

ELECTION URGENT

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION, ODISHA

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No. **225** /SEC.,

Date: 10.01.2022

From

Sri R. N. Sahu, IAS
Secretary

To

All Collectors,
All Superintendents of Police.

Sub:- General Elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions, 2022-
Covid-19 Guidelines .

Madam/Sir,

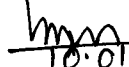
In inviting a reference to the subject cited above I am directed to say that the Commission has prescribed COVID-19 Guidelines to be strictly followed by all concerned during ensuing General Elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions, 2022.

In enclosing herewith a copy of the COVID-19 Guidelines , I am directed to request you to ensure that the instructions of the Commission are strictly followed while conducting General Elections to PRIs, 2022.

A copy of the Guidelines may be circulated at your level among all concerned including Sub- Collectors/Block Development Officers to ensure strict compliance by the officials associated with Election.

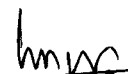
This supersedes Commission's SOP issued vide Letter No.2326 dtd.02.12.2020.

Yours faithfully,


10.01.2022
Secretary

Memo No. **226** /SEC., Date: 10.01.2022

Copy forwarded to all Political Parties for information and necessary action.


10.01.2022
Secretary



सत्यमेव जयते

**General Elections
To
Panchayati Raj Institutions,
2022**

COVID-19 Guidelines

State Election Commission, Odisha

General Elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions, 2022
COVID-19 Guidelines

1. General:

- All person involved with the electoral process shall wear face mask during the concerned election related activities.
- Social distancing norms shall be strictly obeyed by all persons connected with election related activities as per the extant COVID guidelines of the State Government and Ministry of Home Affairs.
- All Polling Personnel/Security Personnel/Counting Staff shall be doubly vaccinated before being deployed/engaged in election related activities.
- No Polling Agent/Counting Agent is allowed to enter the Polling Station/Counting hall without double vaccination.
- As far as practicable, large halls should be identified and utilized to ensure social distancing norms.
- **Adequate number of vehicles shall be mobilized for movement of polling personnel, security personnel to ensure compliance of COVID-19 guidelines.**
- Create awareness among the public for COVID appropriate behavior including self-monitoring.

2. Election Store Room:

The election materials like forms and covers etc. shall be stored in disinfected room(s). Only designated officials shall be permitted to enter the store room and they shall follow all COVID-19 precautionary measures.

3. Training of Polling Personnel:

- Additional staff to be trained for polling & counting duties to take care of contingencies. They may be released before polling/counting.
- Pregnant and lactating mothers shall not be engaged.
- Persons having symptoms of COVID-19 positive shall not be engaged in Polling duty.
- A person from any Containment Zone or in Home Isolation shall not be deployed for election duty.
- As far as possible, persons suffering from co-morbidities susceptible to Covid-19 shall not be engaged in polling duty.
- Materials used for training purpose shall be sanitized.
- Training Hall shall have provision for Soap, Water Bucket and Mug.
- Taking into the capacity of Training Hall, training shall be given in phase-wise manner to avoid large gathering.
- During training all persons shall have to wear face mask.

4. Nomination Process:

Election Officers shall exercise the following COVID-19 guidelines while receiving nominations.

- Election Officers shall regularly wash their hands with soap/sanitizer and also wear face mask and hand gloves compulsorily.
- While filing nominations, either the candidate or one proposer shall enter the waiting room outside Election Officer's office maintaining proper social distance (two meters/6 feet). Similarly, either the candidate or his proposer shall be permitted to enter the room of the Election Officer. The next candidate shall be sent to the Election Officer's room only after the first candidate returns. All the candidates who reach the Election Officer's room within the prescribed time shall be given tokens on first come first served basis.
- A COVID positive patient shall submit nominations through his/her proposer.
- Candidates should compulsorily wear face mask before entering the Election Officer Office.
- Only one vehicle is allowed for the purpose of filing nomination. This may be strictly enforced.
- Election Officer's chamber should have sufficient space to perform the functions of nomination, scrutiny and symbol allocation following social distancing norms.
- Election Officer should allot staggered time in advance to prospective candidates.
- Large space for waiting for candidate(s) should be arranged.

