



National Coalition on Accessible Voting's Voter Access Guide

Chapter 5: Voting by Mail and Absentee

A guide for election administrators to making voting accessible for people with disabilities

August 2024

The National Coalition on Accessible Voting is a coalition that maintains and expands voting access for people with disabilities.

About the Voter Access Guide

We wrote the Guide to help election administrators make voting accessible. The Guide provides information, recommendations, and checklists on accessibility for every stage of the voting process, from registering and gathering information on voting to casting a ballot. The Guide identifies barriers to accessibility in advance, allowing you to address them early in your planning process.

We provide links to the best free resources available for each topic. Use the resources provided in the Guide as starting points for further research.

The Guide refers to “expanding” or “improving” accessibility rather than “making voting accessible.” We (and many election officials) strive for full accessibility for all people with disabilities, but full accessibility is an always-moving, evolving target. Polling places may change. Voting equipment may need to be updated. Election administrators and state laws and regulations may change.

Disclaimers

The Guide does not cover every issue. It is a general overview of expanding voting accessibility. We encourage election administrators to do more research on all topics.

This Guide brings voting accessibility resources together in one place for easy access. We link to or cite resources we used to develop the Guide.

Conformance to any recommendations or use of any resources contained within or suggested by this Guide is not intended to act as a standard for compliance with federal or state law.

The recommendations in this Guide do not constitute legal advice or advice on how to comply with any federal or state law or policy, including the Help America Vote Act (HAVA),¹ the Voting Rights Act (VRA),¹ the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA),¹ Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,¹ Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,¹ the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),¹ and the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (VAEHA).¹

The Guide does not constitute advice on how to implement the President's Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting (March 7, 2021)¹ or any other Executive Order or policy of any federal agency. Each department, office, agency, organization, entity, or individual must make their own independent determination on compliance with any and all applicable laws, including those discussed in this Guide.

Chapter 5

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Chapter 5

Voting by Mail and Absentee

To vote by mail or absentee, voters request a ballot by mail or electronically and then receive, mark, verify, and return the ballot. People with disabilities must be able to vote privately and independently, whether they vote by mail or absentee.

Voters with disabilities frequently vote by mail. According to the [Election Assistance Commission \(EAC\)](#)'s 2022 report, only 44% of people with disabilities voted in person on Election Day, compared to 51% of people without disabilities. Voter engagement for people with disabilities was higher in states with greater mail voting accessibility.

Voting by mail is sometimes less accessible to people with disabilities. People with print disabilities find it hard or impossible to mark, verify, or return the paper ballots often used for voting by mail.

Some states have laws and policies that make it harder to vote. For example, some states as of 2024 have laws that limit who can help voters return mail ballots. It is important for you to ensure that voters are aware of these laws and the options available to them.

This Guide provides recommendations that would improve vote by mail accessibility. We encourage election administrators to advocate for better laws and policies in their state.

Requesting a Mail Ballot

Most states require voters to request a ballot to vote by mail. In some states, you have to make a request for each election. Voters use a form to request their ballots.

All-Mail States: In “all-mail” states, an actual ballot is mailed to all registered voters. For these states, consult “Ballots Sent Electronically” and “Ballots Sent by Mail,” since similar recommendations will apply. Make sure your ballot request forms are as accessible as possible!

About “Excuse” and “No Excuse” : Voting by mail or online is either “excuse” or “no excuse.” “Excuse” states limit mail voting to only some kinds of voters. Voters who can vote with an “excuse” may include voters with disabilities, voters who are not in their voting jurisdiction on Election Day, and voters who are sick on Election Day. “No excuse” states let anyone request a mail ballot. We recommend that you advocate to make your state “no excuse,” since states had higher disability turnout when they switched from an “excuse” to “no excuse” system.

We recommend that election administrators prioritize the forms’ accessibility. People with disabilities cannot vote without them. This Guide section provides recommendations for creating accessible ballot request forms.

