



# A DE-ESCALATION GUIDE FOR ILLINOIS ELECTION JUDGES

*Face coverings could potentially be a point of conflict in this election, but few people will object to social distancing once they realize their right to vote is being respected, with or without a mask on. However, some voters may have difficulty seeing this. Election judges may need to use de-escalation measures to lower stress levels when working with these voters.*

## Steps to take for voters who approach the polling place without a face covering on:

### Examples of phrases to use:

*- "You will be able to vote. We will get you to the voting booth as quickly as possible."*

*- "You will be allowed to vote without a face covering. Please give us time to organize social distancing procedures."*

*- "We regret that you are unwilling to follow the guidelines, but we do respect your right to vote. Please give us a bit of time to organize the area to provide additional physical distance between you, our fellow election judges, observers, and other voters."*

- Ask the voter if they have a face covering to wear in the polling place.
- If the voter doesn't have their own face covering, offer the voter a face covering provided by your office. *Note: offering this face covering to the voter outside the polling place (if possible) can minimize conflict inside the polling place and minimize transmission to those waiting in lines inside the polling place.*
- If the voter refuses to wear a face covering, **speak to the voter calmly, at a normal volume, and do not engage on the underlying objection. Communicate with your posture and expression that you are confident the voter's right to vote will be respected.** Let the voter know they will still be allowed to vote, but social distancing procedures will be used.
- Take every reasonable action to separate these noncompliant voters from those wearing face coverings by establishing a separate waiting area or line, socially distant from compliant voters. *Note: provide a means to track the noncompliant voter's place in the normal queue of voters so they can vote when it is their turn.*

## Noticing an escalating situation and working to de-escalate it:

- If a noncompliant voter is getting angrier or more frustrated, despite attempts to ensure the voter will get to vote, the election judge should make sure that there is another judge present to witness the encounter and intervene if necessary.
- The election judge should **repeatedly remind the voter that they will be able to vote as soon as possible**, while the observing election judge should watch for changes in posture or tone from the voter for an escalating situation.
- Use the example phrases to remind the voter they will get to vote as soon as possible.

## When de-escalating the situation fails:

- If election judges or voters feel intimidated, they should call the election authority's office for further instructions. **If the election judges or voters feel threatened, or if a disturbance of any kind occurs, the election judges should call local law enforcement**, especially if they feel the safety of any person in the polling place is in jeopardy.
- Have a code phrase among election judges to use when law enforcement is needed, for example: ask the voter to hold on and then ask a fellow election judge if, "John is available," which can be recognized as a need for security or a need for the election authority.
- *Note: consider whether time devoted to the upset voter is significantly delaying other voters in deciding when to seek outside help in dealing with the situation.*

*You can contact your local election authority at  
enforcement officials at*

*or, if the situation warrants, local law  
(or 911 in the case of an emergency).*