

CaliforniaHealth+
Advocates

2018 Voter Engagement Toolkit

A guide to permissible voter engagement activities
for community health centers



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About This Guide

CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization that is dedicated to advancing the mission of community health centers through state and federal advocacy. CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates (Advocates) is the advocacy affiliate of the California Primary Care Association (CPCA) and advocates on behalf of more than 1,300 community health centers that provide care to 6.5 million people – that’s 1 in 6 Californians. For more information, please visit www.healthplusadvocates.org.

Co-branded and prepared by
 Nonprofit VOTE

This guide was developed in partnership with Nonprofit VOTE, a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2005 by a consortium of state nonprofit associations and national nonprofit networks to provide resources and trainings for the nonprofit sector on how to conduct nonpartisan voter participation and election activities.

Section I of this guide makes the case for why health centers can and should engage the people they serve in voting, as well as laying out the different types of activities that health centers and their staff can conduct to engage voters. Section II provide guidance on how the activities recommended in Section I can be implemented in your health center. Section III is a collection of resources, including checklists, scripts, and print-outs, that can support planning voter engagement efforts and training participating staff.

The information contained in this guide is for general guidance only and only intended to be used for nonpartisan activities. Information in the guide should not be used as a substitute for consultation with professional legal or other competent advisers. The authors are not responsible for any errors or omissions, or for the results obtained from the use of this information.

Why Engaging Voters at Health Centers is Important



The right to vote is a cornerstone of our democracy. By taking on the responsibility of voter registration, health centers hold the key to ensuring that our democracy remains robust and resilient.

The very nature of health centers makes them an integral part of how low income Americans are involved in their communities and in society, and a natural place for helping the public take steps towards being more informed and civically engaged. Many health centers, including those with funding from Covered California are required by law to provide voter registration. Voter engagement can help health centers meet their organization's mission and maximize effectiveness by educating and engaging the public. By fully and energetically working to engage staff, board, and patients, health centers can help ensure that the promise of our democracy is fully realized.

Health centers are “sleeping giants” of the democratic process. The people you serve trust your health center. You have access to potential voters who are underrepresented in the electoral process. Your position in the community provides you the responsibility to be the catalyst for a dramatic increase in voter participation through legal, permissible, nonpartisan voter engagement activities – voter registration, voter education, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV).

Nonpartisan voter engagement builds recognition and awareness. Elected officials know where communities turn out to vote and a health center engaging voters will be noticed by elected officials who will likely respond better to your advocacy efforts.

There are several ways health centers can engage voters, however, this guide focuses on voter registration and get out the vote efforts. Voter registration can happen in your waiting room, at intake, or in other high-traffic areas and can be completed by either trained staff or outside volunteers or canvassers. Get out the vote (GOTV) can take a variety of forms, from posting messages on your health centers social media account reminding people of early voting periods to providing rides to the polls. Engage your health center staff and leadership to determine the activities that will best suit your health center and the people it serves.

The Benefits of Voting

For the voters, our health centers and democracy

Voter registration benefits our health centers, patients, and democracy. Our health centers gain when the people we serve vote at higher rates. Individuals who register are more connected to their community and have better health outcomes. Our democracy is stronger when citizens of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds participate.

Benefits for voters

Registered voters are more active and engaged citizens. They are more likely to:

- Connect with their neighbors
- Join community activities
- Talk to elected officials and be an advocate for themselves, their families, and their community.

Registered voters have better health outcomes. They have:

- Higher levels of self-reported health and better health outcomes¹
- Feel a greater sense of personal agency or power knowing they have voiced their opinion on the issues of the day – a factor in good health.²
- Stronger social connections to the community around them that lead to a greater quality of life and longevity.³

Benefits for health centers

- People who sign up for health insurance and Medicaid need to be engaged and can express their support for health care access and the services we provide by voting.
- Clients and patients who vote are more likely to be engaged as health care advocates.
- It is an important way we can improve patient health and meet our social mission.
- When our patients and community vote we can have a stronger voice and more impact for health centers (like this one).

Benefits for democracy

- Health centers reach low-income Americans and new citizens that many campaigns miss. If we don't register them to vote, who will?
- Strong democracy depends on engaged and active citizens.