Online Ballot Request Forms

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

Our recommendations for online forms are similar to our recommendations in “[Providing Information Online](#).”

- If the online ballot request form is a website and a portal: Use our recommendations in “[Making Online Voter Registration Forms Accessible](#)” in “Registering to Vote” and “[Creating Accessible Election Websites](#)” in “Providing Information Online.”
- If the online ballot request form is an accessible online document, use our recommendations in “[Creating Accessible Online Documents](#)” in “Providing Information Online” and “[Registering Using Documents Available Online](#)” in “Registering to Vote.”
- Use advocacy organizations, accessibility testers, consultants, or all of the above to review the forms.
- Use as few online security and user verification tools as possible. “[Form Security and Verification Tools](#)” in “Registering to Vote” has more information.

If your ballot request form is inaccessible, it may violate federal law. Nonetheless, a [2020 study](#) found that 43 states had inaccessible online ballot request forms. If your ballot request form is highly accessible, you will be ahead of the curve.

Providing Ballot Request Forms In-Person

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

The “Providing Information at the Office” and “Registering to Vote in Person” sections of the Guide have recommendations for making in-person services more accessible.

- We recommend that you employ staff trained to help people with disabilities fill out the form.
- We recommend that you provide multiple accessible formats, including forms on tablets, in plain language, in large print, and in Braille.
- We recommend that you advertise that you allow people to fill out the ballot request form in person.

Making the Ballot Accessible

This section provides recommendations for creating accessible ballots. The “Ballot Verification” and “Electronic Ballot Return” sections of this Guide have more information on ballot verification and ballot casting.

Ballots Sent Electronically

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

Ballots sent electronically are more accessible than ballots sent by mail, as they better serve voters with print disabilities. As long as the ballot is compatible with assistive technology (AT) and operating system (OS) accessibility features, many people with disabilities will be able to mark the ballot at home.

Most states use systems that allow voters to fill out a ballot with an electronic tool or interface. For example, [Maryland’s mail-in voting system](#) allows users to retrieve and mark their ballots electronically, but not to return them electronically. This is often called a “remote access-vote by mail” or an “accessible vote by mail” system.

Electronic ballot delivery, without electronic ballot return, is not accessible to all people with disabilities. Systems that require voters to retrieve, verify, and return a paper ballot are inaccessible to people with print disabilities. Therefore, our resources and recommendations improve the accessibility of electronic ballot delivery but cannot make it fully accessible.

Remember that voters have differing circumstances from one another. A method that is accessible to one voter with a disability may not be accessible to another voter who has the same disability. For example, some voters lack regular access to a computer. Therefore, election administrators should offer multiple ways to vote and ensure that each system they offer is accessible.

Recommendations for Accessible Electronic Ballot Delivery

- Prioritize compliance with [WCAG 2.1](#), federal, and state law. If you are required to comply with Section 508, visit [Section508.gov](#) for more information.
- Write ballots and ballot referendums in plain language or simple language equivalent to a 6th- 8th grade reading level. This includes instructions on how to receive, mark, and return the electronic ballot. If you are not able to put ballots in plain language due to state or local law, advocate for plain language ballots in your state.
- Our “Providing Information Online” and “Registering to Vote Online” sections of the Guide have general information on online and assistive technology accessibility.
- Consult with IT staff and remote voting system developers. Make sure you consult with accessibility experts as well, such as disability rights advocacy organizations.

