



Federal Agency Voter Registration

A major purpose of President Biden’s March 7, 2021, Executive Order on voting (“Voting EO”)¹ is to promote voter registration through federal agencies – a practice already well-established in state agencies such as motor vehicle departments and public assistance offices under the National Voter Registration Act (“NVRA”).² As the Voting EO points out, the NVRA contemplates that federal agencies should provide voter registration services to persons they serve, and there are many opportunities for federal programs to do so.³

Section 1 of this document provides a summary of the steps for effective and robust voter registration services based on those state NVRA practices.⁴ Section 2 provides details on additional policy considerations related to robust federal agency voter registration. Federal agencies can meet the goals of the Voting EO by following the examples of the states and incorporating effective opportunities to register to vote into their own programs.

Section 1: Steps for Providing Effective Agency Voter Registration Services

- I. Incorporate effective and accessible voter registration services into all relevant agency interactions, including distributing voter registration applications and providing assistance to all clients and constituents
- II. Establish a system for collecting and securely transmitting completed voter registration applications to election officials
- III. Appoint a coordinator to oversee and manage voter registration services
- IV. Obtain guidance from the EAC, from state / local election officials, and, where appropriate, from community groups
- V. Provide robust, regular training for agency staff
- VI. Collect and report aggregate data on agency registrations
- VII. Provide accessible voter education materials

¹ March 7, 2021 Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting, *available at* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/03/07/executive-order-on-promoting-access-to-voting/>.

² 52 U.S.C. § 20506.

³ Voting EO at Sec. 3 and Sec. 4; *see also* 52 U.S.C. § 20506(3)(a).

⁴ President Biden’s Voting EO also directs federal agencies to accept designation as official voter registration agencies, if requested by states under the NVRA, unless they have a very good reason not to. While the recommendations in this document are based on the NVRA requirements, if agencies are designated under the NVRA, a few additional steps would likely be required. For more guidance about the specific legal requirements for NVRA designated agencies providing voter registration, please contact us.

I. Incorporate Effective and Accessible Voter Registration Services into All Relevant Agency Interactions

Voter registration services should be incorporated into all existing transactions—including new benefits applications and returning clients seeking renewals or to update contact information—and via in-person transactions as well as those conducted online, by telephone, or through the mail. This document focuses on in-person transactions, but the principles can be applied more broadly. Online transactions in particular offer simple opportunities for voter registration; please reach out for a separate best-practices guide dedicated to effectively adding voter registration to online portals.

For in-person transactions, agency or program staff should:

- *Provide* voter registration services during all transactions, whether the client is applying for benefits, requesting renewal of benefits, or updating their address.
- *Ask* clients, in writing, whether they would like to register to vote or update their voter registration address.
- *Inform* clients, in writing, that no one may interfere with their right to register to vote or not register to vote, the right to privacy while registering, and the right to choose a political party for themselves if they want.
 - This can be accomplished by following the NVRA model of providing individuals with a form that contains both a question about voter registration and some of the important disclaimers about privacy. This is sometimes called a voter preference form and an example is attached here as *Exhibit A*.
- *Distribute* voter registration applications to clients who say “yes” they want to register to vote or update their registration, and to those who do not answer the question about voter registration.
 - *Paper Voter Registration Application Supply*: Federal agencies can access state voter registration applications, which are publicly available to be downloaded from most states’ election websites, for distribution.⁵ In addition, in many states, election officials provide voter registration applications to state agencies covered by the NVRA on a regular basis (and therefore are likely to be willing to provide federal agencies with copies of their state voter registration applications, if requested), and some states even have systems for easily accessing applications.⁶ Agencies can also use the National Mail Voter Registration Form (“NMVRF”).⁷ The NMVRF is a paper voter registration

⁵ See, e.g., Arizona: https://azsos.gov/sites/default/files/20200417_AZ_Voter_Registration_Form_Printable_0.pdf; Florida: <https://www.myfloridaelections.com/Voting-Elections/Register-To-Vote#App>; Kansas: <https://www.kssos.org/forms/elections/voterregistration.pdf> and Maryland: https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/application.html.

⁶ For example, the Colorado Secretary of State has an online portal that allows agencies to request copies of blank paper voter registration forms. See <https://www.sos.state.co.us/ccorner/NVRAAgencyOrderForms.do>. With respect to providing a supply of hard copy forms, even state election officials who are not supportive of President Biden’s Voting EO might be willing to provide assistance with access to state voter registration forms if requested.

