



Voting in New York in the Time of COVID: A Guide for New York Human Services Organizations

With the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many legal and safe ways to vote and we encourage nonprofits to share information about voting with staff and clients.

General Election Day:

All polling locations throughout New York State are open from 6:00AM until 9:00PM on the **November 3rd** General Election day. All eligible New Yorkers **have the right to vote by mail** in the 2020 General Election due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ways to Vote	Deadline
Early Voting	October 24th – November 1st
Absentee Ballot	Postmark ballot by November 3rd Deliver ballot in-person by November 3rd
Vote in Person on Election Day	November 3rd

General Voting Q & A:

Q: Where do I go to vote?

A: You should receive a voter card in the mail 2–3 weeks after registering to vote that contains your poll site information. You can also check online by using the [Board of Elections poll site locator](#).

Q: How can I check if I'm registered to vote?

A: Use the [Voter Registration Look-up](#) to check your registration status online, or call 866-VOTE-NYC (212-487-5496 for the hearing impaired) for assistance.

Q: When are polling stations open on Election Day?

A: Polls will be open 6:00AM to 9:00PM.

Q: How are poll sites preparing for the coronavirus?

A: Masks and social distancing are required, surfaces will be regularly cleaned with disinfectant, hand sanitizer will be available for all, and poll workers will work behind plexiglass. For shorter lines, we recommend voting early.

Q: When will votes be counted?

A: Election Day votes will be counted when polls close.



Voting in Person on Election Day versus Early Voting:

Registered voters can vote in-person on Election Day. A high turnout is expected, so lines may be long at some poll sites. If you are worried about crowds and the risk of contracting the coronavirus, it is recommended that you **vote early**.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has put together a helpful guide to [Voting Safely During COVID-19](#), which you should review before heading to the polls.

As always, you should make sure you are following the [most important steps](#) to avoid contracting COVID-19: stay home if you are sick, stay at least 6 feet away from other people, wash your hands with soap and water regularly, wear a face covering, and get tested.

Early Voting:

All registered voters can vote early this fall. Polls will be open **October 24th to November 1st**. Your [Early Voting site](#) may be different from your Election Day poll site, so [make sure to check](#) before you go.

Early Voting Q & A:

Q: Do I need to sign up for early voting?

A: NO! Early voting is just like Election Day, but with more flexibility, less crowding, and shorter lines at the polls. Just [find your early voting site](#) and vote.

Q: How can I check to see if I'm registered to vote?

A: Use the [Voter Registration Look-up](#) to check your registration status online, or call 866-VOTE-NYC (212-487-5496) for the hearing impaired) for assistance.

Q: How are early voting sites preparing for the coronavirus?

A: Masks and social distancing are required, surfaces will be regularly cleaned with disinfectant, hand sanitizer will be available for all, and poll workers will work behind plexiglass.



Absentee Voting:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **any New York voter is eligible for an absentee ballot** due to the risk of contracting or spreading a communicable disease by checking the **“temporary illness” box** on the absentee ballot application form.

Date	Deadline Information
October 27th	Last day to apply online , by email, fax or to postmark an application or letter of application by mail for an absentee ballot. <i>(Please be warned that despite this deadline, the Post Office has advised they cannot guarantee timely delivery of ballots applied for less than 15 days before an election.)</i>
November 2nd	Last day to apply IN-PERSON for absentee ballot.
November 3rd	Last day to postmark ballot. Must be received by the local board of elections no later than Nov. 10th. Military Voter Ballots must be received no later than Nov. 16th.
November 3rd	Last day to deliver ballot IN-PERSON to the local board of elections or to any poll site.

Absentee Voting Q & A:

Q: What are the qualifications to vote by absentee ballot?

A: You need to be one of the following...

- Absent from your county or, if a resident of New York City, absent from the five boroughs, on Election Day.
- Unable to appear at the polls due to temporary or permanent illness or disability **(temporary illness includes being unable to appear due to risk of contracting or spreading a communicable disease like COVID-19).**
- Unable to appear because you are the primary care giver of one or more individuals who are ill or physically disabled.
- A resident or patient of a Veterans Health Administration Hospital.
- Detained in jail awaiting Grand Jury action or confined in prison after conviction for an offense other than a felony.



Absentee Voting Q & A (con't):

Q: How can I apply to vote absentee in New York State?

A: You can apply [online](#), by [mail](#), or by calling your local [county board of elections](#). Voters can use the “**temporary illness**” excuse if they are applying because they are concerned over the risk of contracting COVID-19.

- [Download English Form](#)
- [Download Spanish Form](#)
- [Electronic Accessible Absentee Ballot Application Portal](#)
- [Accessible Absentee Ballot Application with Instructions](#)

Q: How do I cast an absentee ballot?

