

COUNTING AGENTS TRAINING

Training manual based on instructions issued by AICC War Room

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1. WHO ARE COUNTING AGENTS:

- Counting agents represent a candidate or their election agent at counting places.
- They must be at least 18 years old and familiar with ECI manuals and EVM/VVPAT functioning.
- **Individuals with security cover or those associated with state/central PSUs**, including MPs, MLAs, and ministers, cannot be appointed.



2. HOW ARE COUNTING AGENTS APPOINTED:

- Counting agents are appointed by the candidate/election agent through Form 18.
- **Two copies of the form are prepared:** one for the Returning Officer (RO) and one for the agent.
- A list of agents with photographs must be submitted to the RO at least three days before the vote counting.
- Generally, 14-15 agents can be appointed per assembly segment.



3. NUMBER OF COUNTING AGENTS TO BE APPOINTED:

- The RO informs candidates about the date, time, and place of vote counting at least one week before.
- The number of counting tables in the hall is communicated in advance.

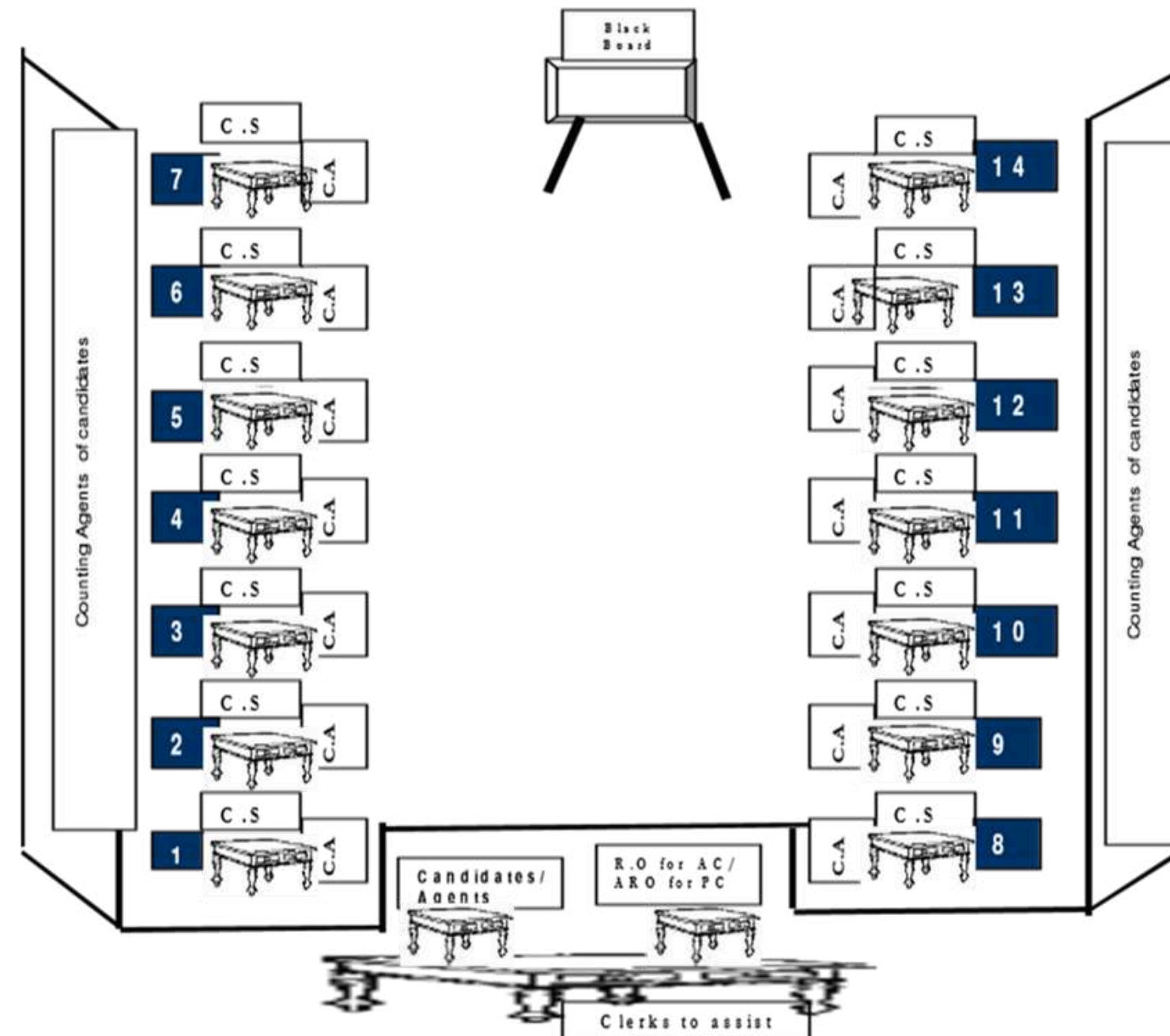


4. COUNTING DAY

- **Arrival:**
 - Counting agents must reach the venue 1 hour before counting starts.
- **Documentation:**
 - Present the letter of appointment and identity card to the RO and sign the declaration in the appointment letter.
- **Identification:**
 - RO will issue a badge indicating the agent's table.
- **Materials to Carry:**
 - Appointment letter in Form 18.
 - Copy of Form 17C, part-I.
 - Photo identity proof.
 - Pen/Pencil/Paper and Counting Sheets.
- **Restrictions:**
 - No mobile phones or electronic gadgets allowed inside the counting hall.
- **Permissions:**
 - Only counting agents, candidates, and election agents are allowed inside the counting hall.

5. LAYOUT OF COUNTING HALL

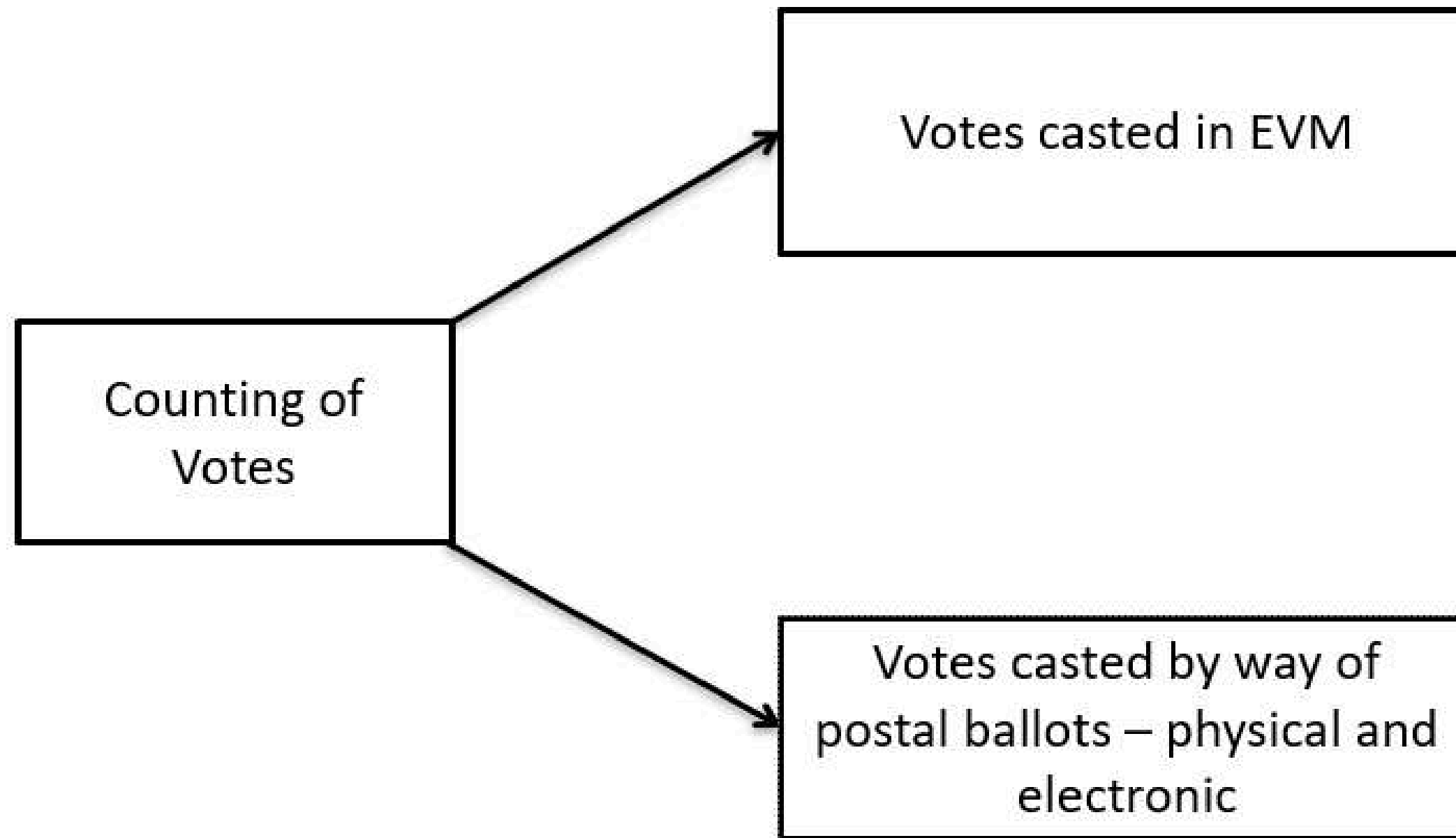
- The layout shows the arrangement of Counting Supervisors (C.S.), Counting Assistants (C.A.), and Counting Agents at various tables.



