

Casting Your Vote: Alternatives to Traditional Voting

For Consumers of Long-Term Care



FACT SHEET

The right to vote is a cornerstone in our society. However, the voting process can sometimes be complicated and confusing. Long-term care facility residents and other consumers receiving long-term care services and supports retain their voting rights no matter where they live or what type of care they receive. These individuals often face unique challenges when attempting to participate in the political process. Some individuals have difficulties voting in the traditional way (finding your local polling place and going in person on Election Day to cast your ballot). This fact sheet is intended to provide information for all long-term care consumers on alternative ways to cast their votes during this election season.

How Do I Vote?

First, you need to be registered to vote. Find out how to register by visiting www.usa.gov/register-to-vote or calling 1-844-872-4681. Already registered? Continue reading to learn about your voting options.

Absentee Voting

Absentee voting is conducted by mail-in paper ballot prior to the day of the election. Ballots can be returned via mail or in-person at a designated drop-off point. Typically, absentee ballots must be requested at least a week before the election. While all states offer some version of it, there is a lot of variation in each state's procedures. In 21 states, an excuse is required.¹ In 27 states and the District of Columbia, absentee ballots can be obtained without an excuse.²

- ◇ In all states requiring an excuse, a physical disability preventing an individual from getting to the polls permits an absentee ballot.

- ◇ In many states where an excuse is required, individuals aged 60- 65 or older can qualify for an absentee ballot.
- ◇ In some states requiring an excuse, individuals who are the primary caregiver of an ill or physically disabled person can be permitted to use an absentee ballot.

Twenty-three states³ permit mobile polling – supervised absentee voting administered by local election officials in long-term care facilities. Some states determine where mobile polling will be offered based on the number of people who have requested absentee ballots, and others on the number of registered voters in residence. Contact your local elections office to arrange mobile polling in your facility.

Early Voting

Thirty seven states plus the District of Columbia offer some type of early voting. Early voting allows voters to visit an election official's office or, in some states, other satellite voting locations, and cast a vote in person without offering an excuse for why the voter is unable to vote on election day.

Some states restrict voting to certain periods of time.⁴ Most early voting takes place between three and 45 days prior to Election Day.

Three states – Washington, Oregon and Colorado – provide mail ballots to all eligible voters in every election. A ballot is automatically mailed to every eligible voter (no request or application is necessary).

¹AL, AR, CT, DE, IN, KY, LA, MA, MI, MS, MO, NH, NY, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA, WV

²AK, AZ, CA, DC, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IA, KS, ME, MD, MN, MT, NE, NV, NJ, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, SD, UT, VT, WI, WY

³AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, ME, MA, MN, MO, NE, NY, ND, OK, RI, SD, TN, WV, WI

⁴ID, IN, IA, ME, MA, MN, MT, NJ, OH, OK, SD, VT, WI, WY

Voting in Your Facility

Some nursing homes are official polling places, and residents are able to vote early or on Election Day within their facility. State elections offices may have an existing policy of creating poll sites in nursing homes, or facilities can contact their local elections office to apply to become an official polling site.

Curbside Voting

Some polling places allow voters who have difficulty entering polling places to vote at the curbside, without having to exit your vehicle or enter the building. To find a polling site offering curbside voting, contact your local elections office.

How Do I Get Help Voting?

Voting Assistance

Individuals with Hearing or Seeing Impairments

- ◇ The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates special assistance for voters with hearing or seeing impairments.
- ◇ Services available for individuals with hearing impairments include: Sign language interpreters and written notes
- ◇ Services available for individuals with seeing impairments: a qualified reader (a person who is able to read effectively, accurately, and impartially using necessary specialized vocabulary) or audio recording with headphones and information in large print or Braille

Accessible Voting Devices

- ◇ All states provide some type of accessible voting device. These devices may include a variety of tactile switches (different buttons coded by color and shape), so those with mobility impairments have an easier time voting.

Assistance from Another Person

- ◇ Federal Law gives voters with disabilities the right to

decide whether to get assistance in casting a ballot and who will provide it. Choose a poll worker, friend, family member, caregiver, or almost anyone else.

- ◇ To receive any of the aforementioned assistance voting, contact your state elections office: www.eac.gov/voter_resources/contact_your_state.aspx

Where Can I Get More Information?

Online

www.eac.gov/voter_resources/contact_your_state.aspx - Find contact information for your state elections office and information on how to register to vote in your state

<https://www.usa.gov/voting> - Get information on all voting questions including registration deadlines and how to contact your local elections office.

- ◇ Live chat at <https://www.usa.gov/chat>
- ◇ Email at <https://www.usa.gov/email>

www.canivote.org – Get registered or check if you are already registered; find your polling place; know what kind of ID to bring; find information on absentee and early voting in your state

www.usvotefoundation.org – Register to vote; request an absentee ballot; find information about election dates and deadlines and voting methods by state

- ◇ Can't find an answer to your question? Use their Voter Help Desk: www.usvotefoundation.org/voter-help-desk

www.theconsumervoice.org/get_help - If you feel like your voting rights have been violated or you need additional help finding information about your local voting options, contact the local long-term care ombudsman program.

By Phone

For general information about voting or to find information on your local elections office, call USA.gov at **1-844-872-4681**. If you have a question about how you can get assistance voting, call the Election Protection Coalition at **1-866-OUR-VOTE**.

For more information visit

<http://theconsumervoice.org/events/residents-rights-month-2016>