¹ "Socioeconomic inequality in voting participation and self-rated health", Blakely et al, American Journal of Public Health

² "Making a difference, makes you happy: A Study", Tim Kasser, YES! magazine

³ "Social ties are good for your health", BeWell@Stanford, Stanford University

Q. Can a health center participate in voter registration activities?

Yes, provided that voter registration is handled in a completely nonpartisan manner. In fact, health centers that have out-stationed Medicaid eligibility workers on site (either public employees or health center employees with delegated authority) may be required to do voter registration under the National Voter Registration Act, also known as “Motor Voter.” health centers that accept Covered California grants are required to provide voter registration services to consumers that seek assistance with applications, renewals, or re-enrolling, or change of address,

Q. What are the risks if a health center does voter registration?

A health center that does voter registration as a public service and remains nonpartisan has nothing to be concerned about. Only conducting partisan political activities, such as endorsing a candidate, coordinating with a campaign, or telling patients who to vote for, will jeopardize a center’s federal tax exemption and may violate the Federal Election Campaign Act. In addition, health centers that are part of a multi-service organization should keep in mind that some federal programs, e.g., Head Start, prohibit voter registration activities entirely. It is important, therefore, to assess whether there are any restrictions on voter registration imposed by a funding source. Coordinate with your voter registration coordinator or local consortia representative if you need clarification. If you don’t know who your consortia are, please contact Jana@healthplusadvocates.org and we can connect you.

Q. What kind of nonpartisan voter registration activities are allowed?

Health centers can make voter registration materials available for patients in waiting rooms and allow local voter registration officials or private nonpartisan organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, to do voter registration on-site. Health centers can also encourage patients to register to vote, help patients to complete registration forms, and send completed forms to the election authorities, as long as they do not suggest how patients should vote or that patients should register as members of a particular political party.

Q. Are there other things to avoid when a health center does voter registration?

Yes. A health center should be careful not to imply that its services are dependent in any way upon a patient’s decision to register or not to register to vote. Centers should not permit candidates or political parties to post or to distribute campaign materials in connection with a voter registration drive.

HIPAA and Civic Engagement at Health Centers

This fact sheet is provided for guidance only. It is not a legal opinion.



What is HIPAA?

HIPAA is the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The primary goal of the law is to make it easier for people to keep health insurance and protect the confidentiality and security of healthcare information. For health centers, protecting patient health information is also a legal requirement under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

What does the Privacy Rule protect?

The HIPAA Privacy Rule protects the confidentiality of identifiable health information, including personal and demographic data, that relates to:

- the individual's past, present, or future physical or mental health condition,
- the provision of health care to the individual, or
- the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to the individual, and that identifies the individual or could be reasonably used to identify the individual and their personal information.

What are the HIPAA issues when doing voter registration?

Voter registration cards and information are not subject to HIPAA regulations. California law does not expressly prohibit photocopying completed voter registration cards. However an applicant's driver's license number, identification card number, and Social Security number are confidential and should be covered.



How does HIPAA affect collecting advocacy or pledge to vote cards?

Voter and civic engagement is a voluntary, opt-in activity. Patients voluntarily provide contact information for this purpose. It is okay for health centers to ask patients to fill out a pledge to vote or advocacy card and to track the data for follow up and program evaluation. It's a good policy to restrict what staff have access to the list. Please see the 2nd bullet below regarding sharing of the list with a civic engagement partner.

How does HIPAA apply to creating a civic engagement database used for advocacy, education, or program evaluation?

HIPAA prohibits the use of your EHR or other patient database for activity related to your civic engagement program. You should not use patient data from the patient's record to fill out voter registration forms or add to your database. Only use information you received directly from the patient on their voter registration form, voter pledge or advocacy card or other civic activity.

A civic engagement database may include staff, family, community members, as well as patients.

- Don't include a special field in your database that identifies the individual as a patient
- You may share contact information with another civic partner to, for example, invite people to a forum or do nonpartisan voter education. If you do, you should request they not identify the list with your health center.
- Your health center may also use a civic engagement list to evaluate the success of your outreach program. A good example is Nonprofit VOTE's "Community Health Vote" report 2012 or 2014.