- Consult with disability rights advocacy organizations for more information on accessibility. Our “[Accessibility Consultants](#)” section in “Gathering Information on Voting” has a list of advocacy organizations.
- The [VVSG 2.0 guidelines](#) are voluntary and created by the EAC. They do not apply to ballot marking devices used outside the polling place, but we still recommend reviewing them. Their recommendations, especially Principle 7, describe accessibility features your electronic ballot should have (text enlargement, color contrast, etc.). Disability rights organizations support expanding the VVSG to apply to electronic ballots and mail voting.
 - We support the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)’s criticism of the VVSG 2.0 in their [Jun. 19, 2020 public comments](#). For the VVSG 2.0, we do not support mandating voter-verified paper ballots as the only accepted final cast ballot or “ballot of record.” We do not support the VVSG 2.0’s removal of nondiscrimination provisions that were originally in the VVSG.
- The Center for Civic Design created a [list of design principles for electronic remote balloting systems](#). These design principles represent best practices and are based partially on the work of a disability-led advocacy organization (the National Federation of the Blind). We recommend reviewing the principles. They recommend some of the following.
 - Make your system “trusted and transparent,” so it is easy for voters to understand how it works.
 - Ensure the system has no special rules different from other absentee ballots.
 - Make the system accessible to all voters, not just specific classes of voters.
 - Make the system comply with the WCAG and Section 508.
 - Minimize security risks by ensuring the ballot only takes the information it needs to identify the voter.
 - Ensure that the system is robustly tested for accessibility.
- The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), in its brief “[Administering Accessible Vote by Mail Systems Challenges and Innovations in Elections Offices](#),” describes how to administer an “accessible vote-by-mail” (AVBM) system. We recommend that you review pages 9-13. Pages 9-13 cover administering electronic ballot delivery systems, differences between systems, differences between voting by mail and voting using electronically delivered ballots, and other issues.

Ballots Sent by Mail

Ballots sent by mail are less accessible than ballots sent electronically. This is because people with print disabilities either cannot read or review paper ballots (due to being blind, or having low-vision or another vision-related disability) and therefore cannot vote privately and independently, or cannot handle paper.

Many ballots are still sent by mail. This Guide’s recommendations help you make paper ballots as accessible as possible, but they are not a substitute for offering an electronic vote by mail system.

Recommendations for Ballots Sent by Mail

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

- Write ballots and ballot referendums in plain language or simple language equivalent to a 6th to 8th grade reading level. This includes instructions on how to receive, mark, and return the mailed ballot. If you are not able to put ballots in plain language due to state or local law, advocate for plain language ballots in your state!
- Waive requirements for witnesses, notarizations, affidavits, or signature matching to the extent you are able to by law.

Ballot Review and Verification

Before casting, the voter needs to be able to review the ballot to confirm that the marked selections are correct. In other words: the voter has to be able to: (1) tell whether they voted for, for example, “Jane Doe” or “John Smith”; (2) change their vote if the ballot is marked for the wrong person (John Smith, but they wanted Jane Doe). Voters must be able to verify the ballot “privately and independently.”

Accessibility barriers are common, particularly if only paper ballots are used. People with print disabilities cannot privately and independently verify paper ballots.

As of 2024, very few jurisdictions, if any, have implemented a fully private and independent, accessible way to verify paper ballots, let alone by mail. Fully electronic voting is the most accessible way to enable voters to verify their ballots. The NCAV is fully committed to improving mail ballot verification. We will update this Guide with new methods as they appear.

Recommendations for Accessible Ballot Verification

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

- Include a ballot verification step for electronic ballots. The ballot verification step should have the same accessibility features as the ballot marking step.
- If your state has electronic ballot return, make the forms for requesting it as accessible as the rest of your electronic voting system. If the form is a document, consult our “Creating Accessible Online Documents” and “Making Online Voter Registration Forms Accessible” sections for recommendations. If the form is a website, consult “Creating Accessible Election Websites.”
- Consider advocating for fully electronic ballot return in your state. Thirteen states as of 2024 allow people with disabilities to return ballots electronically.

Casting the Ballot

Electronic Ballot Return

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

Thirty-one states as of 2024 allow some voters to return ballots electronically. Most are Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters, but people with disabilities can use electronic ballot return in thirteen states.

The security community has raised concerns with electronically returned ballots. All methods of electronic ballot return - whether by fax, email, or online portal - are considered vulnerable to cyberattack. However, the development of fully electronic voting is the only way to make voting accessible to some people with disabilities.

