



# PENNSYLVANIA'S GUIDE TO AGENCY-BASED VOTER REGISTRATION PROGRAMS

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of State  
Bureau of Commissions, Elections &  
Legislation

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	pg. 3
○ What is Voter Registration?	
○ Why Me? My Job Has Nothing To Do With Voter Registration!	
○ You Have A Very Important Role	
○ Help Is Available	
○ Which Clients Are Entitled To Voter Registration Opportunities?	
○ What Must I Do?	
THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS: STEP BY STEP.....	pg. 7
PREFERENCE FORMS (FORMERLY CALLED DECLINATION FORMS).....	pg. 8
THE COMPLETED VOTER REGISTRATOIN MAIL APPLICATION (VRMA) FORM.....	pg. 10
VOTER REGISTRATION QUALIFICATIONS.....	pg. 11
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	pg. 12
AGENCY COORDINATORS AND SITE COORDINATORS.....	pg. 13
MONTHLY REPORTING FORM.....	pg. 14
VRMA <sub>s</sub> , POSTERS AND PAMPHLETS.....	pg. 17
DEFINITIONS.....	pg. 19
IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER.....	pg. 20
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	pg. 21
CONTACT US.....	pg. 23
THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT (NVRA) OF 1993.....	pg. 24
PENNSYLVANIA STATE LAW.....	pg. 25
2008 PENNSYLVANIA ELECTIONS – IMPORTANT DATES.....	pg. 27

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is Voter Registration?**

In Pennsylvania, as in most other states, you must register before you can vote. The laws establish certain qualifications for voting (for example, you must be at least 18 on the day of the next election, and you must reside in the district where you vote), and registration ensures that only qualified persons are allowed to vote. Registration records also help to protect the electoral process from various types of fraud. Voter registration is not a mere formality, but an essential part of the process that keeps elections open, honest and fair to citizens and candidates alike.

Voter qualifications and voter registration procedures vary widely from state to state. In some states, registration procedures were held partially to blame for the decreasing number of citizens going to the polls to vote.

In response to the decline in voter participation, Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993 to make it more convenient for eligible citizens to register to vote in elections for federal office. The NVRA required Pennsylvania and other states to change certain voter registration procedures and provide more opportunities for voter registration.

In 1995, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted a state law, the Pennsylvania Voter Registration Act (PVRA), to conform Pennsylvania's voter registration system to the NVRA and to adopt the NVRA's new registration procedures for state as well as federal election purposes. The PVRA made the Secretary of the Commonwealth responsible for coordinating the implementation of the new registration procedures. The Secretary is the head of the Department of State, which includes the Bureau of Commissions, Elections, and Legislation. In 2002, the General Assembly passed Act 3 to establish the Statewide Uniform Registry of Electors (SURE) system for voter registration. Act 3 (now the state law) has governed the operation of both the SURE system and the procedures for voter registration in Pennsylvania.

### **Why Me? My Job Has Nothing To Do With Voter Registration!**

The NVRA is commonly known as the "motor voter" law, since its most familiar requirement is that states allow citizens applying for or renewing a driver's license to apply at the same time to register to vote. However, "motor voter" is a somewhat misleading name, since the NVRA and Pennsylvania state law actually require several voter registration procedures that have nothing to do with driver licensing.

One of these procedures requires agencies that provide public assistance or that have programs primarily engaged in serving people with disabilities are to provide voter registration opportunities to their clients. This is because low-income citizens and the disabled are not as likely as other citizens to have driver's licenses. In addition, the state law requires all Clerk of Orphans' Court offices, including marriage license bureaus, to provide voter registration opportunities to their clients.