Staying Nonpartisan When Talking About Elections With Health Center Patients, Visitors and the Public

Health center staff must remain nonpartisan when representing the health center on site, at events or doing voter engagement activities. You cannot suggest which candidate to vote for or political party to support. Do not wear buttons, stickers, or other campaign swag when representing the health center. Volunteers must also remain nonpartisan.

DO talk about elections in a nonpartisan manner

- Provide information about voting process like dates and deadlines, early voting hours, getting a mail ballot, or help registering to vote.
- Let people know about candidate forums or debates
- Talk about issues at stake (but without tying them to candidates)

DO direct people towards appropriate sources of information if they ask who to vote for

- Encourage the person to talk to a friend or family member they trust and share values with.
- Direct the person to a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available.
- Closer to the election, you can suggest how to get a sample ballot or find a nonpartisan voter guide.

DON'T talk about the election in a way that could be seen as partisan

- If asked about candidates, answer with simple facts like what party they are in, if they're an incumbent or new candidate or where they live. Don't state your preferences.
- If asked about the difference between Republicans and Democrats tell them to ask a friend or look them up on the internet.

DON'T use your organization's social media to post or share information on candidates

A few more questions:

What if I'm asked about a ballot measure?

Ballot measures are about laws not candidates. You can explain ballot measures and even give your opinion of pros and cons of a ballot measure, unless it goes against your

health center policy to do so. You can also tell them that the health center has a position or is staying neutral. Learn more about what you can and can't do as a health center in the section "Health Centers and Ballot Measures."

Can I support candidates in my personal time?

Yes. Staff may support candidates when not "on the clock" working for their nonprofit.

What about talking to other staff about the elections?

It's normal to exchange views on candidates and the election with other staff "around the water cooler" or on breaks, but don't conduct political activities during work hours with staff, such as handing out literature or signing up other staff to support a candidate.

Using Social Media to Promote Voting

Guidance for 501(c)(3) Organizations

Nonprofits increasingly use social media to communicate with supporters and the public, attract new members, mobilize public opinion, and promote civic engagement. The prohibition on nonprofits participating in partisan political activities is the same for social media as it is for any other type of communication. You may encourage people to register and vote on a nonpartisan basis, but you may not use social media to indicate support for, or opposition to, candidates for public office.

What are guidelines for tagging, sharing or retweeting?

Don't use organizational accounts to tag, re-tweet, or share posts with political campaigns or partisan organizations that have endorsed candidates.

How about sharing content posted by a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization or other non-campaign organization whose primary purpose is other than electing candidates?

You may share content if the content shared is educational in nature and clearly nonpartisan. If you're not sure, it is always safer to share content, for example, from a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, educational source or public media outlet not affiliated with a partisan political campaign.

Is my nonprofit responsible for how our posts are shared?

No. You are not responsible for how and with whom others share your posts.

What about content posted by other users to our social media platforms? (Facebook page, Twitter feed, etc.)

While you can't control what other people post to your wall or tweet at you, you can make a general disclaimer on your social media site that you're not responsible for opinions posted by people not under your employ. Create a policy for deleting partisan content or other types of posts (like unauthorized commercial activity).

Can I use my personal account to support candidates?

Individuals have a right to express preferences for or against candidates. This applies to their personal social media accounts. The exception would be if that account is primarily used by the individual or others as a communication vehicle for the nonprofit.

What about the Executive Director or CEO?

The chief executive officer of the nonprofit has the same rights of free expression as any other staff member, when not officially representing the organization. However, to the extent they are seen by stakeholders and constituents as representing the nonprofit, a CEO should exercise more restraint in what they say on the internet to avoid any appearance of partisanship.

Resources

- Legal Tips on Using Social Media for Advocacy, Bolder Advocacy, www.bolderadvocacy.org/resource/tips-on-using-social-media-for-advocacy
- Friends, Tweets, and Links: IRS Treatment of Social Media Activities by Section 501(c)(3) Organizations, Allen Mattison, The Exempt Organization Tax Review May 2011

Health center staff members often have questions about their personal involvement in political campaigns or work with candidates. There is no prohibition on political activities for health center employees during their free time. However, staff members cannot be seen as representing the organization on a campaign nor may they use organizational resources for a candidate. Here are some frequently asked questions about the political participation of health center staff and keeping health center voter engagement nonpartisan.

Q: When is it personal time?