⁷ *National Mail Voter Registration Form*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM’N, <https://www.eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form> (last visited July 14, 2021).

application that can be downloaded from Vote.gov and used to register to vote in the vast majority of states.⁸

- *Assist* clients in completing the voter registration application just like the agency would assist with its own benefits forms.
- *Transmit* completed voter registration applications to the appropriate election official within 10 days after the client completes the application (and within 5 days before the voter registration deadline for federal elections).

To ensure these voter registration services are accessible to all clients, agencies should also:

- Provide voter registration applications and supporting materials in all the languages in which they provide their own services. Many state voter registration applications are available in multiple languages; the National Mail-in Voter Registration Form is available in 15 languages.⁹
- Offer assistance to voters with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunity to register to vote privately and independently as voters without disabilities.
- Provide access to usable voter registration applications.
 - During transactions, clients generally should receive a blank paper voter registration application.
 - Providing access to states' online voter registration systems is also an option.

However, in almost all states with online voter registration, an individual without a driver's license or state ID card cannot use the system.¹⁰ Furthermore, not all state online systems are in languages other than English or accessible to people with disabilities. If agencies provide access to states' online voter registration systems, they should take steps to ensure all eligible individuals can use them or provide a paper option as back-up.

II. Establish a System for Collecting and Transmitting Completed Voter Registration Applications

To ensure clients complete the voter registration process, it is critical that agencies *collect* completed voter registration applications from their clients and *transmit* them to the appropriate election officials. When clients take voter registration applications home to complete later or to mail on their own, they often do not finish the process. Collecting completed applications and transmitting them directly to election officials simplifies the process for clients and provides them with a compelling reason to complete the registration process at the time of their transaction. Years of experience by state agencies providing voter registration services has established that collecting and transmitting completed

⁸ See 52 U.S.C. § 20503, 20508. There are three exceptions: New Hampshire, North Dakota and Wyoming. See *National Mail Voter Registration Form, Instructions*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/eac_assets/1/6/Federal_Voter_Registration_ENG.pdf (last visited July 14, 2021).

⁹ The different translations of the National Mail Voter Registration Form are available on the EAC's website. *National Mail Voter Registration Form*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, <https://www.eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form> (last visited July 14, 2021).

¹⁰ *Online Voter Registration*, NAT'L CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx>.

applications from clients results in significantly higher rates of voter registration than when applications are distributed but not collected.

A secure and efficient system for collecting and transmitting voter registration applications includes:

- Maintenance of all completed, collected voter registration applications in a secure place, until they are transmitted to election officials.
- Determination of the delivery method of completed applications to election officials – by mail or by some other method, such as drop off at the appropriate election office.
 - The National Mail Voter Registration Form provides an address for delivery of completed voter registration forms in almost all states.¹¹
- Designation of and special training for the person(s) responsible for transmitting completed applications to election officials, whether by mail or in person.
- Establishment of a clear time frame for transmitting applications in a timely fashion, so that all eligible voters are registered to vote by any applicable state registration deadlines.¹²
- Both transmitting and maintaining a cover sheet that records how many applications are transmitted to elections officials when and by whom.

III. Appoint a Coordinator to Oversee and Manage Voter Registration Services

Agencies should designate a “voter registration coordinator” within the agency or relevant program, whose job is to ensure high quality voter registration services are provided to clients.¹³ Having a point person who is responsible for oversight, i.e. ensuring that voter registration happens during the appropriate interactions, makes a significant difference in how effective voter registration plans are in reaching people.

The voter registration coordinator should have sufficient training to ensure they can complete their duties and can orient new staff and provide guidance to existing staff at their office on proper voter registration procedures. Their duties should include, at a minimum:

- Ensuring adequate training for all agency staff engaged in providing voter registration services.
- Being responsible for maintaining voter registration supplies (such as blank voter registration applications).
- Ensuring voter registration services are being offered during relevant transactions and providing quality control of those services.
- Setting up and monitoring a system for delivering completed applications to election officials.
- Collecting and making publicly available data on the number of people registered through the

¹¹ See *Supra* n.7.