**In Pennsylvania, participating agencies include:**

- County Assistance Offices of the Department of Public Welfare
- State Mental Hospitals of the Department of Public Welfare
- County Mental Health/Mental Retardation programs of the Department of Public Welfare
- State Mental Retardation Centers of the Department of Public Welfare
- Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services offices of the Department of Labor and Industry
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation offices of the Department of Labor and Industry
- Centers for Independent Living of the Department of Labor and Industry
- Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) clinics of the Department of Health
- Area Agencies on Aging of the Department of Aging
- Bureau of Special Education offices of the Department of Education
- Student Disability Services offices of the State system of Higher Education
- County Clerk of Orphans' Court offices, including marriage license bureaus
- Armed Forces Recruitment Centers
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Complementary Para-Transit providers
- All offices in the state that provide public assistance and all offices that provide state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities.

## **You Have A Very Important Role**

As a voter registration agency employee, you are working together with county voter registration officials to ensure that every eligible client has an opportunity to participate in state and federal elections. It is your duty to provide the client with an opportunity to complete a voter registration mail application form (VRMA). County voter registration officials are responsible for deciding whether the client is eligible to vote and for informing the client by mail about their application approval or rejection.

When a client is registered to vote, it is important for county voter registration officials to keep the client's voting record current. Therefore, as an additional service, voter registration agencies must help their clients update their voter registration records to reflect name changes, changes of address, or changes of political party affiliation. A client may submit a change of information by filling out the same application form used for new voter registration.

It is important to remember that, as a voter registration agency employee, you are not engaging in a political activity, but helping a fellow Pennsylvanian take the first step toward participation in the electoral process. Therefore, you may not seek to influence a client's political party preference. You should not display any political beliefs or your party allegiance while providing a voter registration opportunity. The NVRA and Pennsylvania state law prohibit you from making any statement to discourage a client from applying to register to vote. The laws also prohibit you from making any statement or taking any action that leads a client to believe that a decision about applying to register to vote has any bearing on the availability of public assistance or disability services or benefits.

## **Help is Available**

Your agency will have people assigned to help you perform voter registration duties. These people are called **agency coordinators** and **site coordinators**.

Each voter registration agency's mission and responsibilities are different. Therefore, each agency must customize its voter registration program to fit the agency's services. The **agency coordinator** is the person responsible for setting up his/her agency's program in accordance with the NVRA and Pennsylvania state law for informing each of his/her agency site about the program details. The agency voter registration coordinator is also the liaison between the agency and the Department of State.

Your agency will have a site coordinator for each office or program required to provide voter registration opportunities. The **site coordinator** has the vital job of ensuring that each employee knows how to carry out the agency's voter registration program. The information in this guide serves as a starting point for implementing the voter registration program, and the agency and site coordinators will supplement this guide with program details unique to the agency. **(Please see page 15 for more information about the duties of agency and site coordinators.)**

Anyone who has a question or a complaint regarding voter registration may call or e-mail the Department of State at:

**1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772) or [ST-VOTERREG@state.pa.us](mailto:ST-VOTERREG@state.pa.us)**

### **Which Clients Are Entitled to Voter Registration Opportunities?**

You must provide a voter registration opportunity along with each application, reapplication, application for recertification, renewal or change of address that occurs in the agency office or during home visits. Each client who is over the age of 18 or will be 18 on the day of the next election is entitled to an opportunity to register to vote. In addition to applying to register to vote, clients who are already registered can update their voter registration information (change of name, address or political party affiliation) by simply completing a VRMA.

### **What Must I Do?**

According to the NVRA and Pennsylvania state law, an agency employee must:

- Offer a voter registration mail application form to each client entitled to that opportunity.
- Record the client's decision to apply to register or not apply to register to vote on a Preference Form, which was formerly called a Declination Form.
- Assist the client with the completion of the VRMA unless assistance is refused.
- Accept a completed VRMA and transmit it to the appropriate county voter registration office.
- Keep the completed Preference Form on file for at least 24 months.

## THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP

1. Clients should be provided with an opportunity to complete a VRMA when they: make an application, reapplication, application for recertification, renewal or change of address. Simply ask the client, “If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?”
2. Inform the client that applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the availability or degree of assistance that will be provided by your agency.
3. Give the client a Preference Form, ask him/her to read it carefully, and assist the client in completing the Preference Form if requested. (The Preference Form contains important information for the client and records the client’s decision about whether he/she wants to apply to register to vote at that time.)
4. If the client does not want to register to vote, ask him/her to mark the “No” box and have him/her sign and date the Preference Form. If the client is already registered to vote, have him/her also mark the box “No, I am already registered to vote where I live now.” If the client refuses to mark any boxes or otherwise complete the form, you may consider the refusal to be a decision not to apply to register to vote at this time and must note this on the Preference Form along with the client’s name and address.
5. If the client wants to register to vote, ask him/her to mark the “Yes” box and to sign and date the Preference Form. You may then give the client a voter registration mail application form.

**Remember that all Preference Forms must be kept for at least 24 months (your site coordinator will instruct you on how to file and store them).**

6. Assist the client in completing the voter registration mail application form, unless he/she refuses such assistance. You should offer the client the same degree of assistance in completing the VRMA and Preference Form as is provided by your office with regard to the completion of its own forms, unless the client refuses such assistance. Inform the client that he/she may complete the VRMA in your office or take it home to complete. If the latter option is taken, the client may mail the VRMA directly to the appropriate county voter registration office at his/her own expense or return it to your office at a later date.
7. **Use the form located on page 20 to request voter registration materials/supplies from the Department of State.**
8. Send the completed VRMA to the appropriate county voter registration office according to where the client resides. **(Please see page 12 for more information about handling completed application forms.)**

**PREFERENCE FORMS**  
**(Formerly Called Declination Forms)**

Preference Forms contain helpful information for the client and record the client's decision as to whether or not he/she wants to apply to register to vote at that time. The client is also asked to sign and date the Preference Form, which becomes the agency's record that the client was offered a voter registration opportunity as required by federal and state law. If a client refuses to mark any boxes or otherwise complete the form, you may consider the refusal to be a decision not to apply to register to vote at this time and must note this on the Preference Form. **Remember, all Preference Forms must be kept for at least 24 months, including those of clients who refuse to complete and sign one.**

A generic Preference Form has been developed by the Department of State and provided to all agency voter registration coordinators for distribution to their individual site coordinators. All Preference Forms must contain the information seen on page 11.

If an agency wishes to do so, it may include a space where the employee providing the voter registration opportunity signs the form. However, an employee signature is not required by law.

## Voter Registration Opportunity

### PREFERENCE FORM

Name (Please print: Last Name, First, M.I)

IF YOU ARE NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE WHERE YOU LIVE NOW, WOULD YOU LIKE TO APPLY TO REGISTER TO VOTE HERE TODAY?

Yes

No    OR     No, I am already registered to vote where I live now.

IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO CHECK A BOX, YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THIS TIME.

Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency.

If you apply to register to vote, the office at which you submit this registration application form will remain confidential.

No information relating to a preference to register to vote will be used for any purpose other than for voter registration.

If you would like help filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private.

In order to be qualified to register to vote, you must be at least 18 years of age on the day of the next election, you must have been a citizen of the United States for at least one month prior to the next election and have resided in Pennsylvania and the election district where you plan to vote for at least 30 days prior to the next election.

If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or your application to register to vote, or your right to choose your own political party preference, you may file a complaint with the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania Department of State, 302 North Office Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120, or call the Department of State, toll-free, at 1-877-VOTESPA (1-877-868-3772).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **THE COMPLETED VOTER REGISTRATION MAIL APPLICATION (VRMA) FORM**

Once the VRMA is complete, you should inform the client that you will transmit the VRMA to the county voter registration office in the county where he/she resides. Advise the client that if the application is approved, he/she will receive a voter registration identification card in the mail from the county voter registration office within approximately two weeks. If this does not occur, the client should contact the county voter registration office, not your agency.

Your site coordinator will instruct you on your agency's procedures for transmitting VRMAs. If you will be mailing them to the county voter registration office where the applicants reside, put the correct mailing address and postage on the front of the VRMA (the addresses of all 67 county voter registration offices can be found on the inside of the VRMA).

