



**pennsylvania**  
**DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE  
TRAINING**

Harrisburg, PA  
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# Voter Registration Drive Training Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide guidelines and best practices to organizations that want to help citizens register to vote in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

This guide was developed with the input of several groups in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of State. Thanks to:

- The League of Women Voters of PA
- Common Cause PA
- PA Voice
- County Commissioners Association of PA

# Know the Rules

# Organization Requirements

Organizations do not need to register with the state or complete training to run voter registration drives

501(c)3 organizations are prohibited by the federal tax code from activities that support or oppose specific candidates or parties.

If your 501(c)3 hosts a voter registration drive, you may not refuse to register a voter because of their chosen political party.

# Helping Voters to Register

- Anyone can help a citizen register to vote
  - Remain nonpartisan
  - Make sure you understand how to properly fill out the form (online and paper)
  - If you complete any portion of the registration application, you must sign the application and provide your address
- Anyone can help a voter check their registration status at [vote.pa.gov](https://vote.pa.gov)

# Eligibility

Q. Who can register to vote?

A. In order to register to vote, a person must:

1. Be a citizen of the United States at least 30 days prior to the election in which they want to vote, AND
2. Be a resident of Pennsylvania for 30 days prior to the election in which they want to vote, AND
3. Be at least 18 years old on or before the date of the election in which they want to vote.

# Residence

Voters must register using their home address (see exceptions for college students & voters with a criminal record).

For persons without a permanent address, they may register at the place where they temporarily reside.

You may not register a PO box as a residence. However, you may use a PO Box for your mailing address.

# Deadlines

In general, voter registration deadlines are 15 days before the next election

- Mailed registrations must be postmarked by the deadline
- Online registrations must be completed by midnight on the day of the deadline
- Hand-delivered registrations must be received by the county elections office by 5:00 pm on the day of the deadline



# Know the Registration Options

# Online Voter Registration

Voters may register through the Pennsylvania Department of State website at [vote.pa.gov](https://vote.pa.gov)

- Registering online reduces errors in data entry
- Online applications are submitted immediately, reducing processing time
- Registering online saves postage or a trip to the election services office.
- Voters who provide email address can get registration status updates

# Online Voter Registration

## Things to Consider

- To register people online “in the field”, you’ll need device(s) and internet access.
- Applicants will need either their driver’s license number, their state ID number, or the last 4 digits of their social security number
- You will need a way to upload photos of applicant’s signatures in the event they don’t have any of the above numbers

# Paper Voter Registration

- Most cost-effective option
- Easy to distribute to volunteers
- Can be misplaced
- Poor handwriting and failure to complete all fields can lead to delays and/or rejection
- Available to download at [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)

# Completing Paper Voter Registration Application

Tell the registrant:

- Take your time, write clearly, and use a pen with blue or black ink
- It is a good idea to include your phone number
- Provide your driver's license, PA ID number or last 4 digits of SSN
- If you have moved, include your previous address
- **BE SURE TO READ ITEM 11, SIGN YOUR NAME AND DATE THE FORM!!**

# Processing of Voter Registrations

- Voter registrations are submitted to county elections offices.
- Online voter registrations are submitted automatically
- Paper registration forms must be submitted to the appropriate county's election office

## Keep in mind...

- Paper registration forms take time to process. If you're submitting a large number, do them as soon as possible so that election offices don't get overwhelmed close to the deadline

# Prepare for the Drive

# Pick Your Date

## Things to consider:

- Voter registration deadlines (*Don't overwhelm your county elections office with a lot of applications right before a deadline!*)
- National campaigns like National Voter Registration Day
- Special events in the area



# Your Supplies

## Things to have on hand:

- Computers, tablets, and/or mobile devices
- Voter registration applications
- Voter education materials
- Staff or volunteer identification/Information about your organization
- Pens and Clipboards
- swag?

# Training Your Workers/Volunteers

**Make sure that all your workers understand the information covered in this training, including:**

- Voter eligibility and important dates and deadlines
- Completing the voter registration form
- What is permitted/prohibited by law
- How to help voters follow up on their registrations
- Where to find answers to FAQs

# During the Drive

# Transparency

**Voter registration workers should very clearly identify themselves and their organization.**

- Provide contact information for your organization in case voters have follow up questions
- If you plan to keep voter information to use for any purpose other than registering to vote, clearly explain what that purpose is.