¹² The NVRA is a good model for this. It requires agencies to transmit completed voter registration applications to the appropriate election official within 10 days after the client completes the application (and within 5 days before the voter registration deadline for federal elections).

¹³ This need not be a full-time position; voter registration oversight can be added to the duties of a person who is already playing a supervisory or oversight role within the applicable program.

program or agency.

IV. Obtain Guidance from the EAC and from State / Local Election Officials

In addition to this guidance, agencies should consult with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and/or state and local election officials about how best to provide voter registration services and to ensure registration applications are received by the appropriate election authorities. Agencies might also consider contacting representatives of the communities they serve as they develop voter registration procedures, especially in thinking about language access. In some cases, these organizations may have been providing non-partisan voter registration services to their communities for years and will have insights on how voter registration can be most effective.

V. Provide Robust, Regular Training for Agency Staff

All staff engaged in any step in the voter registration process should complete training upon beginning in their role and should complete refresher training at least annually. Training should be developed in consultation with NVRA experts and agency constituency representatives. At a minimum, trainings for staff should include:

- At a conceptual level, the importance of ensuring all eligible people have access to registration and voting, the presence of registration gaps faced by the population an agency serves (if relevant), and the role federal agency registration can play in removing barriers to democratic participation.
- The specific process for distributing a voter registration application, offering assistance in completing the application, collecting the application, and transmitting it to elections officials in the context of the program, facility, and/or event through which members of public interact with the agency.
- General information about who is eligible to register to vote in the state, including that an individual must be a U.S. citizen to vote.
 - The National Mail Voter Registration Form and state voter registration applications describe the eligibility requirements to register to vote.¹⁴
- Description of the fields in the voter registration application, including which fields are required for the registration to be complete and accepted, and what information should be supplied for each required field.
- Answers to commonly asked questions about filling out the voter registration application and about voting.
- Information on how clients can contact state or local election officials if they have additional questions about voter registration or voting.¹⁵
- How to ensure that the voter registration application is completely filled out and legible, before accepting and transmitting the application to the appropriate election official.

¹⁴ See *supra* nos. 5 and 7.

¹⁵ This contact information is maintained by the General Services Agency on USA.gov, see <https://www.usa.gov/voting>.

- The strict prohibition on partisanship and the strict rules around confidentiality.
- Attached here are two samples of voter registration services trainings from state NVRA agencies:
 - *Exhibit B* is an information sheet for workers helping individuals apply for benefits through Washington’s online application portal, Healthplanfinder.
 - *Exhibit C* is a simple training guidance document that the California Secretary of State provides to state agency staff.

VI. Collect and Report Aggregate Data on Agency Registrations

Federal agencies providing voter registration services should set up a system to track the *aggregate* number of completed voter registration applications they collect from clients and transmit to state election officials by program and location. A tracking and reporting system allows supervisors within these agencies to ensure that their employees are providing the intended voter registration services; allows agency staff and leadership to measure the impact of integrating voter registration into their services; and facilitates measuring the impact of the President’s Voting EO.¹⁶

VII. Provide Accessible Voter Education Materials

In addition to ensuring that the agency’s programs and facilities provide robust voter registration services, it is also important to provide voter education materials whenever possible. Such materials can include posters with information on how to vote and where to find one’s voting location, palm cards with election dates and voting options, and information on how to contact local and state election officials with questions.¹⁷ Like the voter registration services, all voter education materials should be accessible to people with disabilities and translated into the languages spoken by the communities the agency serves. The General Services Agency maintains information about elections on its USA.gov website.¹⁸

¹⁶ The aggregate numbers of total voter registration applications processed is the only information that should be tracked and saved. At no point should agencies retain any personal identifying information about the individuals who decided to register to vote and provide completed voter registration forms to agency staff for submission to election officials.

¹⁷ Useful content for these materials includes information about the process for voting in that state, including the length of the early-voting period (if applicable), how to request a mail-in ballot, the documents required for voting by mail or in person, etc.

¹⁸ See <https://www.usa.gov/voting>. Because these laws dictating the voting process can change over time, these materials should be reviewed annually for major changes and updated when necessary to ensure clients get accurate information.