We recommend that the states offer electronic ballot return to people with disabilities to the same extent that they offer it to UOCAVA voters. If you are not one of the states that offers electronic ballot return to people with disabilities, advocate (if you can) for changes to your state laws. If electronic ballot return is sufficiently secure to be used by UOCAVA voters, it is secure enough to be used by voters with print disabilities. Disability rights advocates have also successfully sued states for access to electronic ballots. This suggests it is possible to create a secure system for the small number of voters with disabilities who need it to vote privately and independently.

You can prioritize accessibility and compliance with federal law over security without disregarding security. We recommend that you offer electronic ballot return and information on how it works to voters with disabilities. You or your tech support can research existing systems and use the most secure options. You can use the information you collect to inform your voters.

We recommend that you support the research and development of more secure accessible electronic ballot return. Security will only improve if it is researched, with the goal of deploying more secure accessible systems for voters.

If your jurisdiction does have an electronic ballot return option, the electronic return system should comply with WCAG 2.1 and all federal laws, including Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (to the extent applicable). For more information on compliance, visit [WCAG 2.1's website](#) and [Section 508.gov](#).

Our “Recommendations and Resources for Accessible Electronic Ballot Delivery” has more information on how to create accessible online ballots. Our suggestions also apply to the ballot return system.

Ballots Returned by Mail

“Ballots Sent by Mail” has more information on how to make physical paper ballots as accessible as possible.

Recommendations for ballots sent and returned by mail

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

- Send paper ballots with self-sealing, prepaid envelopes for ballot return that are easy to handle.

- The ACLU, in its article “[Voting by Mail is Essential for Voters with Disabilities, but it’s Not Enough](#),” derived from [Let People With Disabilities Vote](#), a brief written by the ACLU and NDRN, offers the following recommendations.
 - Create an “opt-out” mail-in ballot system where mail-in ballots are automatically sent to all registered voters.
 - Allow all voters to request mail-in ballots electronically if it is impossible to create a system where ballots are automatically sent to all voters.
 - Provide virtual training to poll and other election workers on how to assist voters who ask for help filling out their ballots.
 - Allow voters to mark ballots electronically.
 - [The article](#) and [Let People With Disabilities Vote](#) have more recommendations.
- NDRN has useful recommendations in their article “[Vote by Mail Must Be Accessible to Voters with Disabilities](#).”
- If you have an online presence, describe how to mail ballots online, either on your website or on social media.
- Create a way for people with disabilities to request instructions that explain how to mail your ballot. Write the instructions in plain language or Easy Read. We also recommend that you create a video explaining how to mail ballots.
- Create envelopes that are easy to seal and mark correctly. Long multi-step processes are accessibility barriers for people with disabilities.
- Verify the voter’s identity using only one form of documentation. Do not use signature matching unless you are required to by state law.
- Allow voters with disabilities to deliver the sealed and marked envelope in person.
- Use ballot drop boxes that are designed accessibly and placed on accessible paths of travel. The “Ballot Drop Boxes” section of the Guide has more information on ballot drop box accessibility.

Ballot Drop Boxes

Acknowledgments: We wrote this section using the EAC’s [brief on ballot drop boxes](#) (created by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Elections Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council and Sector Coordinating Council’s Joint COVID Working Group) and ADA.gov’s [page on ballot drop boxes](#). We also used the Elections Group’s [Guide to Ballot Drop Boxes](#).

Ballot drop boxes are NOT a replacement or substitute for accessible voting. They are another option available to your voters. You are required to make all options that are available to voters accessible.

Ballot drop boxes are locations where voters can drop off mail ballots instead of sending the ballot through the postal service. There are different kinds of ballot drop boxes. Some drop boxes are attached to the ground or wall and are not monitored. Some drop boxes are monitored via video camera. Some boxes are only available during regular business hours and are monitored by election workers.

