

Fact Sheet for Voters in Long-Term Care Facilities Issued 8/2022

The Department of State (DOS) offers the following information to support long-term care facilities (LTCFs) in providing options and considerations for residents to exercise their right to vote. LTCFs include skilled nursing facilities licensed by the Department of Health, and personal care homes, assisted living residences, and intermediate care facilities licensed by the Department of Human Services. All LTCFs should continue to follow applicable federal and state guidance regarding voting rights and refer to the memorandum issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ([CMS QS-21-02-NH Compliance with Residents' Rights Requirement related to Nursing Home Residents' Right to Vote](#)) regarding the voting rights of patients in nursing homes.

I. **Alternatives to Voting in Person on Election Day**

A. **Voting by Mail**

All registered Pennsylvania voters can apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot by going online to vote.pa.gov/ApplyMailBallot or by completing a paper form, which is available for download at vote.pa.gov/Resources.

1. **Deadlines**

The deadline to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot is 5 p.m. on the Tuesday one week before the election. Ballots must be received by the county elections board by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Mail ballots postmarked by that time but received after 8 p.m. on Election Day do not count.

2. **Voting and Returning Ballots**

DOS urges voters who plan to vote by mail to apply for their ballot as soon as possible, then vote and return their ballots as soon as they receive them.

It is also vitally important to follow the instructions for voting and returning ballots. Voters must follow these steps to ensure their ballots are counted:

- **Mark your ballot.** Be sure to vote both sides of the ballot, if applicable. Follow the instructions that came with your ballot.
- Place your voted ballot in the **inner secrecy envelope** and seal it. Do not make any marks on this envelope.
- Place the sealed secrecy envelope in the **pre-addressed outer return envelope** and seal it.
- **Sign and date** the pre-addressed outer return envelope.

- **Return your ballot. Ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day to be counted.**
 - If you are dropping off your ballot in person, check your county elections website for times and locations.
 - If you are mailing your ballot, affix proper postage and send your ballot as soon as you can after you finish voting.
- You can also find information at vote.pa.gov/ReturnBallot and vote.pa.gov/EarlyVoting.

3. Voters in Need of Assistance

Voters who need assistance completing their mail-in or absentee ballot should contact their county board of elections for information about the process for receiving assistance. You can find county contact information at vote.pa.gov/County.

NOTE: In general, voters must return their own mail-in or absentee ballot. There is an exception for voters with a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, who designate an agent in writing. Please review the following regarding designated agents:

- The [Authorize a Designated Agent form](#) is available for download on vote.pa.gov.
- The form includes instructions for how to designate an agent and information about who can serve as an agent.
- An individual may serve as a designated agent for only one voter unless the relevant voters live in the same household. A “household” for the purpose of designating an agent does not include a long-term care facility. This means that each resident in a LTCF who is unable to return their own voted ballot due to a disability must designate a different agent. However, a couple sharing a room or apartment within a facility may be considered members of the same household.
- As an alternative to designating an agent to return voted ballots, a facility may arrange for residents to deliver their own ballots to a United States Postal Service mailbox, the county elections office, or another drop-off location designated by the county board of elections.

B. Voting Over the Counter by Mail-in or Absentee Ballot

All registered Pennsylvania voters also have the option to complete the application process and vote by mail-in ballot in one visit to their county elections office or certain satellite elections offices designated by the county board of elections. Absentee voters may also use this option.

To use this option, voters can either take a completed ballot application with them to their county elections office and turn it in, or they can request an application to be filled out at the elections office once they arrive. Upon receipt of a voter's application, the elections office will issue the voter a mail-in or absentee ballot that the voter can complete and return before leaving the office that day. The office will secure the voter's completed ballot until the ballot can be reviewed, opened, and tabulated.

All over-the-counter voting by mail-in or absentee ballot must be completed by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday one week before Election Day.

Find the location of your county elections office at vote.pa.gov/County. You can learn more about over-the-counter voting at vote.pa.gov/earlyvoting.

Long-term care facilities that plan to take a group of voters for over-the-counter voting should contact their county elections office to determine what days and times are best for such a visit.

C. Voting by Mail – Additional Accommodations for Accessible Voting

Additional accommodations for individuals with permanent disabilities include the following:

- alternative ballots,
- a permanent absentee ballot mailing list, and
- access to an electronic ballot marking tool.

For additional information regarding these options, please see the department's website at <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Voting-in-PA/Pages/Accessible-Voting.aspx>.

II. Voting In Person on Election Day

In addition to the options outlined above, voters still have the option to vote in person at their assigned polling place between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Election Day. Voters can use the online lookup tool at vote.pa.gov/Polls to find their assigned polling place. In addition to displaying polling place addresses, the lookup tool identifies whether the polling place is accessible.

A. Voters in Need of Assistance

Voters are entitled to receive assistance at their polling place for any reason. Voters who need assistance voting in person on Election Day will either have an indication in the poll book that they are entitled to assistance, or they will be asked to sign a Declaration of Need of Assistance before the Judge of Elections. Voters who are entitled to assistance may receive help completing their ballots from the person they choose, if the person aiding is not:

- The Judge of Elections,
- The voter's employer, or
- An agent of the voter's union.

Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act requires certain counties to provide language assistance to voters with limited English proficiency. Berks, Lehigh, and Philadelphia counties must provide voting materials and assistance in Spanish. Philadelphia County is also required to provide voting materials and assistance in Chinese.

III. Voting by Emergency Absentee Ballot

Voters in Pennsylvania can request an emergency absentee ballot in emergency situations, such as unexpected illness, disability, or last-minute absence from your municipality. You can submit this request beginning after 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before the election through 8 p.m. on Election Day.

To request an emergency absentee ballot, please visit the DOS website:
https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Documents/PADOS_EmergencyAbsenteeBallotApplication_English.pdf

Voters may also designate an Authorized Representative to pick up and/or return their emergency absentee ballot. The form is available here:
https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Documents/PADOS_AuthorizeRepresentativeforEmergencyAbsenteeBallot.pdf