Section 2: Additional Policy Considerations

Following these best practices for agency registration has myriad policy benefits that help fulfill the goals of the Voting EO. Providing robust agency voter registration through the steps described above can:

- I. Close persistent registration gaps and promote full participation
- II. Protect against registration of ineligible individuals
- III. Protect clients from undue pressure and agency staff from uncomfortable interactions
- IV. Protect client confidentiality
- V. Ensure all voter registration services are provided in a nonpartisan way
- VI. Protect the agency from liability

I. Close Persistent Registration Gaps and Promote Full Participation

According to the Census Bureau, as of 2018, there were 76 million eligible Americans not registered to vote. There are significant racial, ethnic and economic disparities in registration rates.¹⁹ Voter registration barriers are a significant factor in not turning out to vote.²⁰

Federal agencies can help improve the voter registration rates in America overall and help reduce disparities for underrepresented groups. Federal agencies and their partners interact directly with millions of Americans through the programs they run and the services they provide. As described above, the opportunity to register to vote or update a voter registration address can be added into agencies' transactions when they are interacting with the public, particularly when individuals are applying for federal benefits or services, or renewing current benefits and services, using the NVRA as a model.

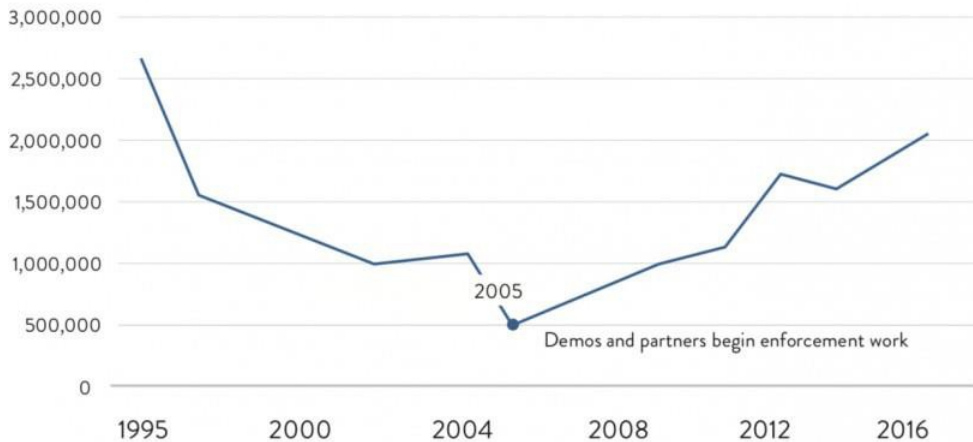
We know that including a *robust* opportunity to register to vote, or to update a voter registration address, with these services and benefits application transactions can be very effective thanks to the success of the public assistance agency requirements of the NVRA. However, the history of the NVRA demonstrates that for the opportunity to register to vote to be most effective, it must include the specific steps described above. After a spike in voter registration applications from public assistance agencies immediately following implementation of the NVRA in the mid 1990's, compliance with the specific requirements of the law waned, and the numbers of voter registrations submitted by agencies also started to drop. After voting rights groups started to push for better compliance with the requirements of the NVRA through litigation and advocacy, the number of voter registrations originating

¹⁹ See <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-583.html>. As of 2018, 71% of White non-Latinx people were registered to vote, while only 64% of Black people were registered to vote, 55% of Native Americans, 54% of Latinx people and 53% of Asian Americans. Moreover, as of 2018, only 59% of individuals making less than \$30,000 dollars annually were registered to vote, but 80% of individuals making more \$100,000 annually were registered to vote.

²⁰ Laura Williamson, Pamela Cataldo, Brenda Wright, *Toward a More Representative Electorate: The Progress and Potential of Voter Registration Through Public Assistance Agencies*, Demos (December 21, 2018), <https://www.demos.org/research/toward-more-representative-electorate>.

from state public assistance agencies started to rise again significantly, as the chart below shows.²¹

TOTAL VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AGENCIES, 1995 -2016



II. Protect Against Registration of Ineligible Individuals

Following these best practices when providing voter registration services will help to protect non-eligible individuals in three important ways:

- Asking about voter registration in writing allows the agency to also provide information about the eligibility requirements, including the fact that to register to vote a person must be a U.S. citizen. Note:
 - The recommendations made here for providing effective agency voter registration involve clients voluntarily completing a separate voter registration form on their own. All state voter registration applications and the National Mail Voter Registration Form list the eligibility requirements.²²
 - State departments of motor vehicles and public assistance agencies have been assisting their clients with voter registration pursuant to the NVRA for over 20 years. Hundreds of millions of American citizens have registered to vote through the NVRA processes over that time,²³ and instances of non-eligible individuals registering through these agency transactions and then voting are vanishingly rare.
- Providing language assistance with voter registration services and voting information helps to ensure the individuals understand exactly what they are being asked about and the specific eligibility requirements.
- Providing training to staff about the basic steps of voter registration and about how their clients

²¹ See *id.*

²² See *supra* nos. 5 and 7.