A: Health center staff may engage in partisan activities, such as supporting a candidate, outside of normal work hours. A staff member may also take vacation or personal time for the purpose of engaging in political activity.

Q: Can staff be identified with their health center organization when supporting a candidate?

A: Health center staff members may identify their place of employment at a political event. Health center staff members, who are spokespeople for their organization or visibly associated with it, should make it clear that they are in attendance at the event or activity as a private citizen and not on behalf of the organization they work for.

Q. Can staff be listed as a supporter of a candidate with the name of the organization?

A: As a rule, it is safer to leave the name of the organization off of any partisan political materials. However, it is permissible to list the organization along with the staff member's name if it is clearly stated that the organization is listed "for identification purposes only."

Q: What about board members and volunteers?

A: Board members and volunteers should follow the same protocol outlined for staff members described above while representing their health center organization.

Q: What if a candidate lists the name of the Executive Director or a health center staff member without their permission?

A: If a candidate lists the Executive Director or any health center staff member with the health center's name on a campaign brochure without the appropriate disclaimer "for identification purposes only" the organization is not at fault. Ask the campaign to remove your organization's name from the list. Save a copy of your email or written request to the candidate in your files.

Separating your personal political participation from your health center work

- Provide political campaigns or candidates a personal phone number and e-mail and times to call you outside of your work hours.
- Don't use any of your organizational resources to support or oppose a candidate (e.g. organizational vehicles, copy machines, paper, etc.) Health center organizations, themselves, may offer certain resources to candidates such as event space or phones – but only if publicly available to all candidates in a race at their fair market value (rental).

Health Centers and Ballot Measures



Can a nonprofit take a position for or against a ballot measure?

Yes. Activity on ballot measures is lobbying – not electioneering. Ballot measure advocacy is an attempt to influence the passage or defeat of a law or constitutional amendment – not the election or defeat of a candidate. 501(c)(3) organizations are free to take sides on ballot measures as a lobbying activity, subject to normal limits on lobbying. Ballot measure advocacy is more a first amendment right to advocate on issues than a matter of tax law. Any organization or individual is free to express their opinion for or against a proposed law or constitutional amendment.

What are common activities for nonprofits on ballot measures?

Your organization can engage in a range of activities related to ballot measures such as – making an endorsement, communicating your position to the public, organizing volunteers to work on passage or defeat of an initiative, or hosting an educational forum or event. You can also distribute neutral educational materials designed to inform the public about both sides of the question.

How much can a 501(c)(3) nonprofit spend on lobbying?

Your spending limits depend on which test your nonprofit chooses to measure lobbying.

1. If your nonprofit has elected to measure its lobbying under the 501(h) expenditure test, you will have clearer guidance and can do more advocacy. Under this test, you can spend as much as 20% of your annual budget on lobbying, including influencing ballot questions or legislation. Filing the 501(h) form is generally recommended for nonprofits that do any significant amount of lobbying and advocacy.
2. If your 501(c)(3) has not filed the 501(h) form, your lobbying falls under the “insubstantial part test.” In this case, you may only spend an “insubstantial” amount of money on lobbying efforts. “Insubstantial” is generally assumed to be 3-5% of annual spending.¹

¹. Lobbying Under the Insubstantial Part Test, Bolder Advocacy, www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Lobbying_under_the_insubstantial_part_test.pdf



Are there any spending limits for ballot measure advocacy?

There are no limits on spending on ballot measures, beyond the limits on lobbying discussed above. Some states require you to file an expenditure report if you devote substantial funds to ballot measure advocacy as, for example, a primary sponsor of a ballot measure or an active partner. Contact your state's campaign finance office for more information.

Staff activity

There are no limitations to what nonprofit staff can do regarding ballot initiatives, except those set forth by the nonprofit itself as a matter of employee policy. As a matter of good policy, the decision to endorse or oppose a ballot measure should be made by the organization's Board of Directors.

Resources

- *501(c)(3) Public Charities and Ballot Measures: An online toolkit*, Bolder Advocacy, www.bolderadvocacy.org/tools-for-effective-advocacy/toolkits/ballot-measures/501c3-public-charities-and-ballot-measures
- *A Guide to taking the 501h-election*, National Council of Nonprofits, www.councilofnonprofits.org/taking-the-501h-election
- *The Benefits-of-filing-the-501h-election*, National Council of Nonprofits, www.councilofnonprofits.org/benefits-of-filing-the-501h-election

Making Voter Engagement and Voting More Visible



A key to conducting a successful voter engagement effort at any health center is creating a sense that it is important. You can do this by making your activities and the opportunity for patients to become registered and engaged visible throughout the health center all the time.