Ballot drop boxes come in different shapes and sizes. Some are cardboard boxes and others are made of metal. Some ballot drop boxes are “drive-through.” This means that the voter drops off the ballot while driving.

Ballot drop boxes are used for many reasons. Some voters do not trust the security of the postal service. Other voters may be casting their ballots “last minute” or are afraid they’ll miss their state’s deadline. Ballot drop boxes can also be placed in rural areas that lack postal service.

Ballot Drop Box Accessibility Resources

[ADA.gov’s “Ballot Box Accessibility” page](#) has guidelines on ballot drop box accessibility.

The EAC website has a [general guide on ballot drop boxes](#), created by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Elections Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council and Sector Coordinating Council’s Joint COVID Working Group. The guide explains how security for ballot drop boxes works, how to determine how many boxes you need, where you should put them, what you should do on Election Day, and other topics.

The Elections Group, which was created by former elections officials familiar with the challenges of election administration, also created a [guide to ballot drop boxes](#).

Election officials who use “drive-through” ballot drop boxes should make sure that a non-“drive through” ballot drop box is available for voters who cannot drive.

All-Mail Elections

Acknowledgments. This Guide section is based on information from [NFB’s Accessible Vote-by-Mail Toolkit](#), the National Conference of State Legislatures’ “[Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and Other Voting at Home Options](#)” and its “[Table 18: States With All-Mail Elections](#),” and Ballotpedia’s “[All-Mail Voting](#)” page.

Seven states and the District of Columbia (DC) conduct elections by mail only. In these jurisdictions, there is a “voting period” instead of an Election Day. Voters in “all-mail” jurisdictions can also travel to a voting center to return their ballot, but there are fewer in-person locations than in non-all-mail states.

Recommendations

Disclaimer: Following our recommendations is not intended as legal advice, and does not necessarily ensure nor is intended as a substitute for full compliance with federal or state law.

We recommend that election officials use (or advocate for, when it is not permitted by state law) electronic ballot delivery and return for people with disabilities who cannot handle paper ballots. Reference the [National Center for Civic Design’s “Principles and guidelines for remote ballot marking systems”](#) and our Guide’s “Ballots Returned by Mail” and “Electronic Ballot Return” sections if you will send electronic ballots to voters who request them which must be mailed in. Inaccessible mail voting may violate federal and/or state law.

Ballot Curing

It is easy for voters to make mistakes when sending mail ballots. Common mistakes are: missing signatures, signatures that do not match the signatures used during voter registration (or on other personal information), incorrectly marked envelopes, missing photo IDs, and missing required documents such as sworn affidavits. According to NPR, more than 560,000 people made mistakes on their 2020 ballots.

In 30 states, election officials must notify the voter if their ballot has been rejected and give the voter an opportunity to fix their ballot. This is called ballot curing. Voters can correct their ballots during a span of time called the cure period.

The curing process has two parts: notification and correction. Jurisdictions may notify the voter in different ways, such as by texting, calling, or emailing them. Once the voter is notified, they can correct their ballot during the cure period. The cure period can be as short as one day before or after Election Day, as long as twenty-one days, or it can be dependent on how the ballot was delivered.

Our recommendations describe the most accessible ballot curing processes.

Recommendations

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- Notify voters using more than one method. For example, you could send an email and a text message to the same voter. This makes it less likely that the notification will be inaccessible.
- Our “Providing Information Over the Phone” and “Providing Information at the Office” sections of the Guide have more tips on interacting with voters with disabilities.
- A few states have a digital curing system that allows the voter to cure the ballot using text messages, emails, or websites. Colorado’s “TXT2Cure” system is an example. We recommend that you use a similar system if you are allowed to under state law.

