

BASICS FOR DESIGNATED VOTER REGISTRATION AGENCIES

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) is a federal law requiring designated agencies to provide “voter registration services.” This handout provides general information and guidance about this law to agency staff.

Requirements

The NVRA requires agency staff to provide “voter registration services” every time a client:

- Applies for benefits or services,
- Renews or recertifies benefits or services, or
- Requests a change of address

What does “voter registration services” mean?

- Provide the Voter Preference Form. The Voter Preference Form asks clients if they would like to register to vote and makes clear that their benefits and services will not be affected by their answer. Completed Voter Preference Forms must remain on file in your office for two years.
- Provide the Voter Registration Card (VRC). Instructions for completing a VRC can be found on page 2.
- Help the client register to vote, unless the client declines to register. Provide the same level of assistance you would provide with your agency’s own forms.
- Accept completed VRCs and forward them to the county elections office. VRCs are pre-addressed and postage paid and should be forwarded daily.

Reminders

- Offer voter registration for all required transactions whether they occur in person or by mail, phone, or online.
- For clients between the ages of 16 and 17, you may offer them a VRC to fill out in order to pre-register to vote.
- When the client is a minor (under 16), provide voter registration to the adult applying on behalf of the child.
- The federal Voting Rights Act requires election materials to be available in Spanish and English in all California counties. Check with your county elections office on additional languages that may be required.
- Do not screen applicants for eligibility to vote or discourage voter registration. County elections officials carefully verify eligibility before a voter is placed on the rolls.
- Encourage applicants to register, but do **not, in any way**, discuss or influence their political party preference.

Additional Information

- People with disabilities may initially decline to register to vote because they are unsure about how they may cast a ballot on Election Day. In California, each polling place has at least one accessible voting machine. Voters also have the option of voting by mail. Counties have remote accessible vote-by-mail (RAVBM) systems allowing voters with disabilities to receive their ballots at home and mark them independently and privately before sending them back to elections officials.
- People do not need to be able to read, write, or speak English in order to register to vote.
- People may not remember if they are registered to vote and can visit www.voterstatus.sos.ca.gov to check their status. When in doubt, a voter can re-register! There is no penalty for re-registering.

For additional information, please visit: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/nvra/training/>.

BASICS FOR COMPLETING VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS (VRCs)

Item 1: Voter declaration. The applicant must mark “yes” or “no” to the question of whether or not they are a United States citizen and if they will be 18 years old on or before Election Day. To pre-register to vote in California, the applicant must mark the box indicating that they are 16 or 17 years old and otherwise meet the eligibility requirements to vote.

Item 2: First name, middle name (or initial), last name, suffix (optional), and title (optional).

- Should match CA driver license (CDL)/CA identification card (ID Card).

Item 3: Date of birth and CA driver license/ID card number or last four of Social Security Number.

- Date of birth and U.S. state or foreign country (not county) of birth.
- If the applicant has been issued a CA driver license or an identification card, they MUST list the number.
- If the applicant does not have either, they MUST list the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number.
- If the applicant does not have any of the above, they can still register to vote. Just leave the field blank.

Item 4: Home address, city, zip code, and county name. This should be their “Residential” address.

- Residence: Place in which the applicant’s habitation is fixed and where the intention is to stay. For voting purposes, a person can have only ONE residence.
- P.O. Boxes & business addresses are NOT valid here.
- If the applicant does not have a street address, they should enter an exact description of where they live.
 - Cross streets, route, box, bridges, or other landmarks can be used.
 - Mostly used for applicants living in rural areas with non-specific street addresses. Also used for applicants who are homeless.

Item 5: Mailing address. The applicant must complete this section if they want to receive election mail at an address other than their residence. This can be a P.O. Box or business address.

Item 6: The applicant should complete this section if they were previously registered and changed their address, surname, or political party preference. If the applicant cannot recall their previous address, it can be left blank.

Item 7: Effective January 1, 2022, every active, registered voter in California will receive a vote-by-mail ballot; if a voter prefers to cast their ballot in person, they may still do so at a polling location.

Item 8: Political party preference. Mark box to choose any of the political parties listed. If the applicant does not want to choose a political party preference, mark the “No Party/None” box.

- There can be only ONE mark in Item 8 with NO CORRECTIONS or ALTERATIONS. A new VRC must be filled out if an error is made.

Item 9: Optional Information

- E-mail address and phone number. These are optional but recommended.
- To receive state materials in another language, mark the language preference box. If no box is checked, voter materials will be provided in English.

Item 10: This item MUST contain the signature/mark/signature stamp of the applicant. Please also include the date of signing.

Blue Box: Complete this box if you filled out (put pen to paper) some or all of the VRC on behalf of the applicant. If you only answered questions or checked if the VRC was complete, do not complete the box.