Ways to raise visibility at your health center

- Create a central and visible voter engagement “kiosk” or area in your waiting room where all materials and registration forms can be filled out and turned in.
- Put posters and other signage throughout the center – waiting areas, hallways, exam rooms – anywhere clients may see them.
- Have staff wear buttons or stickers letting clients know voter registration is available
- Mention the availability of voter registration and voter information in your center communications or on inserts in your patient mailings

The person offering voter registration in the waiting room can be a health center staff, volunteer, or representative of a partner organization, as long as they are adequately trained on how to assist patients with registration and meet state requirements.

All voter registration at health centers must be done in a completely NON-PARTISAN way. Offering voter registration to all persons in the waiting room reaches citizens who are accompanying clients but do not have appointments themselves. Many of these citizens may not have been offered voter registration on prior visits and can be offered a chance now.

1. Designate a voter engagement coordinator at each site

Health centers should appoint a staff person at each site to oversee voter engagement activities. The Coordinator should be responsible for:

- Coordination of outreach to clients in waiting rooms
- Training intake workers to ask every client if he or she would like to register to vote
- Making certain that an adequate supply of voter registration applications (in all relevant languages) is always available
 - Forwarding completed forms to the appropriate officials
 - Maintaining a voter registration tally sheet to track how many voters you reach (this will allow you to report on how many voters you've assisted)
 - Offering voter registration to other health center staff. Often times agency staff themselves are not registered to vote at their current addresses.

2. Train staff on voter registration procedures

All of the forms in the world will not insure success unless staff members are fully trained and have bought into registering clients. It is critical that staff members:

- Receive training from voter registration coordinators on how and when to use the forms;
- Receive training on how to assist clients with the voter registration application;
- Understand that registering voters is a part of the health center's efforts to foster inclusion of their clients in society.

In addition to training, providing health center staff themselves with the opportunity to register to vote can be an important part of launching renewed efforts for client voter registration. Contact your local League of Women Voters or Nonprofit VOTE for information about training opportunities.

3. Post signs informing clients of the opportunity to register to vote

Every site should include prominent signs in appropriate languages on walls and desktops stating, for example:

- "This health center registers voters – you can register to vote here today."
- "Ask us to help you register to vote today."
- "May we update your voter registration today?"
- "Skip the polls on election day and vote-by-mail – ask us about requesting a ballot"

Such signs will set the appropriate tone – for staff and clients alike – and help ensure that clients understand that they have an opportunity to register to vote while visiting the health center.

4. Use a "Follow-Up Form"

This form will inform clients of their ability to register to vote when they check in for their appointments and allow them to opt-in to get reminders and other information on voting. It is best to place this information on a form that should be a part of any forms clients fill out when they check in. Using a follow up form is optional but is highly recommended if your health center plans to do voter engagement.

5. Recognize success

Health centers should develop ways to recognize sites that do a good job. Effective means of recognition include:

- Awards and/or letters of commendation from leadership to staff who demonstrate achievement in voter registration efforts;
- Site "thermometers" – charts updated weekly to show how sites are performing;
- Friendly competition between sites;
- Newsletters stories on voter registration results and individuals who have taken the lead in registration efforts.

Handling Voter Registration Forms



Notification and Registration Requirements

Organizations or individuals requesting 50 or more blank state voter registration cards must submit a Voter Registration Card Statement of Distribution form by fax to (916) 653-3214 or by mail to Secretary of State, Elections Division, 1500 11th Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Voter Registration Deadline

Applications must be postmarked by 15 days before Election Day. Submit all cards collected to the elections official, even if some cards do not contain all of the information required by Elections Code sections 2150 and 2159.