- If your state has a ballot curing system with an extremely short cure period, we recommend that you advocate for changes to your state’s law.
- If your state has very strict requirements for ballot curing, advocate for changes to your state’s laws or policies to the extent you can.
- Avoid racial and ethnic disparities to the extent their cause is understood. Black, Latino, Asian, and African-American voters have their ballots rejected at three to five times the rate of white voters.
- If your state has strict signature matching requirements for your ballots, advocate for changes to your state’s laws or policies to the extent you are allowed to by law. People with disabilities and elderly people (especially those with degenerative disabilities or disabilities with periodic “flare-ups”) may not sign their signature the same way they did when they first registered to vote. Signature matching is not the only reason a voter may need to cure their ballot. People with disabilities benefit when there are fewer signature matching requirements.

Ballot Tracking

As of May 2024, forty-seven states and the District of Columbia allow voters to track their mail and absentee ballots online. Ballot tracking reduces voter uncertainty and helps prevent voters from accidentally voting again by letting them know their ballot was counted.

If you are in one of the three states that does not allow voters to track their ballots online, we recommend that you advocate for changes to state law to the extent you can. Ballot tracking systems must be accessible. Our “Providing Information Online” section has more information on making online websites and portals accessible.

Appendixes

In the Appendix

- [Federal regulations and guidance on voting and accessibility](#)
- [Terminology](#)
- [List of NCAV Member Disability Rights Advocacy Organizations](#)

Federal regulations and guidance on voting and accessibility

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

All state and local election offices are covered by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Their “services, programs, or activities” cannot discriminate against people with disabilities.¹ Section 504 requires agencies that receive federal funding to not discriminate against people with disabilities.² Section 504 provides voters with similar rights to those provided by the ADA.

The U.S. Code is available through the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO)’s GovInfo website at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/USCODE>. The ADA is in Title 42, Chapter 126 of the U.S. Code. Section 504 is in Title 29, Chapter 16, Subchapter V of the U.S. Code.

Both the ADA and Section 504 have regulations. ADA regulations for Titles II and III are available at: <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/regulations/>. Many agencies have Section 504 regulations pertaining to their specific jurisdiction area. Election agencies should look to the Section 504 regulations issued by the federal agency that is funding the state or local government’s activities, or the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), for specific guidance.

- The ADA’s 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design describe requirements for physically accessible buildings. They are available at: <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/design-standards/>.
- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) provides resources and guidance on voting, including a checklist on polling place accessibility, at <https://www.justice.gov/voting/accessibility-voting>.
- The U.S. Access Board’s Guide to the ADA Accessibility Standards is an excellent resource for physical accessibility. It is available at: <https://www.access-board.gov/ada/guides/chapter-1-using-the-ada-standards/>.
- The ADA National Network is an excellent general ADA resource: <https://adata.org/>.
- The Department of Justice released [final regulations on web accessibility](#) for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act in April 2024. This rule will require covered agencies to adhere to at least the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.

¹ 42 U.S.C. § 12132 (2022).

² 29 U.S.C. § 794 (2022).

- The Department of Justice updated its guidance on [voting rights and disability](#) in April 2024. The new guidance clarifies people with disabilities’ voting rights, including their right to assistance and right to be free of categorical disqualification from voting because of their disabilities or guardianship status.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 covers electronic and information technology accessibility. Federal agencies and agencies that receive federal funds must comply with Section 508. [Section 508.gov](#) provides covered agencies with detailed information and guidance.

Help America Vote Act (HAVA)

HAVA, passed in 2002, provides many protections to voters with disabilities. Voters with disabilities must have the “same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters.”³ HAVA resources can be found at: https://www.eac.gov/about/help_america_vote_act.aspx.

EAC Resources

The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) serves as a “national clearinghouse” of information on elections and election administration.⁴ The EAC has a list of accessibility resources for election officials, including a webinar series, at <https://www.eac.gov/voting-accessibility>.

National Voter Registration Act Of 1993 (NVRA)

The NVRA requires Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMVs) to offer voter registration. Public assistance offices and offices that primarily serve people with disabilities must do the same.⁵ The NVRA is often called the “motor voter” law. The Department of Justice has a question-and-answer sheet on the NVRA at <https://www.justice.gov/crt/national-voter-registration-act-1993-nvra>.