²³ See NVRA Reports to Congress, <https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/studies-and-reports>.

can obtain assistance from election officials if they have complicated questions, including residency or restoration of rights concerns, also helps to protect clients because it gives them additional resources to help better understand questions about eligibility.

III. Protect Clients from Undue Pressure and Agency Staff from Uncomfortable Interactions

Providing the voter registration opportunity in writing with additional information modeled after the required language from NVRA helps to ensure that clients do not feel pressured to register to vote, which in turn ensures smooth interactions with agency staff or intermediaries. The NVRA requires that clients are clearly told that it is their choice to register to vote, that their decision to register to vote will not affect their benefits, and that if they want to register to vote, they can do so in private.

Following this model helps ensure that clients do not feel pressured to register to vote.

IV. Protect Client Confidentiality

Training ensures staff understand they are required to keep confidential any information they learn through assisting clients with voter registration and/or handling completed voter registration applications for submission to election officials.

V. Ensure All Voter Registration Services are Provided in a Nonpartisan Way

Robust and regular training helps to ensure agency staff understand that any discussions about voting and voter registration must be strictly nonpartisan. With thorough training, staff understand what it means to be nonpartisan and that they should not try to influence the choice of their client to register to vote or to pick the political party of their choice. Note:

- State department of motor vehicles and public assistance agencies that provide assistance to their clients with voter registration pursuant to the NVRA are nonpartisan government entities and successfully train their staff to remain non-partisan while providing these services.

VI. Protect the Agency from Liability

While federal agencies can play an important role in improving access to voter registration services, a federal agency providing its clients with the opportunity to fill out a voter registration application does not represent the full process or responsibility of registering individuals to vote. The ultimate responsibility for registering voters rests with election officials, who evaluate individuals' eligibility to register to vote and actually register voters after they receive completed applications. Individual clients, not the agency official, affirm their eligibility to register to vote directly for themselves through the voter registration process. State agencies have been facilitating access to voter registration opportunities for clients since the NVRA went into effect in 1995 and have not been responsible for any inadvertent mistakes that occasionally occur.

Exhibit A

Colorado

Voter Preference Form

Agency-Based Voter Registration



Please read the following information and complete and sign the declination form below. This agency will detach and keep the declination form for its records.

Information about agency-based voter registration

Must I fill out this application?

No, it is your choice.

How do I turn in the application?

You may

- leave it with us and we will turn it in for you
- mail or deliver it to your county clerk and recorder's office

Does filling out or not filling out the registration form affect services I am applying for?

No. Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency.

How private is this process?

The name and location of the agency or public office where you received the voter registration application will not appear on your records. If you decide not to use this application to register to vote, that is also confidential.

Am I eligible to register to vote?

You are eligible to vote if you:

- will be 18 years of age or older at the time of the next election
- are a United States citizen
- are a Colorado resident and have lived in your current precinct for at least 30 days before the election
- are not serving a sentence (including parole) for a felony conviction

Important Notice:

If you believe that someone has interfered with

- your right to register or to decline to register to vote,
- your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote, or
- your right to choose your own political party or other political preference,

You may file a complaint with:

Colorado Secretary of State
1700 Broadway
Denver, CO 80290
Phone: (303) 894-2200

Declination form (Accept or decline this opportunity to register to vote)

If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?

Please check only one of the following boxes and sign below. *If you do not check any box, you will be considered to have decided not to register to vote at this time.*

- Yes, I want to apply to register to vote today. (Please fill out the Voter Registration Form)
- Yes, I am currently registered to vote and want to change my address, political party, or other information on my voter registration.
- No, I do not want to apply to register to vote today.
- No, I am currently registered to vote and do not want to update my information.