Ensure at least each of the following fields is complete and legible

- Name,
- Residence address,
- Mailing address, if different from residence address,
- Date of birth,
- State or country of birth,
- California driver's license or ID card number, or last four social security number digits, if the applicant does not have a current and valid California driver's license or California ID card,
- Political party,
- Signature of applicant,
- Signature of any person and who completes a portion of the application for the applicant including the date,

Submitting Completed Applications

Completed applications may be returned either in person or by mail to the county elections official within three days of receiving it (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and state holidays) or before the close of registration, whichever is earlier.

Vote-By-Mail



What is a Vote-By-Mail ballot?

A vote-by-mail ballot is a paper ballot, with the same candidates and measures on it as you would receive at your polling place on election day. The ballot is mailed to you with instructions on how to mark it and how to return it. (Note: a vote-by-mail ballot was formerly referred to as an absentee ballot).

Who can use a Vote-By-Mail ballot?

Any California registered voter may ask to vote using a vote-by-mail ballot. You do not have to be “absent” or “out of town on election day” to vote by mail in California. You may apply for a vote-by-mail ballot just because you want to. You must request a vote-by-mail ballot for each election unless you have permanent vote-by-mail voter status. Voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot on the form provided by your County Elections Official.

Why Use a Vote-By-Mail Ballot?

Voting by mail ensures that the voter actually casts a ballot. It is more convenient than going to a polling place for many voters, especially families with small children or limited access to transportation. Voting by mail early also means that a voter is less likely to be contacted by campaigns since their ballot is already cast.

Staffing a table in your lobby or at an event is an effective strategy for engaging your clients and constituents in voter registration, pledge-to-vote, and other voter outreach activities. For tabling to be effective, staff and volunteers need to be positive, assertive, confident, and pro-active. Don't sit behind the table waiting for people to approach you. The tips below should help get you started.

Tips for active tabling

- Be pro-active! Engage people and encourage them to approach the table. Stand up, get out from behind the table, and greet people. Use our “Making the Ask” factsheet for tips.
- Use large signage to attract attention. Banners, posters, balloons and other decorations can make your table inviting.
- Use snacks or other freebies to encourage people to approach the table and talk to you.
- When you're talking to somebody, start to put the pen and clipboard in their hand. You'll be surprised at how many people will automatically start filling it out.
- Table in the weeks leading up to the registration deadline, early voting period, or Election Day. For a November election, the best time to table is between August and October.

At your center

- Make sure the entire staff knows about your tabling activities. Everyone on staff should join in to encourage people to stop by the table.
- Table during the hours that foot traffic is heaviest. During peak hours, canvassers should be averaging 1 to 4 completed voter registrations per hour and 3 to 5 voter pledges per hour.
- Move around the office and common areas with a clipboard. Don't stay in just one place.

In the community

- Find highly trafficked areas (transit stops, supermarkets, etc.) or events that draw local crowds eligible to vote in your area – like an event you or a partner sponsors.
- If it's an event, equip staff with clipboards and encourage them to canvass the crowd.

America's community health centers provide care to many communities who traditionally do not turn out to vote in high numbers. One of the reasons that these communities have been traditionally underrepresented may be that they have experienced barriers to voting. When engaging traditionally underrepresented communities, it is important to keep a few things in mind.

Persons experiencing homelessness: People experiencing homelessness obviously do not have a conventional residential address. In California, courts have ruled that a homeless person may register to vote at a location they state is the place where they spend most of their time. The person must provide a description of the location that is clear enough for the elections official to establish that person's right to vote in a particular precinct. This ensures accurate elections materials can be provided to this voter. In these instances, a mailing address needs to be provided in order for the voter to receive election materials.

Non-citizens: If you work with an immigrant population then you know it is important to be sensitive to the fears that new immigrants may face when they come to receive care, particularly if you serve populations who are undocumented. A non-citizen may register to vote if they will be an American citizen by the next election. Because it is often not clear when someone's citizenship will be completed, it can be better to wait until citizenship is completed to register. However, there are many other opportunities for non-citizens to engage and observe the democratic process.

Survivors of domestic violence: Because voter registration rolls are public information, survivors of domestic violence could be put at risk by making their address and whereabouts known publicly. Many survivors do not realize that voter registration rolls make their address publicly available to almost anyone. It is important to talk about this issue with survivors and help them to protect their safety while accessing their right to vote. Victims of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, and human trafficking, as well as household members of victims may be eligible for Safe at Home, California's Address Confidentiality Program. Call (877) 322-5227 to inquire about eligibility.

