally the ballots.

After placing unscanned ballots in the Emergency Ballots Canvassed by Hand bag, place that bag in the black Affidavit bag.

Closing the Voting Machine
After scanning any emergency ballots, print two Poll Closed Results tapes and power down the voting machine. The two tapes print as one tape and need to be separated. Put one tape in the A- Bag.

Using the second Poll Closed Results tape, confirm with the Inspectors the "Total Scanned" ballots. The Inspectors then enter this number on the Closing Certification and Ballot Log or Ballot Reconciliation Form. After the Inspectors are finished with the tape, post it next to the Opening tape. Remove all tapes when you leave the building.

Chain of Custody (COC)

What is it?
Chain of custody refers to the process or paper trail documenting the control or transfer of equipment and materials, such as voting machines or ballots. While commonly thought of for physical pieces of equipment, chain of custody also applies to digital materials such as electronic transmissions or records. This includes the transfer of digital information to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of information are not compromised. It is critical to always know where this equipment is and who is handling it at any given time – a loss of physical or digital control can create unmanageable risks, result in election offices being unable to provide assurance a machine or system has not been tampered with, and undermine established public processes.

While the exact methods of how the transfer is documented may differ (paper v. electronic, locks, seals, etc.), all election offices should have a procedure for documenting the movement of election materials. Election offices should continuously test and audit this procedure, incorporating best practices (consistent with legal requirements) to further strengthen both the process and the documentation. Post-election audits, and pre-election logic and accuracy tests, may be able to "organically" test this process.

Why do we need it?

A documented chain of custody helps ensure transparency of the election process and the integrity of election equipment. A break in the chain of custody is defined by the Cybersecurity Infrastructure and Security Agency (CISA) as time when the control of equipment (such as election equipment and materials) "is uncertain and during which actions taken … are unaccounted for or unconfirmed." This could result in election offices being unable to guarantee equipment has not been tampered with. In some cases where chain of custody cannot be meaningfully reestablished, equipment may be decommissioned and replaced – a time-consuming and costly undertaking.

Physical access to some equipment provides the highest risk that an adversary will be able to find a vulnerability; in addition to being a direct security risk, breaking chain of custody can, in and of itself, result in future vulnerabilities. Therefore, election offices should have clearly documented procedures for chain of custody in place before any election to ensure that all steps are properly followed.

The disclosure of the underlying technology that makes up election systems also increases the risk that an adversary could detect a vulnerability. Patch levels, configurations of systems and software, and other information about the makeup of election systems could be used by attackers looking to find a way to compromise the system. For example, the disclosure of a system's IP address could give an attacker attempting to compromise a system a specific target. With the rise in election offices being asked to turn over voting equipment for third party audits, documentation of the handling of voting equipment and ballots provides evidence that all necessary procedures were followed during the election period. It is also crucial that election offices understand chain of custody, and what they are legally required to do when asked to turn over records or equipment. Those requesting access to the equipment should carefully consider whether the request will break the chain of custody and potentially introduce risk to the election process.

Election security spotlight - chain of custody is crucial for election offices. CIS. (2021, October 22). https://www.cisecurity.org/insights/spotlight/election-security-spotlight-chain-of-custody-is-crucial-for-election-offices

Who fills this out?

A-Bag

The Poll Site Managers (PSMs) are responsible for filling out the seal report and verifying seals at the end of the election. The **Transporter** is taking custody of the **A-Bag** and is responsible for the delivery of the bag to the Board of Elections after the election. By signing the COC, you are verifying that all seals listed above are correct. This document is to remain with the transporter and presented to a Tompkins County Board of Election Employee who will verify the seals on arrival.

Ballot Bag, B-Bag and Affidavit bag

The Poll Site Managers (PSMs) are responsible for filling out this seal report and verifying seals at the end of the election. The **Transporter** is taking custody of the above-mentioned bags and is responsible for the delivery of the bags to their designated return site after the election. By signing below, you are verifying that all seals listed above are correct. This document is to remain with the transporter and presented to a Tompkins County Board of Election Employee that will verify the seals on arrival.

Failure to complete

Failure to complete this document will result in having to fill out a secondary document holding one accountable for not following the security measures put in place by New York state. As a secondary consequence the poll working personnel may not be asked to come back next election.