Make our voices heard: empowerment for voters

Voter engagement and registration tips for voters & nonprofits

VOTING AND THE RAPE CRISIS MOVEMENT

The rape crisis movement has always understood that the personal is political. This movement began with courageous advocates using their voices to break the silence surrounding sexual violence. They spoke up to advocate for better laws, services, and treatment for victims and survivors. They spoke out to instill hope that ending sexual violence is possible, and we all play a role in prevention. Voting is another important way to add our own voices to this long history of advocacy and empowerment. It is of the utmost importance in today's political landscape.

VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES AT LOCAL SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTERS

As agents of social change, we can empower ourselves and the people we serve through voting. Registering to vote, and the act of voting, can serve as a very empowering experience for survivors of sexual violence. Voting connects survivors to a larger system of societal decision-making and gives them a voice in the policies that impact their lives.

Survivors of sexual violence often struggle to navigate a web of social services and institutional systems on their path to healing; registering to vote may not be a top priority. However, voter registration can be a quick and simple process with impactful benefits in a survivor's daily life.

Registering to vote and the act of voting can be empowering for survivors of sexual violence.

Sexual assault centers can play a helpful role in getting out the vote by running voter registration drives in their communities. We hope this resource can provide you with more information on the voting process as well as some simple ways to implement voter engagement and registration within your agency's mission.

Promoting voter engagement at your agency can boost your commitment to the populations you serve and educate clients about larger social issues. People who were engaged as voters while receiving nonprofit services vote at higher rates than they would without this intervention (Nonprofit Vote, 2024).

Is it legal for my center to run a voter registration drive in Pennsylvania?

Yes! A voter registration drive can be facilitated by a 501(c)(3) registered nonprofit as long as the organization does not accept any financial compensation for registering voters AND does not try to influence how a person registers or votes along party lines.

Nonprofit 501(c)(3) companies *may not:*

• Endorse or oppose a candidate running for office

• Make a campaign contribution to or against a candidate

• Rate candidates on who is most favorable to your agency's issue

• Let candidates use an agency's facilities or resources, unless these resources are made available to all candidates at fair market value

But nonpartisan does not mean non-participation! Here are some ways you can integrate voter registration into your ongoing activities and services:

★ Post information such as posters, brochures, and voter registration cards in waiting rooms and common areas. Have plenty of registration materials readily available for potential voters and make sure all staff and volunteers are prepared to answer basic questions about voter registration.

★ Set up a public computer in waiting rooms and common areas where staff members can assist individuals in registering to vote online.

★ Celebrate National Voter Registration Day on September 17! Ask volunteers or staff to set up tables with voter registration materials on site and at local open spaces (i.e. parks, sidewalks, libraries, etc.) to help people register to vote.

★ Utilize social media pages and other online forums to publicize voter registration. Create ready-to-use links on your agency's website for simple online voter registration.

★ Consider integrating questions about voter registration into general intake forms. It can be as simple as "Are you registered to vote? Would you like further information about becoming registered to vote?"

★ Host a voter registration and electoral process workshop in collaboration with other agencies. Open up discussion about what the issues are, what candidates are running, and what questions may be posted on the ballot. A dialogue about the ballot empowers individuals to take part in the election and gives individuals who may be first-time voters more confidence about taking part in the electoral process.

★ Discuss voting as part of ongoing conversations about "empowerment," "self-determination," or "social activism" in support group settings.

★ Celebrate Election Day at the agency!! Host an in-agency election party on November 5th to celebrate voting. Plan to go vote during your lunch hour or before or after the workday with some of your colleagues or volunteers.

★ In all aspects, use your judgment to assess the timeliness, relevance, and usefulness of information to victims and survivors. Not everyone will be ready for this information.

Can I offer an incentive to register to vote?

Yes! This is a great way to attract an audience to your table, but you must also distribute incentives to any individual/group that asks for it. For example, if you offer candy or a sticker to individuals at your stand for registering to vote, you must also give this reward to any individual, whether they register or not.

Nonprofit Vote: Nonprofit Vote helps thousands of nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services. They offer a wide array of free, online webinars, resource guides and voter registration toolkits made simple for nonprofit agencies of all sizes. (Nonprofit Vote, 2024).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR VOTERS

Who can register to vote?

Anyone who is at least 18 and a U.S. citizen may register to vote. Voters must register 30 days before the next election to be eligible to vote in that election. That means you must register by midnight on October 21, 2024 to vote in the general election.

Where do I go to vote?

To vote, you must go to the polling place that corresponds to your address. You can find your polling place location and directions by visiting Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2024).

How do I register to vote?

🖥 **Online:** You can register using the online application at https://www.pa.gov/en/services/vote/register-to-vote.html

👤 **In-Person:** You can deliver your completed voter registration application to your county voter registration office (find your local office here: https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Contact-Your-Election-Officials.aspx

✉ **By Mail:** You can mail your application to your county voter registration office (find the mailing address of your local office here: https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Contact-Your-Election-Officials.aspx). If you choose to mail in your application, make sure it will be delivered before the deadline!

Once your registration is approved, you will receive a voter registration card in the mail within 14 business days. You can check the status of your application at any time at Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2024).

Do I need a driver's license or other identification to vote?

No. Unless you are a fist-time voter at that polling place, you do not need a form of identification. If you are a first-time voter, acceptable forms of identification include PENNDOT issued license, ID issued by any Commonwealth or U.S. government agency, U.S. passport, U.S. Armed forced ID, student ID, employee ID, and/or recent utility statement.

What if I need help when I am at my polling place?

You have the right to assistance when voting. This may be due to language needs, literacy issues, and/or disabilities. For more information about receiving assistance when voting, please visit League of Women Voters (League of Women Voters, 2023).

BECOMING AN INFORMED VOTER

Before heading to the polls on November 5th, it is important to understand what is going to be on the ballot. In Pennsylvania, there are various positions and offices available for reelection. The following positions are up for election on the general election ballot: President of the United States, United States Senator, House of Representative in Congress, PA Attorney General, PA Auditor General, PA State Treasurer, Senators in PA General Assembly (in some districts), Representatives in PA General Assembly. Becoming an informed voter can be quick and easy. Resources, such as Ballotpedia (2024) and Committee of Seventy (n.d.), offer information to voters including: sample ballots, side-by-side comparison of candidate political stances, and local policy issues.

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