Generally, you must transmit a completed VRMA to the appropriate county voter registration office within **10 days**. However, you must transmit them within **5 days if they are received within the last 5 days before a voter registration deadline**, which occurs 30 days before each election. Your site coordinator will inform you of these registration deadlines for each election.

## VOTER REGISTRATION QUALIFICATIONS

The following information regarding voter registration qualifications is provided solely to assist you in answering the client's questions about voter registration. Remember, it is the responsibility of the county voter registration office to determine voter eligibility and to inform the client as to whether or not his/her VRMA has been approved or rejected.

Individuals possessing the following qualifications are entitled to apply to register to vote in Pennsylvania:

- They will be at least 18 years of age on or before the day of the next election.
- They will have been a citizen of the United States for at least one month prior to the next election.
- They will have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and in their election district for at least 30 days prior to the next election.

If the client has indicated that he/she is not eligible for one of the above reasons, and yet he/she still wants to apply to register to vote, allow him/her to complete a VRMA and still transmit it to the appropriate county voter registration office. However, **please attach a separate note advising the county voter registration officials that the client may not be qualified to register, and list the reason(s)**. Sign the note with your agency code, as in the example below. This will help them determine the eligibility of the client.

SAMPLE NOTE:

*Dear County Voter Registration Official,*

*Enclosed is a voter registration mail application form that John Doe completed. According to our records, Mr. Doe will not be 18 years of age on or before the day of the next election. Please feel free to use this information to determine whether John Doe is qualified to register to vote in Pennsylvania.*

*Sincerely,*

*Agency X*

## CONFIDENTIALITY

By law, the identity of the voter registration agency through which any particular voter is registered must not be disclosed to the public. Therefore, when requesting voter registration material, **please make sure to order directly from the Department of State. The Department of State has VRMAs specifically designed for your agency with pre-printed codes on each application.**

Agency and site coordinators should ensure that employees requesting voter registration materials request the correct agency form. The coding system allows the Department of State to gather statistics regarding the source, as required by law, without compromising the client's right to confidentiality.

Agency personnel should be instructed not to complete Box 10 of the VRMA ("Name of person assisting in the completion of this application".) If an employee does assist a client, **the employee should write their agency code in Box 10 and indicate on the client's Preference Form that the employee assisted in the completion of the VRMA.** This will help ensure that the client will not be identified with the agency at which he/she applied to register.

## AGENCY COORDINATORS AND SITE COORDINATORS

An **agency coordinator** is the person chiefly responsible for setting up an agency's voter registration program, and then ensuring that the program operates in accordance with the provisions of the NVRA and Pennsylvania state law. An agency coordinator also acts as the liaison between the agency and the Department of State. Training, guiding, assisting and supplying site coordinators with voter registration material from the Department of State are other important functions of the agency coordinator.

A **site coordinator's** responsibilities are to:

- Coordinate the implementation of the voter registration program at his/her work site.
- Train employees to perform voter registration duties.
- **Ensure the timely and accurate transmittal of completed VRMAs to the appropriate county voter registration offices where the applicants reside.** All VRMAs must be transmitted to the appropriate county voter registration office within **10 days** of receipt, **or within 5 days of the receipt during the last 5 days before a voter registration deadline**, which occurs 30 days before each election. Your agency coordinator will inform the site coordinator, who will inform his/her colleagues of these deadlines for each election. The Department of State recommends that VRMAs be transmitted on a weekly basis.
- **Provide timely and accurate monthly voter registration site statistics to the agency coordinator.**
- Maintain an adequate inventory of forms and registration supplies such as VRMAs, Preference Forms, posters and pamphlets.

## MONTHLY REPORTING FORM

Pennsylvania state law requires the compilation of statistical information about agency voter registration programs. This statistical information comes from county voter registration offices and is reported to the General Assembly for the purpose of assessing the impact of voter registration programs. The Department of State provides all voter registration agencies with a format for reporting their statistics. **Site coordinators** are responsible for completing a reporting form for each month and submitting it to their agency coordinator.

