

2020 Voting Fact Sheet for Long Term Care Facilities

The Department of State (DOS) is publishing the following information to support long-term care facilities when providing options and considerations for facility residents exercising their right to vote during the general election scheduled for November 3, 2020. Long-term care facilities (LTCF) 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 LTCF should continue to follow applicable federal and state level guidance regarding voting rights and operating safely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Human Services (DHS)

Refer to the Department of Health [Guidance on COVID-19 for Skilled Nursing Facilities in Pennsylvania](#) and the [Department of Human Services Guidance on COVID-19 for Personal Care Homes, Assisted Living Residences and Private Intermediate Care Facilities](#) for more detailed information on how to safely provide for non-medical outings, including in-person voting. Note - the DHS guidance linked to above is being updated and will be released soon.

Applicable facilities should also refer to the [memorandum](#) issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services regarding the voting rights of patients in nursing homes.

II. Alternatives to Voting in Person on Election Day

Thanks to historic legislation, there are now more options than ever for Pennsylvania voters to cast their ballot before Election Day.

A. Voting by Mail

All registered Pennsylvania voters may choose to vote by mail-in ballot. Qualified Pennsylvanians may vote by absentee ballot. Voters can apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot online at votesPA.com/applymailballot or using a paper form, which is available for download in the [VotesPA.com Resource Center](#).

Deadlines

The deadline to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot is 5:00 p.m. on October 27, and the deadlines for returning ballots are as follows:

- Ballots delivered in person must be received at the county election office or other site designated by the county board of elections by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday November 3, 2020.

- Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked by 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday November 3 AND received at the county election office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday November 6, 2020.

Voting and Returning Ballots

The Department of State urges voters who plan to vote by mail to apply for their ballot as soon as possible and 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:

1. **Mark your ballot.** Be sure to vote both sides of the ballot, if applicable. Follow the instructions that came with your ballot.
2. Place your voted ballot in the **white secrecy envelope** that indicates official ballot and seal it. Do not make any marks on the secrecy envelope.
3. Place the sealed secrecy envelope in the **pre-addressed outer return envelope** and seal it.
4. **Complete, sign and date** the pre-addressed outer return envelope.
5. **Return your ballot.** If you are mailing your ballot, no postage is necessary for this election. If you are dropping off your ballot in person, check your county election website for times and locations. You can also find information on votesPA.com/dropbox and votesPA.com/earlyvoting.

Voters in Need of Assistance

Voters who need assistance completing their mail-in or absentee ballot should contact their county boards of election for information about the process for receiving assistance. You can find county contact information at VotesPA.com/county.

NOTICE: 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 votesPA.com.
- The form includes instructions for how to designate an agent and information about who can serve as an agent.
- A “household” for the purpose of designating an agent does not include a long-term care facility. However, a couple sharing a room or apartment within a facility may be considered members of the same household. This means that each resident who is unable to return their own voted ballot due to a disability must designate a different agent.
- As an alternative to designating an agent to return voted ballots, a facility may make arrangements for residents to deliver their own ballots to a United States Postal Service mailbox, the county election office, or another drop-off location designated by the county board of elections.

B. Voting Early in Person via Mail-in or Absentee Ballot

All registered Pennsylvania voters also have the option to vote by mail-in ballot at their county election office or certain satellite election office designated by the county board of elections. Absentee voters may also use these options. In this case, voters can either take a completed ballot application with them to the county office and turn it in or request an application to be filled out at the office once they arrive.

The same steps outlined above for voting by mail-in or absentee ballot apply for early voting. Likewise, the deadlines outlined above apply, so outings planned for this reason must take place on or before October 27, 2020.

Find the location of your county election office at votesPA.com/county. You can learn more about voting early at votesPA.com/earlyvoting.

Long-term care facilities that plan to take a group of voters to vote early should contact their county election office to find out what days and times are best for organizing such a visit.

III. 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 on election day.

A. Polling Place Lookup

Voters can use the online lookup tool at VotesPA.com/polls to check the location of their assigned polling place.

B. Safety Precautions

The Department of State urges voters going to the polls to practice the following precautions to protect themselves, other voters and poll workers from COVID-19:

- Wear a mask.
- Wash your hands before and after voting.
- Bring your own blue- or black-ink pen to use.
- Practice social distancing, maintaining at least a six-foot distance from others.
- Follow poll workers' instructions.

DOS has also issued instructions to Pennsylvania counties regarding polling place setup and recommended safety measures for poll workers, in accordance with guidance from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Guidance is available on the [Department of State website](#).

NOTICE: Be advised that voters who arrive without a mask may be asked to wear a mask but will not be denied the right to enter the polling place and vote.

C. Voters in Need of Assistance

Voters who need assistance voting in person on election day will either have an indication in the poll book that says 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, as long as the person providing assistance is not:

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