If you would like help in filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the voter registration form in private.

Print your full name _____

Sign here _____

Today's date _____

For agency use only

The applicant completed a voter registration form. Yes No

The applicant requested and was given a voter registration form for later delivery. Yes No

Information about registering to vote

If I don't know my Colorado driver's license or Colorado ID card number may I provide my Social Security Number instead?

No. If you have a Colorado driver's license or ID card issued by the Colorado Department of Revenue, you must provide that number for your application to be complete.

How will I know if my registration was processed?

You will receive an official information card from your county clerk and recorder's office approximately 20 days after they receive your registration form.

You may also check your status at the Colorado Secretary of State website by visiting www.sos.state.co.us, clicking on the "verify/update my voter registration" link.

When is the last day to register to vote?

29 days before an election.

Other frequently asked questions

Will I need identification to vote?

If you vote in person, yes. If you are voting by mail for the first time, you may need to provide a photocopy of your ID.

What is mail-in voting?

If you choose not to go to the polls on Election Day, you may apply to vote by mail-in ballot.

What is permanent mail-in voting?

If you choose to be placed on the list of Permanent Mail-in Voters, you will receive a mail-in ballot for every applicable election.

What is the deadline for requesting a mail-in ballot?

Your county clerk and recorder must receive your application no later than the close of business on the 7th day before the election. If you mail your application, make sure to allow time for delivery. If you want to pick up your mail-in ballot, you may pick it up at your county clerk's office no later than the Friday before the election.

May I register to vote if I was arrested for or convicted of a crime?

Yes, if you

- are on probation for either a misdemeanor or felony
- are a pretrial detainee awaiting trial
- are currently in jail serving a misdemeanor sentence only
- have served your sentence for a felony conviction, including any period of parole

Once you have served your complete sentence, you are automatically eligible to register to vote. If you were previously registered, that registration will have been canceled and you must re-register if you wish to vote.

Exhibit B

Washington

**Information sheet for staff assisting clients
registering to vote using Washington's online
application portal, Healthplanfinder**

Information Sheet: National Voter Registration Act

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) or Motor Voter Act requires that States offer voter registration opportunities at certain State and local offices, including public assistance and disability offices. Specifically, Washingtonians applying for health coverage through Healthplanfinder must be provided the opportunity to register to vote. The NVRA requires that the Navigator, Assister, or Caseworker assist the applicant with completing an online voter registration form or paper registration form. However, under no circumstances should voter registration be considered a condition of applying for health coverage.

The following provides instructions on how to assist consumers in walking through an online and paper voter registration application:

When working with a consumer to complete an application or renewal through the Healthplanfinder, you will reach a screen after the applicant e-signs and submits the application that asks if the applicant is registered to vote.

1. If he or she says they are not registered to vote, ask if they would like to register to vote or, if they are registered to vote would they like to update their registration.
2. If an individual says they wish to register to vote, click on the link provided in the system. Ask them if they need assistance.
3. If they say they do not wish to register to vote, continue with the application.
4. When the client wants to register to vote EITHER –
 - a. Let applicant complete their own voter registration form on the computer at the link: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/> OR –
 - b. Let the applicant request a voter registration form to be mailed to the applicant, through that same website OR
 - c. Provide the applicant with a paper form, to complete then, or fill out later.
Paper forms are available at: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/abvr/forms.aspx>. The Secretary of State has voter registration forms in English and 7 other languages on line at that website. The Assister does not complete the voter registration form, on line or paper, for applicant (according to Secretary of State Rules) but can walk the applicant through the process.
5. Assisters can print their own forms, through the Sec. of State site.
6. The applicant may complete the paper form on-site and the Assister may mail it to the Secretary of State for the client, or the client may take the form home to complete and mail.

When working with a consumer that is reporting a change of address please ask them if they would like to register to vote or, if applicable, update their registration. Follow the process outlined above.

Agency Registration Forms

Send completed forms within three days via campus mail to MS-40229; or mail to:
Washington State Elections Office, PO Box 40229, Olympia, WA 98504-0229

Exhibit C

California

**Training guidance document that the
California Secretary of State provides to state
agency staff**

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: To become a permanent vote-by-mail voter, the applicant must check the box marked “yes.” This can be left blank if the applicant wants to vote 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.