Persons convicted of a felony: A person loses the right to register and vote while they are in state or federal prison or on parole for the conviction of a felony. Once they are out of state or federal prison (or county jail for serving a state prison sentence) and their parole period is completed, the person's voting rights are restored and they should re-register.

Youth: A young person can register to vote as long as they will be at least 18 years of age by the date of the next election. For more information on youth and voting, please contact CIRCLE at 301-405-2790 or www.civicyouth.org

For health centers of many varieties, providing rides to polling places will be a must on Election Day. For some groups, providing rides will be their only activity. Bringing someone directly to the polls is the best way to ensure that they vote. Here are some tips for creating an effective “Rides to the Polls” program:

Know the rules regarding:

- Early voting in your state
- Toll free help lines for voters like 1-866-OUR-VOTE or 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA
- Same day registration (if available in your state)

Create a plan

- How many people can you involve? How many staff? How many volunteers?
- Where do you want to focus?
- What resources are available?

Form coalitions

- What other groups can you work with?
- Who has done this before?

Start thinking about drivers and vehicles RIGHT NOW! Election Day will come sooner than you think, and it is better to have more people than you can use, then to not have enough.

- Consider reserving vehicles that can be used to transport wheelchairs.
- Recruit volunteers who will remain nonpartisan, and whose vehicles will not have political bumper stickers.

Train staff and volunteers before Election Day

When reminding people to vote, ask if they need a ride to the polls. Start thinking about routes and minute details.

Ideally you have things planned out to the point that drivers know where they are going, and voters know when they are being picked up, at least a few days before the election.

Ideally you also have a couple drivers who are available for last minute calls and problems. These drivers could be shared with other organizations in the area.

Voter Registration and Health Insurance



Best practices checklist

- ☐ **Assign a voter registration coordinator**
 - Assign a staff person to oversee voter registration, provide training to enrollment staff, and manage the collection and return of voter registration forms.
 - Coordinate with your local consortia to identify voter registration coordinators. If you don't know who your consortia are, please contact Jana@healthplusadvocates.org and we can connect you.
- ☐ **Connect voter registration to your health center's mission**
 - Communicate to all health center staff the reasons for and value in offering voter registration at the center.
- ☐ **Provide training for enrollment staff**
 - Train the enrollment team in filling out the voter registration form and its importance as a service of the health center.
 - In the training, emphasize the messages and methods through which staff can best succeed in getting patients to register. Practice using sample scripts or role plays.
- ☐ **Have a place to store completed forms**
 - Have a safe place to store completed forms before they're returned, such as a desk drawer or file cabinet in a private office.
- ☐ **Establish a system to return forms**
 - Follow your state's procedure for returning forms to your local election office or state election office on a timely basis.
 - Use advice from a partner or local election office to establish the best procedure.
- ☐ **Connect to your local election office**
 - Get to know your local election board for assistance with questions about returning the form or the election process.
- ☐ **Have a voter registration partner**
 - Have someone at your state primary care association or another non-partisan organization to check in with, ask questions, or get help.
- ☐ **Post register to vote signs**
 - Display a "Register to Vote" poster or sign in the area used for voter registration.
- ☐ **Maintain a folder of key materials**
 - Create and maintain a folder or notebook for enrollment staff with materials used for voter registration and in-trainings, including:
 - Sample script
 - Frequently Asked Questions for staff to answer basic questions about voting
 - Using the Community Health Vote Online Voter Registration tool

Sample Voter Registration Script for Voter Registration In Medicaid and WIC Enrollment



Agencies helping people apply for Medicaid, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and other federal programs are required under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to offer the applicant the opportunity to register to vote, including updating their voter registration. Enrollment staff should be trained to do this and have easy access to the state registration form or online voter registration tool. It's recommended that staff help those who wish to register to complete the form. If possible, it helps to have a procedure to submit the completed form on their behalf. Below is a sample script to help guide your conversation about voter registration with patients. It's best to do so before starting the enrollment or at the end before finalizing or submitting the application.

Health Center Employee Script

Intro

Another important service we offer our patients is helping you register to vote or update your registration. Your vote really matters to your health care and your health center so I can help you quickly register to vote or update your registration right now.

Health center employee ask:

Are you registered to vote at your current address?