5. Scrutiny of Nominations:

Scrutiny of nominations shall be done constituency wise in front of the candidates. Either candidate or the proposer or any person authorized by the candidate shall be present during scrutiny. The candidates shall compulsorily sanitize their hands, maintain social distance and wear face mask. On behalf of the COVID positive candidate, his/her proposer can be allowed inside the hall.

6. Withdrawal of Nominations:

Candidates are allowed to withdraw nomination and they shall sanitize their hands and compulsorily wear face mask, before entering the room of the Election Officers for doing the same within the prescribed time. COVID positive candidates shall give prior notice to the Election Officer about the proposer/agent for withdrawal of nomination.

7. Allotment of Symbols:

The List of final contesting candidates shall be prepared constituency wise and symbols be allotted accordingly. Candidates of concerned

constituencies shall be permitted to be present in the hall. If the number of candidates are more, symbols shall be allotted as laid down in rules. If more than one candidate opts for the same symbol, then the symbol shall be allotted by lottery following social distancing norms.

8. Election Campaign:

- In case of election to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the area of the constituency being small, the campaign is restricted to the concerned constituency. The candidates can undertake door to door campaign with minimum supporters, maintaining social distance during the campaign and they shall all wear face masks without fail. The maximum persons allowed during door to door campaign is **5 (five)** including candidate.
- As far as possible the priority should be given to the campaign through social/electronic media.
- In view of COVID-19, campaigning in large groups is not allowed. The limit of the number of persons is five (5).
- COVID positive candidates shall restrict their campaign through electronic media only. Physical presence in campaign is strictly prohibited.
- Further, Political parties and candidates are advised to conduct their campaign as much as possible through digital/virtual/media platforms/mobile based mode instead of physical mode ensuring strict compliance of Covid safety norms.
- No Road show, padajatra, cycle/bike/vehicle rally and procession shall be allowed.
- No physical rally of Political Parties or probable candidates or any other groups related to election shall be allowed.
- No victory procession after the counting shall be allowed and not more than two persons shall be allowed to accompany the winning candidate.
- Political Parties/candidates having their Camp Office in different Wards be instructed to wear face mask and often sanitize their hands, either with sanitizer or soap and water. They shall encourage the voters to do the same while campaigning.
- *Anybody violating instructions on COVID-19 measures* will be liable to be proceeded against as per the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable.

9. Containment Zone:

- When the location of booth happens to be in a Containment Zone it can be considered to shift the booth outside Containment Zone with prior permission of the Commission but only to an existing booth nearby.
- Before submitting proposal to shift the booth, the matter shall be formally discussed with Political Parties/Candidates whenever necessary.
- District Administration shall be vigilant to ensure strict observance of the COVID-19 Protocols instructions in the containment zone.

10. Preparations for Dispersal:

- As Dispersal takes place on the previous day of voting, all preparations shall be done in advance. Route map to dispatch the poll parties to their respective destinations as per COVID guidelines shall be prepared.
- To avoid overcrowding, District Administration shall identify multiple Dispersal Centres in the Block headquarters.
- The route map of polling stations allotted to each Dispersal Centre shall be displayed in all the Dispersal Centres.
- The polling personnel shall be intimated of the allotted Dispersal Centres.

11. KIT for Polling Officer:

- The following items shall be provided to every polling official and security personnel (Other than those where PPEs are needed) in addition to other prescribed items:
 - a) Mask
 - b) Sanitizer

