



Thankfully, today many of our loved ones are living longer and healthier lives. As living arrangements change to help older Ohioans remain as independent and active as possible, questions about maintaining civic engagement often arise as they adapt to new living situations.

The Voting Rights Institute (VRI) in the office of Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner has compiled this general guide to answer some of the common questions raised by individuals who assist older Ohioans in remaining active and involved. This general guide is not meant to cover all circumstances for all voters. *For further details, please contact your county board of elections or the Voting Rights Institute.*



VOTING RIGHTS
I N S T I T U T E
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Serving Ohio's Aging Population:

Information on the Voting Process



Jennifer Brunner
 Ohio Secretary of State

What may family members do to help their loved ones in the voting process?

- 1 Family members may help their loved ones register to vote. Remember, when a voter moves into Ohio or within Ohio, he or she must complete a voter registration form showing the change of address and file it with the board of elections in the county to which he or she has moved. For the purposes of voter registration, a residence may include a family member's home or an assisted living facility. The key to determining residency is where the voter intends to return. If an assisted living facility is for temporary purposes, "residence," for the purposes of voter registration is a place other than the facility. An absentee ballot can still be sent to the facility, even though the voter resides elsewhere in Ohio.
- 2 Family members may help their loved ones request an absentee ballot through the mail. Many registered Ohio voters are eligible to request an absentee ballot through the mail from their county boards of elections. Some Ohio voters find this option more convenient, as they are able to vote at their leisure without leaving home. Family members may aid in returning the ballot to the county board of elections and, under some circumstances, may offer assistance to their loved ones in marking the ballot. If the voter has filed the appropriate form with the board of elections naming a family member as his or her "attorney in fact" as provided in Ohio Revised Code section 3501.382, the voter may have the family member sign the identification envelope on behalf of the voter.
- 3 Family members may help their loved ones get to their polling place on Election Day or during early voting times leading up to Election Day (usually at the county board of elections). Additionally, voters with disabilities may choose to ask for help from family members while voting at the polling location.
- 4 Through grant assistance from the federal government and monitoring by state and federal officials, the vast majority of polling places in Ohio have been configured to comply with requirements for accessibility of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and compliance work is ongoing.

What may employees of assisted living facilities do to help their residents in the voting process?

- 1 Employees of assisted living facilities may offer assistance to their residents who are eligible Ohio voters and wish to participate in the process.
- 2 Employees of assisted living facilities may help residents register to vote. Remember, when a voter moves into an assisted living facility with the intention of staying, he or she must use that address as his or her residence when registering to vote.
- 3 Employees of assisted living facilities may help residents request an absentee ballot through the mail. Many registered Ohio voters are eligible to request an absentee ballot through the mail from their county boards of elections. Employees may aid their residents in requesting absentee ballots from the county board of elections and, under some circumstances, may offer assistance to their residents in marking the ballot. If the voter has filed the appropriate form with the board of elections naming a qualified individual as his or her "attorney in fact" as provided in Ohio Revised Code section 3501.382, the voter may have the "attorney in fact" sign the identification envelope on behalf of the voter.
- 4 Employees of assisted living facilities should contact the board of elections in the county where the facility is located for help in making sure the facility's residents have access to voting.

What may Ohio elections officials do to help voters who may be in new living situations such as assisted living facilities to exercise their voting rights?

- 1 County boards of elections may provide staff representatives to assist residents of assisted living facilities with access to voting. When assisting individual residents, boards are required to provide equal numbers of representatives from each of Ohio's two major political parties (one Republican and one Democrat). With such representation, board representatives may offer residents assistance in marking ballots. While boards may offer such services, please note that requirements to do so only apply to

individuals who are confined to a facility because of illness, disability, or infirmity.

- 2 Elections officials, including representatives of the Ohio Secretary of State's office and county boards of elections may also provide and encourage the use of absentee ballot request forms. Some county boards provide assisted living facilities with a list of registered voters residing at those facilities and remind employees of the facility that those voters may request absentee ballots.
- 3 As Ohio's chief elections official, Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner created the Voting Rights Institute within her office to answer questions the public may have about voting in Ohio. VRI created this guide, among other available resources, is happy to assist and may be contacted at 1 (877) VOTE-VRI or via e-mail at vri@sos.state.oh.us.

Other Common Questions

- 1 What if an individual seems unable to fully comprehend the voting process? Is that individual still eligible to vote? Under Ohio law, an individual can only be declared incompetent for the purposes of voting by a probate court. Therefore, any properly registered individual who wishes to be a part of the voting process must be included and offered all allowable assistance to cast a ballot.
- 2 How do voter identification laws affect individuals in assisted living situations? Current Ohio law permits a limited number of forms of identification to be used to enable an individual to vote. When voting in person on Election Day, individuals may use a current and valid Ohio driver's license or Ohio state identification card, a military identification card, or one of several other pieces of official correspondence that include the individual's address at which he or she is registered to vote. Examples include utility bills, bank statements, paychecks, and other government documents. Recognizing that many Ohio residents in assisted living situations may not have some of these forms of identification, in 2008 the Ohio Secretary of State's office issued Advisory 2008-26 explaining that utility bills issued by an assisted living facility, even those that have a "zero balance," are acceptable forms of identification. When a voter votes before the election (absentee ballot by mail or in-person) voter identification requirements are as simple as providing a valid driver's license number or the last four digits of his or her social security number.