C.S.=Counting Supervisor; C.A. = Counting Assistant

Learning Module of RO/ARO

6. COUNTING PROCESS





6.1.1 POSTAL BALLOT COUNTING

- The RO has wide discretion in rejecting a postal ballot.
- Counting agents **must be vigilant** and immediately **object** if the counting agent is satisfied that the rejection is not appropriate.
- Each rejection of the declaration form must be observed by the Election Observers.
- If the winning margin is less than the rejected postal ballots, each rejected postal ballot **must be mandatorily checked by the RO himself.**



6.1.2. COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- Only the control unit (CU) of EVMs and Form 17C is brought to the counting tables in each round.
- First, it has to be **ensured from the tags that the CU is intact** and there has been no tampering done with the seals.



6.1.3 POSTAL BALLOT COUNTING PROCEDURE

- **Verification:**
 - Check the declaration in Form 13A for the voter's details.
 - Ensure the serial number on Form 13A matches Form 13B.
- **Counting:**
 - Open Form 13B, extract the actual ballot, and count the votes.
 - Enter results in Form 20.
- **Announcement:**
 - Announce results by writing on the display board and oral announcement.
 - Seal counted and rejected PBs separately and allow agents to sign them.



6.1.4 POSTAL BALLOT COUNTING – REJECTION CASES

- **Reasons for Rejection:**
 - Only one document found inside the outer envelope.
 - Unsigned declaration by the elector.
 - Declaration not attested by a competent officer.
 - No seal and the officer cannot be identified from details.
 - Different serial number on the declaration form and inner cover.
 - Improperly marked votes, such as:
 - Votes given for more than one candidate.
 - Spurious ballot paper.
 - Damaged/mutilated postal ballot paper.
 - Not returned in the prescribed format and envelope.
 - Mark placed in a wrong manner.
 - Mark disclosing the identity of the voter.



6.1.5. POSTAL BALLOT COUNTING

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- Each rejection of the declaration form must be observed by the Election Observers.
- If the winning margin is less than the rejected postal ballots, each rejected postal ballot **must be mandatorily checked by the RO himself.**



6.2 COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- **Verification:**
 - Only the CU of EVMs and Form 17C are brought to the counting tables.
 - Ensure the CU is intact and seals are not tampered with.
- **Agent Responsibilities:**
 - Match EVM serial numbers with Form 17C.
 - Check the integrity of seals and paper strips.
 - Report any tampering to the RO immediately.
- **Result Display:**
 - Once verified, power on the CU and access the result section.
 - Note the results displayed and report any discrepancies immediately.

6.2.1. COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- Only the control unit (CU) of EVMs and Form 17C is brought to the counting tables in each round.
- First, it has to be **ensured from the tags that the CU is intact** and there has been no tampering done with the seals.



