



Election & Voting Information 2016

As part of the aging and disability services community, many of us receive questions about voting and what we can do as employers, providers and individuals when it comes to elections and campaigns. We have put together this information to answer some of these questions.

This document includes information about elections, in-person and absentee voting, the rights of people who receive services, employee rights, and how to find your polling place. Much of the information contained in this document is compiled from information found on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website. Please visit this site if you have additional questions.

General Election Information

This year in addition to municipal and county elections, the Minnesota House of Representatives, the Minnesota State Senate and the President of the United States are up for election.

August 9, 2016 is the Primary Election - Candidates in the major political parties generally go through a party endorsement process. Many candidates compete for the party endorsement and many times the candidate that wins that contest is the only candidate on the ballot. Those candidates who choose not to go through the endorsement process or choose to continue to run even without the party endorsement will compete in the primary election on August 9.

November 8, 2016 is the General Election - The primary election determines who will compete in the General Election which is November 8, 2016. There will be a candidate from each party on the ballot. The General Election determines who will be elected into office in January of 2017. In Minnesota's case, the General Election will also determine who has control of the State House of Representatives for the next two years and the State Senate for four years.

We encourage you to visit the [Minnesota Secretary of State Voter Information Site](#) for information about voter registration, updating voter registrations, requesting absentee ballots for early voters, rules for vouching for residents, finding your polling location, seeing a sample ballot, rules regarding allowing time off for voting, and more.

Frequently Asked Questions

I don't know where to vote: [This tool will help you find your polling place.](#)

How do I register to vote? You can register to vote today or you can register to vote on Election Day as Minnesota has same-day voter registration. You must provide proof-of-residence. [Visit this website to find out what you need to do to register to vote.](#)

Can I vote early? In Minnesota you have the ability to vote early, called “no excuse absentee balloting.” This [link](#) provides you with information on absentee balloting, what it is and how to do it. You can vote ahead of time and your vote will count. Absentee ballots are now available for the Primary Election which is August 9, 2016. No excuse early voting is open on September 23, 2016 for the General Election.

Can provider staff help people they support vote? Staff may assist voters who live at a residential facility which includes: Assisted living facilities; battered women’s shelters; group residential housing; homeless shelters; nursing homes; residential alcohol and chemical treatment programs; residential facilities for persons with developmental disabilities; supervised-living facilities; transitional housing; and veteran’s homes.

There are two important roles staff at these facilities can play for the people they support:

- **Request and pick up absentee ballots:** Special accommodations are made for voters who live in a nursing home, assisted living facility, residential treatment center, group home or battered women’s shelter. They may ask someone (including staff members) to pick up an absentee ballot for them.
- **Provide proof of residence by “vouching”:** As stated above, voters who are registering to vote when turning in their ballot, either when voting absentee or in-person on Election Day, must provide proof-of residence). One way to do this is by ‘vouching’, when someone swears that they personally know the voter lives in the precinct (only if no other proof-of-residence is available). Voters in a residential facility can ask a staff person to vouch for them, and that staff person can vouch for an unlimited number of residents.

How can I vouch for people I support at the polls? You must be [eligible](#) to vote in Minnesota, but you do not have to vote or be registered to vote yourself to vouch for others. Your facility should create a list of any employees who might help people served at their facility vote on Election Day. The facility should send the list to the county elections office of the county where the facility is located at least 20 days before Election Day. If there are multiple buildings in different precincts, the facility should provide an employee list for each building. Employees can be listed under any building where they work and can be on more than one list.

The facility should submit the list [using this form](#), or by sending the list on company letterhead to the county election office. IF sending on letterhead, the letter must be signed and dated, and include the facilities’ name, address and name and title of the person sending the letter. The letter should use this language:

I certify that the following is a list of employees in this facility who may vouch on Election Day for eligible voters who are residents of this facility, and this facility meets the definition of “residential facility” contained in Minnesota Statute 201.061, subd. 3, para. (c).

An employee not on the list can still vouch for residents if they can show that they work at the residential facility. The employee can show an employee ID badge or bring a certification of their employment signed by the facility’s manager on the facility’s letterhead.

Specific to people in nursing homes: The city clerk’s office will send out teams of election judges to nursing homes and hospitals during the 20 days preceding the election. They will distribute absentee ballots to residents of the facility and provide assistance if needed.

Do I get time off of work to cast my own vote? Yes, Minnesota law specifically states that an employer may not directly or indirectly refuse or interfere with an employee’s right to vote, and employers cannot instruct employees of when during work hours employees are excused to go and vote. However, employers may request that employees provide notification as to when they will be gone and request that employees coordinate their absences so as to minimize adverse impact on the workplace. [View the full requirements here.](#)

What if a candidate for office wants to visit my facility? State law says you must let candidates and their volunteers in to visit with the people you serve. There are limitations though:

- **You can ask for a pre-scheduled time to set up the visit:** we encourage this as a way to plan for the upcoming visit and inform staff and residents of what to expect.
- **Residents have a right to privacy:** Candidates must be allowed to enter the building and common areas but that does not mean they have the right to speak with every resident. Residents have the right to their privacy in their personal units. A good solution to this is to work with the candidate to schedule a meet and greet in a common space for any resident that wishes to attend, and offer to let them leave their literature in a common area for people to pick up after they have left.
- **Only the candidate themselves has the right to access the building:** while a reasonable number of volunteers who are with a candidate must be allowed to accompany the candidate in the building, volunteers or staff who are NOT visiting with a candidate can be turned away.

[Please read the entire statute](#) and note it specifically protects certain people, and you would be within your rights to confirm that the candidate has filed for public office - check the Secretary of State’s website for candidate filings.

In working with campaigns that would like to visit your facilities, we strongly encourage scheduling a ‘meet and greet’ event with people you serve in the dining room or other common area, and pair it with an offer to provide a tour of the facility ahead of time so you can speak with the candidate make sure they are familiar with the issues that you face.

Each trade association has tools for you to use in preparing for the tour and actually giving the tour. Staff at associations, including ARRM, are more than happy to help in planning this.

How can I participate in the political process? First and foremost – vote! We all have personal lives. If you decide in your personal life you wish to support one candidate over another it is your right to do so. If you are interested in supporting a candidate personally please contact their campaign office or the candidate directly. Visit the [Minnesota Secretary of State website](#) for more information on any of these topics or for information about the candidates in your area.