12. Dispersal:

- On the day of dispersal, it is mandatory for all the Officials/Staff to wear face masks.
- On arrival of the polling Officials/Staff at the Dispersal Centre mandatory thermal check up for fever shall be conducted and sanitizer shall be provided. After ensuring there are no COVID symptoms, they shall be allowed inside the dispersal Centre.
- The Dispersal area shall be sanitized.
- Polling Party shall be dispersed to their respective stations in a staggered manner to avoid crowd.
- Required numbers of face masks for use by the Polling Party should be supplied.
- One Litre of sanitizer be given to each Polling Party.
- Thermal scanning of each polling personnel and the Drivers/Helpers be done and recorded in the Register.
- The vehicles before proceeding to booth and returning from the booth after polling be sanitized at the Dispersal centre.
- Polling parties shall travel only in the vehicles assigned to them. Care shall be taken not to overcrowd any vehicle.
- Soap, Bucket, Mug also be supplied.
- Large Halls/ spaces should be identified for distribution/collection of election material following all safety, sanitation and social distancing measures.
- Large halls/spaces should be identified for distribution/collection of election material.

- Prior staggered time should be allocated to the polling teams for distribution/ Collection of Election Materials.
- Different counters of the Dispersal centre shall be situated at least 6 ft. distance.
- The Polling Personnel shall collect Election Materials from different counters following social distancing.

13. Polling Station Arrangements and Day of Poll:

- In the Polling booth, the Polling Personnel, Polling Agents, Voters and candidates shall follow the guidelines issued by the State Government from time to time.
- Mandatory sanitization of Polling Station, preferably, a day before the poll.
- Markers to demonstrate social distancing for queue.
- Earmarking circle for 15-20 persons of 2 yards (6 feet) distance for voters standing in the queue depending on the availability of space.
- There shall be three queues, for male, female, and PWD/Senior citizen voters.
- The services of Volunteers, Home Guard/ Civil Defence/ NCC etc may be utilised to monitor and regulate social distancing norms and sanitization of persons.
- The Police personnel, Home Guards etc. shall regulate the work of sanitization, voters in queue maintaining social distancing.
- Soap and Water shall be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
- Sanitizer should be provided at the entry/exit point of every polling station.
- Reserve Face Masks will be kept for those voter who are not carrying the same.
- Awareness posters on COVID-19 should be displayed at visible locations.
- Seating arrangement in polling station for the polling personnel and polling agents shall be made as per the norms of social distancing. If it is seen that the seating arrangement is not possible in the voting Hall by social distancing, the Polling Agents can sit outside the Hall where they can observe/see the voting process.
- If Polling Agent or Counting Agent is having temperature above the prescribed limit, then their reliever shall be allowed by Presiding Officer, which may be recorded.
- During the process of identification of voter, the voters may be asked to lower the face mask for identification, when required.
- 1 (one) voter shall be allowed to stand in front of each polling official maintaining social distance.
- When voting is in Ballot Paper cross mark seals be used for the voting purpose after sanitizing the same alternatively by the third polling officer.

In each case the seal is to be sanitized before being handed over to the voters.

- Sanitizers shall be kept inside the booth at appropriate locations with clear direction for the use by Polling Personnel.
- Polling Agent or Counting Agent shall be asked to put on face mask during the process. The Presiding Officer should ensure that this is observed. While issuing Appointment Order to the Polling/Counting Agents it shall be clearly mentioned that the appointment of Polling Agent may be withdrawn if Covid-19 norms are violated by him/her.
- Apart from the room earmarked for the booth, another room may also be kept ready for Persons including Voters and Official who appear to be suffering from Covid-19 flu type symptoms so that they can wait in the earmarked Room.
- If symptoms of COVID-19 are noticed in Polling Staff or drivers of the vehicle during the poll period they may be kept in a separate room arranged for taking rest until medical treatment or shifting to nearby medical or home isolation.
- Local PHC may be contacted for screening of temperature.
- Data/information may be collected before hand from Local PHC/Hospital for Home isolation people/Containment Zone.
- The same shall be reflected in the margin of the Electoral Roll against the elector.
- The Volunteers who are engaged in the arrangement shall be handed over a copy so that they can advise the people to come for vote on the later part of the voting time.
- COVID-19 patients who are quarantined will be allowed to cast their vote **during the last hour of the poll day** at their respective Polling Stations, under the supervision of health authorities, strictly following COVID-19 related preventive measures. Sector Officer shall coordinate this in their allotted polling stations. This will be done under the strict supervision of health authorities.