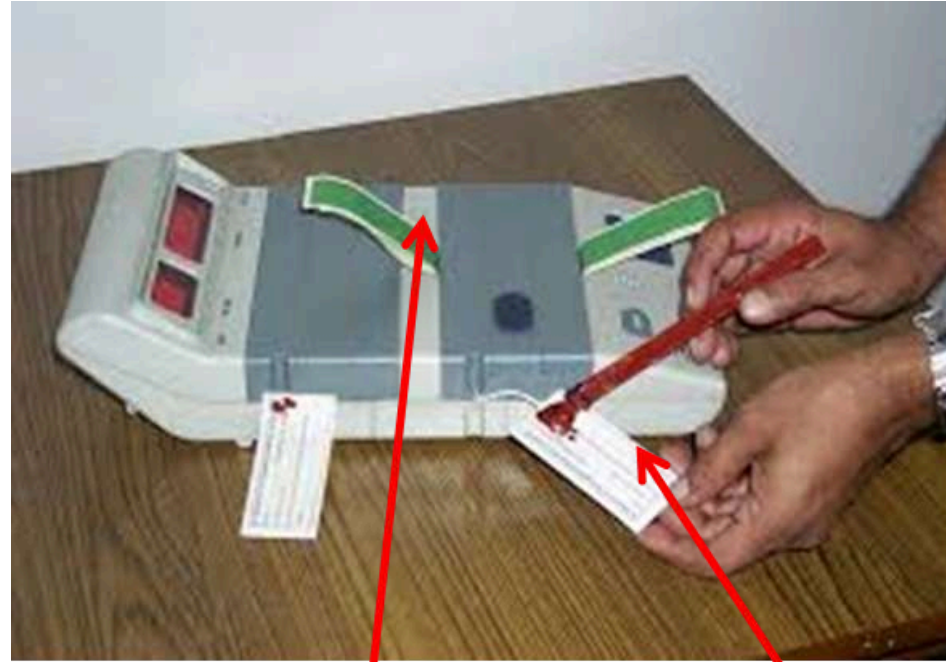


6.2.2. COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- **Match** whether the same EVM is used in the corresponding Polling Station (Form 17 C is having the name of the corresponding Polling Station name and number). For this, **check the serial number** of the EVM and match it with the Form 17 C.
- **Check** if the seal on the Candidate section is intact.
- **Check** if the Green Strip Seal number is the same as mentioned in Form 17 C.
- **Check** if the Green Paper Strip on the Result button is intact.
- In case of any tampering, **bring it to the attention of RO**, who will take action, and the said machine will not be included for counting till Election Commission has taken a decision on it.

6.2.3. COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- Green Paper Strip, EVM Seal, and Pink Paper Seal are verified.



GREEN PAPER STRIP



EVM SEAL



PINK PAPER SEAL

6.2.4. COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- Once the seals are found intact, the **power button is pressed ON.**
- The counting agent must **ensure that the CU number on the machine is the same as that in Form 17C**, a copy of which is provided in advance by the candidate.
- Once the power is pressed ON, the pink paper seal above the RESULT section is pierced so as to press it after which the display starts on the display panel of the CU.



6.2.4. COUNTING OF VOTES CASTED IN EVMS

- At the "Result" button being so pressed, display panel will indicate as:
 - Computing Result
 - Poll Date
 - Total No. of Candidates
 - Total No. of Votes
 - Candidate wise no. of votes polled – which can be noted by the Counting Agents in the counting sheet simultaneously.
- The result as displayed sequential Candidate wise shall be noted by the Counting Supervisor in Part II-Result of Counting' of Form 17C.
- **Counting agents must also note the same in their counting sheets.**
- If required, the Result button can be pressed again to enable the Candidates and/or their agents to note down the above result.





7. MEASURES OF TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS BY ECI

- **Observers will randomly check 2 CU results of each round** with the assistance of additional counting staff.
- **Mandatory randomized VVPAT slip counting** – five per assembly segment - Returning Officer, in the presence of all Candidates, or their representatives, will randomly select five polling stations per assembly segment for which VVPAT Paper slip counting will be done. The same will be done in a VCB – VVPAT Counting Booth.



8. ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

- For every round, once the counting supervisor has noted the details from CU display – candidate-wise votes secured- he will get **signatures of counting agents on the same.**
- Original copy of Form 17C will be given to RO for compilation and the second carbon copy will be photocopied and given to counting agents.
- Polling booth-wise results will be compiled by RO and Observer will ensure that data feeding is done carefully.
- Round-wise results at the end of each round will be **announced by RO by displaying it on a large board** and oral announcement.
- Counting agents must see that the number of votes to candidates is properly written on the display board and any errors may be immediately pointed out.
- Final results will be marked in the result sheet in Form 20. RO will wait for a few minutes for candidates to check and object for any issues.



9. MISCELLANEOUS

- For any discrepancy, candidates/their counting agents **must raise objections in writing**. They can demand VVPAT slip count for particular booths or recount. RO will pass a speaking order either granting or rejecting such requests.
- Where VVPAT counting takes place, and discrepancy is found in CU data, **VVPAT slip count shall prevail** and result sheets will be amended accordingly.
- Observers have the powers to order RO to stop the counting process/result declaration in a few situations but to restart the same, they have no such powers and the same can be done by ECI alone. It can be stopped when:
 - There were booth capturing in large scale
 - There were dislocation of EVMs/VVPAT from the strong room illegally
 - The election documents or instruments are stolen, deformed, or spoilt due to any accident, calamity or theft, burglary, etc. due to which, results cannot be decided decisively.



10 UNDERSTANDING FORM 20

Explanation of Each Section in the Sample Form 20:

1. Polling Booth Information:

- The form lists each polling booth in the constituency with a unique serial number and name/code.

2. Votes for Each Candidate:

- Each candidate has a dedicated column where the number of votes they received in each polling booth is recorded.

3. Total and Rejected Votes:

- Total votes for each booth and the number of rejected votes are recorded.

4. Final Compilation:

- The last few rows summarize the total votes each candidate received across all polling booths.
- This is crucial for determining the overall winner of the constituency.

5. RO's Signature:

- The form concludes with the RO's signature, validating the accuracy of the recorded results.

