

ORGANIZING VOTER ENGAGEMENT EVENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Engaging renters in voting efforts is critical to expanding affordable housing and reducing disparities between low-income renters and homeowners. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique set of challenges and creates uncertainty that must be considered when planning voter engagement initiatives.

Organizations must be mindful of the latest public health guidance and take precautions to ensure everyone's safety. This includes considering whether to host an in-person or virtual event, properly planning before the event, and then implementing the needed precautions to protect attendees, volunteers, and staff during the event.

Many national organizations are committed to helping state and local organizations get out the vote before the 2022 elections. The information provided in this toolkit was adapted from the National Voter Registration Day's Covid-Proofing Your In-person Voter Registration Event publication.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING AN ELECTION-RELATED EVENT:

- **Is it safe to host an in-person event?**
 - Consult the [CDC's website](#) for the latest information and updates on the novel coronavirus in your area.
 - You can also find out if your state has socially distanced voting options by going to [NLIHC's state resource pages](#).
 - For large gatherings such as candidate town halls and candidate forums, consult the CDC's Event Planning FAQs page and consider implementing their recommended prevention strategies—such as conducting health checks, enabling physical distancing, and encouraging or requiring vaccinations in accordance with applicable privacy laws.
- **What safety measures need to be put in place for an in-person event to occur?**
 - If possible, host any voter engagement events outdoors (such as get out the vote parties, registration drives, and candidate visits).
 - If an outdoor event is not possible, host the event indoors only if:
 - There is ventilation, such as the ability to open windows.
 - You can thoroughly disinfect a space before the event.
 - There is a way to limit social interaction (such as hosting small events in large rooms or allowing for social distancing measures).

- If the event is come-and-go style, aim for a longer event so participants can spread out their arrival times.
 - Consider having people sign up for time slots through online registration for the event.
- Have a backup plan in case conditions worsen in your area and an in-person event is no longer recommended.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves for volunteers, attendees, and staff.
- Sanitize equipment (such as pens, laptops, etc.) after each use by attendees and staff.
- Demonstrate separation of at least six feet via tape/stickers and set up extra tables to prevent people from getting too close.
- Post health and safety protocols on signs disbursed throughout the event space with health and safety reminders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 – such as this printable [poster](#) from the CDC.

- **Ways to limit physical contact:**

- Set up table(s) at a property with registration forms, detailed instructions for how to fill them out, and a box to drop them in once completed.
- Set up laptops at a table for people to register online and have step-by-step instructions before the person registers.
- Post a link to online voter registration (OVR) on a poster (if OVR exists in your state). There is a "Register to Vote" button on each [state page](#) of the Our Homes, Our Votes webpage.
- Avoid handing out food at events you might hold, such as new voter trainings or Get Out the Vote parties.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS:

- Incorporate health and safety protocols in any volunteer trainings and print out health and safety protocols for the day of the event.
- Consider offering virtual volunteer trainings.
- Recruit extra volunteers for any in-person events you host in case volunteers are unable to participate due to illness or other reasons.
- Don't allow volunteers that have been exposed to COVID-19 in the past 10 days or who show symptoms attend the event.
- Engage volunteers at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 in planning, fundraising, or promoting your event.
- Avoid volunteers taking on health and safety compliance burdens by having a staff person monitor adherence to protocols.

CONSIDERATIONS DURING AN IN-PERSON EVENT:

- Mandate that every person at the event wear a mask!
- **Implement social distancing.**
 - Try to maintain a distance of at least six feet between volunteers and attendees via signage and tape.
 - For voter registration events, consider setting up tables that contain plexiglass shields. Put any forms on clipboards so volunteers can hand them to attendees and then step away.
 - Have attendees drop their registration forms in a box to avoid any direct contact with volunteers.
- Sanitize equipment often, and provide hand sanitizer (that contains 60% alcohol and above) for all attendees and volunteers to use throughout the event.
- Provide nonfood options that can be distributed during the event like stickers, buttons, pens, etc.
- Have people bring their own pens or allow them to keep the pens they use at the event. Sanitizing pens after each use is another option as long as you make sure they are fully dry before reusing.
- Prominently feature online and mail-in options to register to vote and submit a ballot.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AFTER THE EVENT:

- Get tested, especially if involved in a sustained period of interacting with attendees during the event.
- Ask staff, volunteers, and attendees to report any positive test results back to you for contact tracing.
- To support any potentially necessary contact-tracing efforts, be sure to collect contact information of all event attendees.

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