Entry of Voter and Voting Procedures:

- Each voter before entering the Polling station shall strictly adhere to all COVID-19 protocols,
- Applying Indelible Ink: The Polling Officers shall carefully apply the ink without physical contact. If the voter is wearing the hand gloves, the Polling Officers shall ask him/her to remove it and then apply the ink to the proper finger.
- Handing over of ballot paper: The Polling Officer assigned with the task of handing over ballot shall give the ballot paper to the voter. After that, as per procedure voter's signature/thumb impression in the counterfoil shall be taken.

- Voters shall not be allowed to touch the ballot box. If the ballot paper is not inserted properly inside the ballot box, the Presiding Officer shall properly insert the ballot paper with the help of the sanitized pusher provided for the purpose.
 - Closure of Polling: Immediately after the completion of the polling, Presiding Officer shall seal the ballot box and along with statutory documents and shall return in the vehicle while maintaining proper social distancing.
- 14. Setting up of de-dispersal Centre, Strong Room and Counting Centre:**
- Large halls shall be identified keeping in mind the de-dispersal activity, strong room facility and counting activity to ensure social distancing.
 - To avoid overcrowding, District Administration shall identify multiple de-dispersal/counting Centres in the Block headquarters
 - Strong Room has to be disinfected before and after keeping the sealed Ballot boxes and statutory covers. Care shall be taken not to cause any damage to the Ballot boxes and other documents while disinfecting.
- 15. De-Dispersal or Receiving Centre:**
- Large gatherings in the de-Dispersal Centres shall be avoided and proper social distancing measures shall be undertaken.
 - De-Dispersal/Receiving Staff and Polling Officers shall invariably wear face mask and hand gloves during the process.
- 16. Preparation of the Counting Centre:**
- The identified rooms/halls for counting have to be disinfected on the previous day of counting and necessary arrangements shall be made properly before sealing it.
 - During the counting process either the candidate or his/her authorized agent shall be allowed to sit inside the counting hall. Barricade shall be erected to avoid touching the ballot papers by the candidate/agents.
 - Counting activity shall be done strictly following COVID-19 guidelines.
 - Large gatherings outside the counting Centre shall be prohibited.
 - Vaccination certificate to be checked before allowing entry to counting centre.
 - Compulsory testing (RTPCR or RAT) for all persons entering counting centre within 48 hours of start of counting even if they are double vaccinated.
- 16. Counting of Votes:**
- Every person shall have to wear face mask. All persons before entering Counting Hall be thermally scanned and use sanitizer.
 - A large Hall may be identified for the purpose. If large Hall is not identified, then counting may be conducted in separate adjacent rooms

for different wards. But counting shall be done for one ward at a time in a single room.

- Sitting Arrangement shall be so made that the procedure of counting can be seen properly. After counting, the candidate and Counting Agent shall be asked to leave the Hall for counting of next ward so on, unless there is demand for recounting.
- Large gatherings and procession by the winning candidates are prohibited.
- Counting Centre shall be disinfected before and after the counting.
- Counting Hall be sufficiently big to maintain social distancing, proper ventilation, windows, exhaust fan etc.
- Anyone, even after being doubly vaccinated, having any symptom of COVID like fever, Cold etc. will not be allowed in Counting hall.
- Every Counting Official and Security personnel be provided with Mask, Sanitizer.
- No public gathering outside the counting venue during process of counting.
- Candidate may appoint/replace counting agents in case report is positive.

17. Conduct of Indirect Election

- One day before the meeting, the Meeting Hall be sanitized.
- The seats for Members and Officials be arranged keeping safe distance.
- The articles/materials including Ballot Boxes used for voting shall be properly sanitized.
- On the day of voting, hand Sanitizer be kept at the entry point of the Hall.
- Before entering the Meeting Hall, thermal scanner be used for recording of temperature of all officials and Members with the help of local Medical.
- All Officials and Members are required to wear face mask on the day of meeting.

NB: The Commission reserves the right to modify the above guidelines as and when required taking the prevailing situation into consideration.