Possible patient responses:

1. *"Yes but I moved recently"*

I can update your registration right now. I can save you time by getting it done now and we can turn it in for you to the right election office.

2. *"Yes. I'm already registered and my information is current."*

That's great! Please remind your family and friends to register too.

3. *"I don't want to register" or "I don't care about voting."*

I understand. There are a lot of challenges out there. We have a goal of registering 100 percent of our eligible patients here at _____. It's important the voices in our communities are

heard. Our ability to serve people like you can depend on the support of elected officials and it helps when they know our patients are registered to vote.

4 *"I don't have time."*

I know you are really busy. Filling out this form only takes a couple minutes and I can make sure it gets turned in for you. You can save time by registering with me today.

5. *"I can't register to vote. Not eligible"*

May I ask why not? I'm trained and may be able to help you.

- Not a citizen: I understand. If you have people in your household who are eligible to vote do make sure they're registered!
- Have a felony conviction: Your voting rights are automatically restored upon completion of parole, and people on probation can vote but you need to re-register.
- Not old enough: Will you be 18 by Election Day? If yes, I can register you today.

6. *"Why are you asking me that? I'm just here for health care (or to get insurance)."*

In addition to providing health care and helping our patients apply for health insurance, another service we think is important for our patients is helping you register to vote or update your registration. Your vote really can make a difference to your health care and your health center so I'd be glad to help you register to vote or update your registration right now. It will only take a couple of minutes.

Voter Registration Cover Sheet

Print the sheet on the next page and place it with a voter registration form to include with other intake forms



This Health Center Offers Voter Registration

You may use the attached form to register to vote. If you have moved or changed your name since you last registered to vote, you should use it to update your voter registration.

- You may vote if:
 - You are a United States Citizen
 - You are 18 years old or will be 18 years old by election day
 - You are not currently serving a sentence including probation or parole for a felony conviction
- You should update your voter registration if:
 - You have changed your name (i.e. due to marriage, divorce, etc.)
 - You have moved and changed your address
 - You have not voted recently or do not know where your polling place is
- Registering to vote is a quick and easy process. Our staff can help you register TODAY

Please check one:

- ☐ Yes, I am an eligible voter and would like to register today.
- ☐ I would like assistance in checking to see if my voter registration is up to date.
- ☐ I am unsure if I am eligible to vote and would like assistance.
- ☐ No thank you. I would not like to sign up today.

Voter registration services are available without regard to the voter's political preference. Information and other assistance regarding registering or voting, including transportation and other services offered, shall not be withheld or refused on the basis of support for or opposition to particular candidates or a particular party

Nonprofits Get Out the Vote!



The election is close!

Your staff is busy and capacity stretched. You don't have resources for a campaign style GOTV effort. How can you help your community vote? Here are ten easy to implement tactics common to nonprofits.

For staff:

- ☐ Include personal messages in internal staff communications with dates and voting information.
- ☐ Have the CEO/ED send an email reminding staff of time off to vote policies.
- ☐ Do a staff education activity on a ballot measure or the election's impact on your issue and the community you serve.
- ☐ Circulate a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide or list of key races.

For clients and constituents

- ☐ Put election reminders in communications. Two weeks out, one week out and day before.
- ☐ Create a flyer with basic voting information. Hand out at the front desk and during staff-client interactions.
- ☐ Create visibility: In the final week, use announcements at events and meetings, messages boards, and signage to make the election visible.
- ☐ Organize a phone bank to contact people you've registered or have #s for.
- ☐ Devote the day before Election Day to asking everyone when and where they plan to vote. Have a phone number or website to go to for help.
- ☐ Keep in mind factors most likely to help people vote. Use these to frame what you do.

Keep in mind factors most likely to help people vote. Use these to frame what you do.

1. Getting personal contact. Any type of personal contact close to the election from a trusted messenger like you increases a person's likelihood to vote. In person or the phone is best, but personalized email, social post, or mail help as well.
2. Knowing what's at stake: Likely voters are motivated by knowing about and the potential impact of a contested candidate race or ballot measure.
3. Making voting easier: New voters benefit from any message or assistance that makes it easier to vote. Finding a poll or early voting location. Getting translation assistance. Seeing a sample ballot. Having a plan of when they're going to vote.