



October 5, 2020

2020 General Election Guidance Voting Information for Nursing Homes and Other Long-Term Care Facilities

This guidance provides important information for nursing homes and other long-term care facilities (collectively, "LTC") to provide safe access to voting for their residents during the November 3, 2020 General Election.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) had limited visitor access to LTC facilities to protect the residents from COVID-19 since March 9, 2020 when Governor JB Pritzker issued a disaster proclamation due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus. The disaster proclamation was most recently renewed September 18, 2020 and declared that COVID-19 constitutes a "public health emergency under Section 4 of the Illinois Emergency Management Act."

The risk of COVID-19 transmission within nursing homes and other LTC facilities is high due to congregate living and the fact that the risk for severe illness from the virus increases with age. In addition, residents of these facilities may also have underlying medical conditions, such as heart conditions, diabetes, or cancer, that place them at a greater risk for severe illness and death.

Section 19-12.2 of the Election Code (10 ILCS 5) requires local election authorities and LTC facility administrators to make arrangements for on-premises voting 30 days or more before Election Day. Due to the significant risk COVID-19 poses to LTC residents, IDPH recommends that LTC administrators coordinate *as soon as possible* with their local election authorities (i.e., county clerks or election commissioners) to make alternative arrangements for residents to vote that avoid the operation of on-site polling places and interaction between local election officials and LTC residents. This will significantly reduce the number of election workers at LTCs and the amount of time they spend inside the facilities on Election Day.

Each LTC facility and its local election authority should determine what alternative is appropriate. During the March 17, 2020 Primary Election, many LTC facilities and their local election authorities implemented alternatives. These alternatives included, but were not limited to, having local election authorities personally drop off ballots to LTC facilities that were then picked up by election officials or returned by mail to the local election authority. Because, as noted above, Illinois law requires local election authorities and LTC administrators to make arrangements for on-premises voting, it is critical that LTC facilities make alternative arrangements with local election authorities or those authorities may be required by law to

operate on-site polling places.

For additional information, LTC administrators can contact their local election authority (<https://elections.il.gov/electionoperations/electionauthorities.aspx>) or the Illinois State Board of Elections at <https://www.elections.il.gov/> or at (217) 782-4141.