



Assistant Chief Education Program – Communications

04-Jul-2025

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your volume is turned up.**



Introduction

Communication is the most important skill for a chief.

- You have to build a team out of the EOs assigned to your precinct – this starts well before the election by communicating with them. Whether you communicate in person, on the phone, by text or by e-mail or by all of these before and after an election, you should have a plan for what you need to communicate, how you are going to do so, when you will do so, and how you will ensure your communication has been received.
- It does no good to send twenty preparatory emails to an EO only to find you had their email address wrong.
- You also need to communicate with the Registrar's office before, during and after an election.



Communication Basics

- Verbal communication offers the advantage of the opportunity for immediate feedback – if you say something wrong or confusing the other party can bring that to your attention.
- Written communication is one way – **UNLESS YOU ASK FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.** Written communication has the advantage of ensuring you have consistently communicated everything to everyone. As a corollary, whenever you use written communication, it is worthwhile to proof-read your material before you send it.
- Remember that it is very difficult to convey “tone of voice” with written communication.



Communication Plan

- Every precinct needs a communication plan.
- There are three phases to this plan, before, during, and after the election.
- These three phases have different objectives:
 - Before – build your team, get them ready, get them used to you
 - During – support your team, keep them informed and keep your self informed, direct your team
 - After – thank your team, get their opinions, communicate lessons learned, set the table for the next election.
- The communications with the precinct team should always include the Chief and the Assistant(s).



Communications – Before Election 1

- Find out from the Elections Manager who is on your team – we usually do this with a roster email, although individual members may be added to the team between roster versions.
- Establish communications with your team.
 - Introduce yourself, tell them why you are reaching out.
 - Ensure that they get your communication and that you have a good method to communicate with them (telegram, phone call, text message, email, etc.). Track this by individual.
 - If the team member is new, get to know them in terms of their elections experience.



Communications – **Before Election 2**

- Communicate the education schedule to your team. The Elections Manager will send a schedule to everyone, your job is to make sure they understand what parts of that are pertinent to them.
- Remind folks a day or two before a class that it is coming and when and where to be.
- Connect with them at classes if you can.
- Make sure your team knows you can answer their questions and want to.



Communications – Before Election 3

- Communicate your precinct specific information to your team:
 - Set-up schedule before the election and how folks can help
 - When to arrive
 - Where to park
 - Where to enter the building
 - What the food plan is, e.g., bring-your-own, order, pot-luck, etc.
 - Clothing they should/should not wear
 - How long will the day be



Communications – Before Election 4

- Communicate specific information to each individual:
 - Will they be rotating out of one position and into another and when might that be
 - What their setup assignment is – this is what they do when they arrive so they know to get going on that
 - What is their first job assignment after setup
 - What is their closing assignment so they know what to do when the polls close.

There is usually value in having folks set-up and close out the same things. Scanner, signs, marking booths, pollbooks all benefit from having a consistent team assigned to them.



Communications – Before Election 5

- In the process of communicating job assignments, whether for set-up, closing, or initial assignment, it is not uncommon to get feedback from EOs about what they want or do not want.
- This feedback can help you build a more effective team.
 - Some EOs can't stand or sit for long periods, making them one-on-one for certain jobs.
 - Some EOs have a hard time doing some jobs – sometimes this can be sorted on election day with one-on-one education, sometimes you just have to adjust your assignment schedule so no one is set up to fail.
- The more feedback you get, the better you can plan. Encouraging feedback can really help.
- Remind folks immediately before the election when to be there and to call you if they will not be there or will be late.



Communications – During 1

- During the day, oversight and communication is the most important thing a chief does.
- It is hard to oversee or communicate if you are **doing** something instead of overseeing.
- In a slow election, for example a local primary, the voter volume may allow a chief to do and oversee, but generally not.
- Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs are the primary point of contact for:
 - Poll watchers
 - Voters in distress or experiencing a problem
 - EOs who need assistance
 - The Registrars office
 - Candidates
 - Media
 - Electoral Board members



Communications – **During 2**

- The Chief needs to let the Registrar's office know when entry has been made to the polling place location – let them know you are there.
- The Chief needs to have contact information for the polling place location staff in case they can not get in as planned – who do you call when the door is locked?
- The Chief needs to reach out to any EOs not at the polling place by 5:15 a.m. to find out where they are.
- As poll watchers arrive, the Chief needs to process them and ensure they know the poll watcher do's and don'ts, that they should only communicate with the Chief or Assistant Chief if they have concerns.



Communications – During 3

- The Chief’s table should be set up somewhere where the Chief can visually survey the entire polling place.
- The discipline known as “Management by Walking Around” definitely applies to the Chief and the Assistants. Being “right there” lets EOs and voters communicate with you.
- Go outside from time to time to see what is happening with campaigners and how things are working with voter parking. Campaigners can be a great communication resource, often willing to alert you when an outside polls voter is having a hard time calling the precinct for assistance.
- Chiefs and Assistants should let each other know whenever they leave the polling place floor – where they are going and if appropriate, how long they will be gone. Get over being embarrassed about taking a bathroom break – your colleagues need to know if you are unavailable.



Communications – **During 4**

- The Chief or their designee needs to communicate with the Registrar's office during the day:
 - Periodic reconciliation updates
 - Provisional vote questions
 - Mover's rule nuances
 - Other voter problems
 - Any equipment or supplies issues
 - Statement of results information at the end of the day
 - Status if the results are going to be delayed



Communications – After

- After the election is a good time to solicit feedback from your team on suggestions for improvement. You will find you get suggestions that are specific to the individual “I just want to work at the scanner” as well as suggestions as broad as a completely new layout for the polling place. The folks in the trenches often have a good perspective on what is going on.
- This is a good time to express your appreciation for the hard work the team exhibited, as well as to highlight any lessons you have learned and might apply to the next election.
- Celebrating your successes is never out of order.
- This is a good time to remind the EOs of when the next election is, and of your hope to see them then.



Afterword

- Election communications are essential to success.
- There are a lot of points in the process where communication is needed.
- Having a communication plan helps you hit all of those points.
- Communication is always two-sided - what you say (or type) is not always what the receiver hears (or reads). Confirmation and acknowledgement as part of the communication process can improve your communication effectiveness.