³ 42 U.S.C. § 15481(a)(3)(A); Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, National Disability Rights Network, Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP, and Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, *A Guide to the Voting Rights of People With Mental Disabilities 10-11* (2020) [hereinafter “Bazelon Mental Disabilities Voting Rights Guide”].

⁴ *About the EAC*, U.S. Election Assistance Commission, <https://www.eac.gov/about> (last visited 3/1/2024).

⁵ U.S. Dept. Justice Civ. Rts. Div., *The National Voter Registration Act Of 1993 (NVRA)*, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/national-voter-registration-act-1993-nvra> (last updated Jul. 20, 2022).

Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (VAEHA)

VAEHA requires that polling places and voter registration be accessible to elderly people and people with disabilities.⁶ The Department of Justice enforces this law and can be consulted on compliance.

⁶ 52 U.S.C. § 20102, 20104 (2022).

Terminology

These are some terms we use in the guide to refer to people with disabilities or who work in elections.

- **“Election officials”** and **“election administrators”** are interchangeably used to refer to state, county, and local personnel who manage and oversee federal, state, and local elections. They are the main audience for this Guide; we refer to them as “you” throughout.
- **“Poll workers”** refers to election workers who help people vote, as well as manage and run polling places and voting centers.
- **“Autistic people”** refers to people on the autism spectrum.
- **“Blind people, people with low-vision, and people with vision-related disabilities”** refers to vision-related disabilities.
- **“Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened, and people with hearing disabilities”** refers to people with hearing disabilities.
- **“People with cognitive disabilities”** refers to people with disabilities that affect the mind who do not have a developmental disability and do not have a psychiatric or mental health disability.
- **“People with intellectual and developmental disabilities”** refers to people with IDD. According to the National Institutes of Health’s Eunice Kennedy Shriver Institute of Child Health and Human Development, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) are disabilities that are “usually present at birth and that uniquely affect the trajectory of the individual’s physical, intellectual, and/or emotional development. Many of these conditions affect multiple body parts or systems.” Some examples of IDDs are autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, intellectual disability, and spina bifida.
- **“People with psychiatric or mental health disabilities”** refers to people with these disabilities.
- **“People with print disabilities”** refers to people whose disabilities make it hard or impossible for them to access or handle printed paper and text.⁷

⁷ Nat’l Disability Rts. Network and Am. Assoc. People with Disabilities, Making Voting Accessible to Voters with Print Disabilities 2 (Jul. 24, 2021), <https://www.aapd.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Making-Voting-Accessible-to-Voters-with-Print-Disabilities-1.pdf>.

List of NCAV Member Disability Rights Advocacy Organizations

International Cross Disability

- [World Institute on Disability](#)

National Cross Disability

- [American Association of People with Disabilities](#)
- [National Association of Statewide Independent Living Councils \(NASILC\)](#)
- [Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs \(ATAP\)](#)
- [Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living \(APRIL\)](#)
- [Association of University Centers on Disabilities](#)
- [Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund \(DREDF\)](#)
- [National Council on Independent Living](#)
- [National Disability Rights Network](#)
- [RespectAbility](#)

Regional Cross Disability

- [Center for Living and Working](#)
- [Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley](#)
- [New Disabled South](#) (disability advocacy in Southern states)

Blindness and Low Vision

- [American Council of the Blind](#)
- [National Federation of the Blind](#)

Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened, and People with Hearing Disabilities

- [National Association of the Deaf \(NAD\)](#)

Mental Health/Psychiatric Disabilities

- [Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law](#)

Physical Disabilities

- [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#)
- [United Spinal Association](#)

Autism

- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- [Autism Society of America](#)

Intellectual and Developmental Disability

- [National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities \(NACDD\)](#)
- [Self Advocates Becoming Empowered \(SABE\)](#)
- [The Arc](#) of the United States

Natural Disasters and Disability

- [The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies](#)