The agency coordinator is responsible for compiling the site coordinator's reports into a monthly agency report to the Department of State. **Before submitting the agency report, the agency coordinator must review the site reports for accuracy and resolve any errors or discrepancies.**

When completing a monthly reporting form, **you must not leave any boxes blank.** If there is no value for a particular box, please insert a **zero**. Below is an illustration of the monthly reporting format and instructions for proper completion:

Box #1 NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED DURING THE REPORTING MONTH (Meaning number of clients served for application, reapplication and application for recertification, renewal or change of address)	
Box #2 NUMBER OF CLIENTS WHO WERE OFFERED A VOTER REGISTRATION OPPORTUNITY	
Box #3 TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS WHO DECLINED TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION	
Box #4 NUMBER OF CLIENTS FROM BOX #3 WHO DECLINED TO APPLY BECAUSE THEY INDICATED THEY ARE ALREADY REGISTERED TO VOTE	
Box #5 NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TAKEN BY CLIENT TO BE MAILED OR DELIVERED	
Box #6 NUMBER OF COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MAILED OR DELIVERED BY AGENCY	

**Box #1- Number of clients served during the reporting month.** This means the number of clients who came to your office (or who received a home visit) for the following reasons: new application, reapplication, application for recertification, renewal or change of address. If you are not sure what this means, contact your agency coordinator.

**Box #2- Number of clients who were offered a voter registration opportunity.** This means the actual number of clients who were asked if they would like to apply to register to vote. This number should be easy to obtain from the Preference Forms. The number in Box #2 should equal the number in Box #1. However, the number in Box #1 and the number in Box #2 should be determined independently of each other. In other words, you should not simply assume that the number of clients offered a VRMA is equal to the number of clients served.

**Please Note: Anyone who is receiving the services listed in Box #1 must be offered the opportunity to register to vote. If it is not clear when you are required to offer voter registration opportunities, please ask your agency coordinator for assistance.**

**Box #3- Total number of clients who declined to apply for registration.** This is the number of clients who marked the “No” box on the Preference Form, thus indicating they do not want to apply to register to vote at this time. This includes the number of clients who declined because they indicated they are already registered to vote.

**Box #4- Number of clients from Box #3 who declined to apply because they indicated they are already registered to vote.** Of those listed in Box #3, please indicate the number of clients who declined to apply to register to vote because they indicated they are already registered to vote.

**Box #5- Number of applications taken by client to be mailed or delivered.** This is the total number of people who indicated they wanted to apply to register to vote and took the VRMA with them.

**Box #6- Number of completed applications mailed or delivered by agency.** This is the number of completed VRMAs that your office mailed or delivered to the appropriate county voter registration office.

**Accurate reporting of voter registration statistics is extremely important. It is the site coordinator’s responsibility to carefully review his/her monthly report before submitting it to his/her agency coordinator. The site coordinator is also responsible for ensuring that agency employees accurately record statistical information about the voter registration services they provide to their clients.**

# Monthly Reporting on Agency Voter Registration

(TO BE USED ONLY BY AGENCY VOTER REGISTRATION COORDINATORS)

Name of Agency and Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

Fax: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Month and Year of this Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Submitting this Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Box #1 NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED DURING THE REPORTING MONTH (Meaning number of clients served for application, reapplication and application for recertification, renewal or change of address)	
Box #2 NUMBER OF CLIENTS WHO WERE OFFERED A VOTER REGISTRATION OPPORTUNITY	
Box #3 TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS WHO DECLINED TO APPLY TO REGISTER TO VOTE	
Box #4 NUMBER OF CLIENTS FROM BOX #3 WHO DECLINED TO APPLY BECAUSE THEY INDICATED THEY ARE ALREADY REGISTERED TO VOTE	
Box #5 NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TAKEN BY CLIENT TO BE MAILED OR DELIVERED	
Box #6 NUMBER OF COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MAILED OR DELIVERED BY AGENCY	

Please Return the Completed Report to Your **Agency Coordinator**.

