

Other States Best Practices

1. The Rights of Voters

BEST PRACTICE: Training poll workers to ask voters politely how to spell their names can often eliminate miscommunication.

2. Election Challenge Procedures

BEST PRACTICE: If a disruption occurs, avoid direct confrontation. It is also best to move the parties involved outside and to a safe distance from the polling site so that the polling place can continue to process voters.

BEST PRACTICE: Training for poll workers should include role-playing to provide poll workers with the chance to experience situations where they will have to confront challengeable behavior under different scenarios. This can also be done using a film or video to expose poll workers to various situations and have them see the appropriate responses.

3. Operation of a Jurisdiction's Voting System

BEST PRACTICE: Poll workers often want to spend more time practicing how to use a voting system. Counties may wish to have additional optional workshops for poll workers, or have frequent "office hours" at several locations in the weeks before an election, so poll workers who feel tentative or uncomfortable with the system can come in and gain more experience assembling, dismantling, and operating the voting system.

4. Preventing, Detecting and Addressing Problems with Voting Systems

BEST PRACTICE: Training should include a hands-on walk through of all of common issues. If poll workers might need to fix a problem on Election Day, then they should practice fixing that problem in training.

BEST PRACTICE: If possible, training should include some role-playing or demonstration of unusual situations and how poll workers should observe and record the unusual events.

5. Poll Hours

BEST PRACTICE: Poll workers should be instructed to arrive at polling places from one half hour to one hour before the polls open, to give them adequate time to set up and ensure that polls are ready for operation. Allowing poll workers to practice setting up equipment can show them how long they will need for set-up at the polls so they can plan accordingly.

6. Relevant Election Laws and Procedures

BEST PRACTICE: Training on ballot reconciliation is critical. Reconciling the numbers with the poll book is an important post-election procedure that seems to confuse a lot of poll workers. Walking through it during the training can help poll workers understand the importance of making sure they get the poll book right in the first place.

BEST PRACTICE: Training materials should be presented in chronological order (i.e. the order in which poll workers will face the issue or task during Election Day.)

BEST PRACTICE: Language used in training materials should avoid technical, legal and system jargon. Simple words and phrases should be used, or if not, should be explained or defined.

7. Cultural Competency

BEST PRACTICE: Counties should provide one hotline dedicated to poll workers and one hotline designed for voters to receive assistance.

BEST PRACTICE: Counties should broaden their poll worker recruitment to recruit workers who are diverse in age, ethnicity and language ability.

BEST PRACTICE: Provide a customer feedback form for voters to comment on the experience at the polling place. Allow voters to turn it in at the polling place or mail it back to the county elections office.

8. Voters with Disabilities

BEST PRACTICE: Providing poll workers a demonstration or opportunity to actually sit in a wheelchair, enter a mock polling place blindfolded, or try to communicate with someone when they are only mouthing words, can give poll workers a much better understanding of the obstacle that voters with disabilities can face at a polling place if poll workers are not counseled in how to be sensitive and aware.

9. Procedures Involved with First-time Voters, Absentee Voting, etc.

BEST PRACTICE: Poll workers should be trained to process and assist all voters with a customer service mentality in order to make their experience as positive as possible. Congratulating a first-time voter for voting also sends a positive message.

BEST PRACTICE: Counties should review the performance of each poll worker's performance. Poll workers should be evaluated on key areas so that they can improve based on feedback on their performance, and so counties can remove poor workers and reallocate the best workers to serve in the busiest precincts or to become troubleshooters.

10. Authority of Poll Workers and Appropriate Limits of that Authority

BEST PRACTICE: Some counties designate a specific private phone line for poll workers to call if they need any type of assistance.

BEST PRACTICE: Roving inspectors should have an evaluation tool, like a checklist, to ensure that every polling place is following the rules regarding voting, including providing assistance to voters with disabilities.

BEST PRACTICE: Poll workers should have a written, laminated instruction sheet to give to poll watchers and they should be instructed to have a place designated for poll watchers to stand or sit.