# Handling Paper Applications

**If you choose to provide paper applications, here are some things to consider:**

- Make sure you have pens in black or blue ink, and make sure they work!
- Encourage voters to write legibly. If the county staff can't read the application, they may reject it.
- Paper applications must have original signatures. No photocopies, scans, or facsimiles of completed forms!

# Troubleshooting: Incomplete/Incorrect Information

- If an application is incomplete, you may fill in missing information **ONLY** with the applicant's permission, and you **MUST** complete the section of the form that says you provided assistance.
- If you cannot get the applicant's permission to complete the form, **DO NOT COMPLETE IT**. Submit incomplete paper forms to the county voter registration office, preferably with the applicant's phone number included.

# Troubleshooting: Incomplete/Incorrect Information

- Try to review the application for completeness while the voter is present
- If an applicant is using the online system, they will not be able to complete registration without filling in all of the required information.
- If you have any concerns, submit the application anyway!

# Tracking

- Voters can track their registration status online at [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)
- Inform voter that the county voter registration office typically sends a voter registration card within 14 days of receipt of an application
- If a voter does not receive a paper voter registration card, they may contact the county to confirm receipt of their application.



# Voters with Special Considerations

# Voters with Disabilities

- There is no competency requirement in PA for voting. Any voter with a disability, including those who live in assisted living facilities, may register and vote. Voters with disabilities experience many obstacles to voting, including difficulties in registering. Your organization can help by being mindful of their diverse needs.
- Note Box 13 on registration application

# Voters with Criminal Records

MAY NOT vote if:

- Currently incarcerated on a felony charge.
- In a halfway house or alternative correctional facility on pre-released status for conviction of a felony and will not be released before the next election
- Were convicted of a violation of the PA Election Code within the last four years

# Voters with Criminal Records

**MAY** vote if:

- Incarcerated but are pre-trial
- Incarcerated for misdemeanors
- On parole or on probation

# Voters with Criminal Records

Voters who are incarcerated (including a halfway house) but are eligible to vote may use their most recent address as their residence, or they can use the address where they will live upon their release.

The incarceration facility may be used as a mailing address and they can apply to receive an absentee ballot there.

More information is available at [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)



# Voters with Limited English Proficiency

## Things to consider:

- Consider recruiting registration drive workers who are multilingual and can help voters in another language.
- PA's online voter registration application is available in English and Spanish
- The paper voter registration form is available in Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese at [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov)
- You can refer voters to the Department of State for help in another language, at no cost to the voter.

# High School Students

## Things to consider:

- The biggest obstacle for high school students is making sure they understand their eligibility to vote.
- They don't have to be 18 to register. They can pre-register if they will be 18 on or before the date of the next election.
- Special elections can affect the registration cut-off date, so check with the county election office to confirm those cut-off dates.

It's often helpful to have students assist with encouraging their peers to register

# High School Students

## Other things to consider:

- When announcing or advertising your drive, remind students to bring their driver's license or social security number with them.
- Make sure to explain any section of the registration form that the students may not understand.
- Explain how registering with a party will affect their ability to vote in primary elections.



# College Students

College students have two options about where to register and vote while attending college in Pennsylvania.

- Register where they attend college with an on-campus or off-campus address
- Register at their prior home address

Students must vote where they are registered, either in person or by mail-in ballot

# Absentee Ballots for College Students

Be sure the voter knows to submit the application to the appropriate county office.

- For example, if someone is attending Penn State University, but lists their residence as Berks County, the application must be sent to Berks County, not Centre County.

Be sure to inform voters that they must vote where they register.

- If the student above registers to vote in Berks County, they may only vote in Berks County (or by mail-in ballot).

# College Students

## Registering to vote in PA does NOT affect their:

- Financial Aid
- Status as a dependent on their parent's taxes (Being registered to vote at a different address from your parent does not mean you're not their dependent)
- Tuition status (Being deemed out-of-state for tuition purposes does not prevent them from choosing to register to vote in their campus community)
- Driver's license (Registering to vote does not invalidate their out-of-state drivers license)

For questions related to the contents of this guide, contact the Department of State or your local county election office.

Pennsylvania Department of State  
Bureau of Commissions, Elections and Legislation

401 North St. Ste. 210

Harrisburg, PA 17120

(717) 787-5280

[RA-BCEL@pa.gov](mailto:RA-BCEL@pa.gov)