A: Once you receive the ballot, mark the ballot according to your choices for each office following the instructions on the ballot. Once you have completed marking your ballot, fold it up and place it in the Security Envelope – this envelope will have a place for your signature. Then follow these steps:

- Sign and date the outside of the Security Envelope.
- Seal the Security Envelope.
- Place the Security Envelope in the Return Envelope. (This envelope will have the return address of your county Board of Elections on the outside and should have a logo that reads, “Official Election Mail”)
- Seal the Return Envelope.

You may return the ballot in any of the following ways:

- Put it in the mail ensuring it receives a postmark no later than November 3rd.
- Drop it off at an early voting poll site between October 24th and November 1st.
- Drop it off at a poll site on November 3rd by 9pm
- Drop it off at your [County Board of Elections Office](#) starting September 8th until no later than November 3rd by 9pm

Q: What is the deadline to submit an absentee ballot application?

A: You must apply online, postmark, email or fax a completed application or letter request for the General Election Absentee ballot no later than 7 days (**October 27, 2020**) before the election. You may apply in-person up to the day before the election (**November 2, 2020**). You may file an application at any time before the deadlines, but ballots will be mailed out beginning on or about **September 18, 2020**. *(Please be aware that despite the above deadlines the Post Office has advised that they cannot guarantee timely delivery of ballots applied **for less than 15 days before an election.**)*



What Else Do I Need to Know?:

You Can Still Vote in Person if You Request an Absentee Ballot

Even if you request or cast and return an absentee ballot, you may still go to the polls and vote in person. The Election Law recognizes that plans change. The Board of Elections is required to check the poll book before canvassing any absentee ballot. If the voter comes to the poll site, on Election Day or during early voting and votes in person, the absentee ballot is set aside and not counted.

New York Voting Rights

New York voters [have the right](#) to take up to **two hours of paid time off** in order to vote if their work schedule otherwise prevents them from voting in person while the polls are open. Voters must tell their employers that they need time off to vote **at least two days** before the election.

- You are in line at your polling place no later than 9:00 p.m. on Election Day.
- You can vote even if the voting machine is broken.
- You can vote by "affidavit ballot" if your name is missing from the list of voters at your polling site.
- You can vote without an ID unless you are a first-time voter who registered by mail and did not provide identification.

****Voters who experience discrimination or other barriers to registration and voting can contact the [Civil Rights Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's Office](#) at (212) 416-8250 or email civil.rights@ag.ny.gov.****

The [NYCLU's](#) partners at the national [Election Protection Hotline](#) provide assistance to voters before and after the election, and on Election Day. Call 866-OUR-VOTE for help. Contact the [NYCLU](#) at (212)-607-3300.

Victims of Domestic Violence

N.Y. Election Law (5-508) allows victims of domestic violence who obtain a court order from NY Supreme Court, Family Court or County Court in the county where they are registered to have their voter registration record kept separate and apart from other registration records and not be made available for inspection or copying by the public or any other person, except election officials acting within the course and scope of their official duties. Under a separate section of the law (11-306), you can also be excused from going to your polling place to vote and get a special ballot. For further information, you should contact your local board of elections for their confidential registration and special ballot procedures.



Homeless Individuals

People who are [homeless](#) can register to vote by identifying a place of residence (a street corner, a park, a shelter or any other place where you usually stay) and a mailing address (a local advocacy organization, shelter, outreach center, or anyone willing to accept mail for the individual).

Give Staff Paid Off Time to Vote

New York voters [have the right](#) to take up to **two hours of paid time off** in order to vote if their work schedule otherwise prevents them from voting in person while the polls are open. Voters must tell their employers that they need time off to vote **at least two days** before the election.

Organizations can develop policies to ensure that all employees have adequate paid time off to vote. In addition to reminding staff of election deadlines and encouraging folks to vote, it is important to let staff know about the organization's time off to vote policy. Nonprofits should consider **including early voting in their time off policy** to help lessen the crowding and diminish wait times at the polls due to the pandemic.

If your organization does not have a time off to vote policy, [Nonprofit VOTE](#) has [sample time off vote policies](#) that include different ways you may ask staff to notify the organization they are taking time off to vote and when they should take that time.

Nonprofit VOTE also lists [sample "Get Out the Vote" email from leadership](#) to let staff know about your organization's time off to vote policy.

In addition to notifying staff about the importance of voting, organizations can consider offering time off to be poll workers or volunteer in civic activities.

Thank you for helping get out the vote during COVID-19!
Please email info@humanservicescouncil.org with any questions.

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