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GUIDANCE ON DE-ESCALATING INCIDENTS AT THE VOTING LOCATION

Thank you for serving as a poll worker! You play a crucial role in ensuring our elections are secure, fair, and safe. We expect unprecedented turnout in this year's election, and in this environment of heightened interest, voters can be very passionate about candidates and issues, including current public health recommendations due to COVID-19. Voters may also become upset if they do not appear on the roster or e-pollbook, are at the wrong precinct/polling place, forgot their identification, are otherwise required to vote a provisional ballot, or felt intimidated by observers or demonstrators outside the 75-foot limit. The following tips are intended to help you de-escalate situations that might arise at a voting location as you fulfill your primary responsibility of helping eligible Arizonans to vote safely. Thank you again for your service to Arizona's voters.

GENERAL TIPS FOR DE-ESCALATION

→ **Use non-verbal techniques to help de-escalate.**

- Speak with a calm voice; control the volume and tone of your voice.
- Take slow and deep breaths; use kind language and gentle movements.
- Don't mirror defensive gestures, like crossed arms.
- Try to move the situation to a private area.
- Your calm behavior can be just as contagious as another person's negative emotions.

→ **Listen, validate, and address the concern.** Most people want to know their concern is being heard.

- Listen. If possible, stop what you are doing, take a breath, and look at the voter as they present their concern. Try to remember details and refrain from interrupting or trying to finish their sentences. Take their viewpoint into consideration, even if you disagree.
 - Don't engage with underlying issues that may factor into the objection.
- Validate the person's emotions.
 - "This must be really difficult / frustrating / hard / uncomfortable for you."
 - "I understand you disagree with the policy/requirement."
 - "I appreciate your feedback."
- Address the concern, using one or more of the following:
 - Use positive and helpful statements: "I'm happy to help you safely vote."
 - Empathize:
 - "I know wearing a mask can be uncomfortable; we're trying to keep everyone safe."
 - "It can be hard to keep up with all the requirements and changes, but this is what our staff is being instructed to do today/this week and we appreciate your patience."
 - Remind the person that they will be allowed to vote. Let them know that your primary responsibility is to help eligible Arizonans to vote, but they are being asked to comply with rules that ensure the election is safe and secure for all voters.

→ **If the voter continues to escalate the situation, ask another poll worker to join the conversation.**

- If a voter refuses alternative options, escalate to the polling place marshal or inspector to help resolve the situation or decide if it is necessary to call law enforcement.
- If you feel the safety of any person is in danger, however, call 911.

DE-ESCALATING REFUSALS TO COMPLY WITH PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

To protect both poll workers and voters, election and public health officials are recommending that voters maintain at least 6-feet of physical distance from others and wear a mask or face covering at the voting location.

A voter should not be turned away for refusing a face covering or for not maintaining social distancing. Instead, poll workers should follow the tips provided here to allow all voters to vote quickly and safely.

De-escalation, quickly servicing the voter, and maintaining physical distance will help keep poll workers and other voters safe, while allowing all voters to participate in the election.

➔ **Step 1: Inform and assist the voter**

- Voters who appear at a voting location without a face covering or who refuse to maintain a 6-foot distance from other voters and staff should first be informed by a poll worker that these are the recommended public health guidelines.
- If the county has masks available, poll workers should also inform a voter who is not wearing a face covering that the poll worker would be happy to provide the voter with a mask if they don't have one.
- Poll workers should maintain a calm voice and demeanor when informing and assisting voters. Poll workers should also continue to maintain a 6-foot distance from the voter whenever possible.

➔ **Step 2: De-escalate and work to maintain social distancing**

- If a voter continues to refuse to wear a face covering or socially distance and begins to push against the suggestion, poll workers should respond by using de-escalation techniques. Poll workers should recognize that it is possible some may desire conflict, and it is important for the poll worker to remain calm throughout the interaction.
- Continue to stand at a safe distance from the voter. Do not engage on a discussion about the underlying objection to face masks or social distancing.
- Ask another poll worker to join the conversation to observe.
- Emphasize to the voter that they will be allowed to vote.
- If a voter refuses to wear a face covering, then a poll worker should ask whether the voter would be willing to maintain physical distancing from others throughout their time at the location. If a voter will not wear a face covering, then great attention should be paid to keeping that voter physically distant from others.
- Provide the alternative of curbside voting if available.

➔ **Step 3: Call for assistance if needed**

- If all other efforts fail and a voter continues to ignore directions or escalates the conflict, poll workers should know who and how to call for assistance.
- County officials will help poll workers to de-escalate the situation while maintaining the voter's right to cast their ballot. This could include:
 - Moving the voter to the front of the line to be processed if appropriate.
 - Offering curbside voting or otherwise assisting the voter outside of the voting location if appropriate.