

ABOUT REGISTRATION: FOR ORGANIZATIONS

So you'd like to help low-income and homeless individuals register to vote? **Great!** But before you rush out to participate in a voter registration drive in your neighborhood, there are some things you might need to know.

These are commonly asked questions, answers provided on the following pages will help you and your organization put together a successful voter registration drive.

- Is my agency allowed to do voter registration?
- Can my organization or organizations we work with to register voters do so on behalf of a particular party or candidate?
- How much time after a registration drive do I have to send in the completed forms?
- May I send photocopies of voter registration forms to the elections office?
- May I attach any flyers or other information to the registration forms?

- Can rewards like balloons or pens be given out after a person registers?
- Can vehicles and drivers provided by my organization be used in registration drives or to transport voters to the polls on Election Day?
- When registering voters who are currently homeless, what address should they provide on the registration form?
- May I refuse to give an eligible voter a registration form?
- Does my organization have to become a deputy registrar to conduct a voter registration drive?

- Can you give me some examples of what I am allowed to say while offering information to voters?
- I'm not sure my agency has the staff or volunteers to do voter registration.
- What else can my organization do?

REGISTRATION FAQ'S FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Is my agency allowed to do voter registration?

Yes. Nonprofit 501(c) (3) organizations can operate voter registration drives if they do so in a nonpartisan manner. In fact, Section 1b of the National Voter Registration Act encourages all non-governmental entities to register their clients. This includes homeless shelters, drop-in centers, food pantries, soup kitchens, daycare centers, child welfare agencies, community health centers, etc. As a non-profit, you can register people to vote, but you cannot take positions on candidates, or be partisan in any of your communications.

Can my organization or organizations we work with to register voters do so on behalf of a particular party or candidate?

No. All voter registration services by nonprofit organizations must be nonpartisan. Nonpartisan means that the activity or program shall not be influenced by, affiliated with, or supportive of the interest or policies of any political party or candidate. Support for candidates of two different parties in an election (“bipartisanship”) is not a nonpartisan activity. Participating organizations and individuals cannot make any statements in support of or in opposition to any particular candidate or party, nor carry on any other activity designed to reflect a preference or recommendation for any political candidate or party.

How much time after a registration drive do I have to send in the completed forms?

Usually, states require the completed forms to be sent in no later than a **few days** after completion of the forms. Check with your state's election board.

May I send photocopies of voter registration forms to the elections office?

No. For the purposes of a voter registration drive, the actual form received from the elections office must be filled out and mailed. However, an individual may print a voter registration form off the Internet and mail it to the county election office.

May I attach any flyers or other information to the registration forms?

No. You may not attach anything to the voter registration forms.

REGISTRATION FAQ'S FOR ORGANIZATIONS CONT.

Can rewards like balloons or pens be given out after a person registers?

Many states have laws against such “rewards.” Check with the office of the Secretary of State in your state or county office of elections. (state offices are listed in the appendix)

Can vehicles and drivers provided by my organization be used in registration drives or to transport voters to the polls on Election Day?

Yes. You can even affix non-partisan messages to vehicles encouraging voters to go to the polls. However, make certain that the vehicles and the drivers do not have any partisan literature, buttons, posters, flyers, bumper stickers, or other political propaganda.

When registering voters who are currently homeless, what address should they provide on the registration form?

Most states allow a shelter address, a description of a general location at which the individual usually spends the night, or even a drawn map to be recorded as an address. An address is needed primarily for assigning people precincts and mailing election information.

May I refuse to give an eligible voter a registration form?

No. You must give a registration form to any person eligible to vote.

Does my organization have to become a deputy registrar to conduct a voter registration drive?

Many states do not require any sort of registration or official representation. However, some states do require voter registration drives to be registered or require the presence of a deputy registrar at the drive. States requiring a deputy registrar or some other official allow anyone to be trained, usually in a short, one-time session, to conduct a proper registration drive. Other states may also require voter registration forms to be notarized.



REGISTRATION FAQ'S FOR ORGANIZATIONS CONT.

Can you give me some examples of what I am allowed to say while offering information to voters?

You can say:

- "Public policy is decided at the polls. Take a position on housing, health care, wages, and other issues affecting your life. Register to vote here today."
- "You can have an impact on the decisions affecting your life. Register to vote now."
- "Budget cuts are reducing services provided by this agency and many others. If you care about housing and other social services, register to vote today."

You can't say:

- "Support family values. Vote Buchanan in 2016! Register now."
- "Congressional Republicans want to take away your housing and healthcare. Vote Democrat! Register here."
- "Mayor Johnson has a track record of voting against affordable housing measures. Register to vote here, and let him know you won't take it anymore!"

I'm not sure my agency has the staff or volunteers to do voter registration.

We're all strapped for time, but you can make it easy. Here are some ideas:

- Appoint one person, either staff or volunteer, to be a coordinator.
- Make it part of your intake or exit interview process. Add to your forms: "If you are not registered where you now live, would you like to register today?"
- Put up signs announcing that people can "Register to Vote Here."
- Have outreach workers do voter registration.
- Get volunteers and clients to help.
- Pay clients to register other clients. Contact your local City/County Elections Office to find out how to do this.



REGISTRATION FAQ'S FOR ORGANIZATIONS CONT.

What else can my organization do?

Here are a few ideas. Call us at (202) 462-4822 if you want more information or help.

- Allow your residents/clients/unhoused neighbors use your agency as a mailing address for their sample and/or absentee ballots.
- Call your City/County Elections Office and find out if your agency can become a polling site on election day.
- Organize a candidates' forum and ask the candidates to address your issues.
- Help clients to get to a candidates' forum in your community.
- Talk to your peers in other non-profits, and encourage them to involve their clients in the democratic process.
- Create a multi-lingual voter information card. See samples in Appendix.

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**I'M NOT SURE
MY CLIENTS ARE
INTERESTED IN
REGISTERING TO
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People who have low incomes, or who are unhoused, are no more or less interested in politics than anyone else. Please don't let your attitude be a barrier! People who are poor and unstably housed are often disconnected from community life. **Voting helps them reconnect with their community in a positive way.**