For a list of agency coordinators, please contact the Department of State by e-mail:

[ST-VOTERREG@state.pa.us](mailto:ST-VOTERREG@state.pa.us)

## VRMAs, POSTERS AND PAMPHLETS

The Department of State has designed voter registration posters for use by all agencies offering voter registration opportunities. Pennsylvania state law requires that such voter registration posters be prominently displayed in each office where voter registration opportunities are provided. The site coordinator is responsible for ensuring that at least one poster is displayed in a public area of the agency office.

Pamphlets are also available that explain Pennsylvania's voter registration process. Contact your agency coordinator if you need a supply of posters, pamphlets or VRMAs or use the Voter Registration Material Request Form provided by the Department of State.

**Use the request form on page 20 to order all of your material.** It is your **site coordinator's** responsibility to keep an accurate inventory of both English and Spanish VRMAs on site. Once you believe you need to re-order, please fill out the request form and transfer it to your agency coordinator. The Department of State will then fill your order in a timely manner.

## Pennsylvania Department of State Voter Registration Order Form

Voter Registration Applications come in cases of 1,500 or packs of 100.

Date:	Phone:
Contact:	Email:
Agency:	County:
Address:	City/State/Zip:

Description of Form	Abv.	Quantity
Women, Infants & Children Nutrition Clinics	<b>WIC</b>	
Blindness & Visual Services (BVS) District Offices, BVS Contractors, Centers For Independent Living (CIL), State Mental Retardation Centers, State Mental Health Hospitals, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Office of Mental Health and Addictions Services (OMHAS), County MH/MR Offices, Office of Mental Retardation (OMR)	<b>Disability Agencies</b>	
County Assistance Offices	<b>CAO</b>	
Clerks of Orphan's Court	<b>COOC</b>	
Children and Youth, Children and Early Learning Organizations	<b>CY</b>	
Health Care not for profit, Health Care-managed care and other profit organizations	<b>HC</b>	
Student Disability Services Offices at Universities within the State System of Higher Education, Bureau of Special Education, Special Ed Programs	<b>SSHE</b>	
Area Agencies on Aging	<b>AAA</b>	
Para-Transit Providers	<b>Para-Transits</b>	

- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ voter registration mail application forms (English)
- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ voter registration mail application forms (Spanish)
- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the Pennsylvania Voting Guides
- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ voter registration posters

**Please return this form by fax/mail/email to:**

Lindsey Hock, Chief Division of Voter Registration  
 Bureau of Commissions, Elections & Legislation  
 Room 210 North Office Building  
 Harrisburg, PA 17102  
 717-787-5280 (phone)  
 717-705-0721 (fax)  
[ST\\_VOTERREG@state.pa.us](mailto:ST_VOTERREG@state.pa.us) (email)

## DEFINITIONS

<b>Agency Coordinator</b>	Person responsible for all sites that participate in the agency's voter registration program.
<b>“Motor Voter law”</b>	A popular nickname for the NVRA.
<b>NVRA</b>	National Voter Registration Act. The NVRA was signed into law in 1993 to increase registration among eligible citizens and to ensure the maintenance of accurate voter registration records.
<b>Pennsylvania State Law</b>	In 2002, the General Assembly passed Act 3 to establish the Statewide Uniform Registry of Electors (SURE) system for voter registration. Act 3 (now the state law) has governed the operation of both the SURE system and the procedures for voter registration in Pennsylvania.
<b>Preference Form</b>	A form that records the client's desire to apply to register or decline to apply to register to vote at that time (formerly known as the Declination Form).
<b>Site Coordinator</b>	Person responsible for administering the agency's voter registration program at a particular office or program.
<b>VRMA</b>	Voter Registration Mail Application form. VRMAs are printed and distributed by the Department of State.

## IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Offer each client the opportunity to apply to register to vote during every application, reapplication, application for recertification, renewal, and change of name or address transaction.
- Provide the same level of assistance in completing the Preference Form and VRMA as you would provide a client when completing one of your own agency forms.
- Inform a client who wishes to apply to register to vote that he/she may complete the VRMA in the office and you will transmit it to the appropriate county voter registration office, or he/she may take it home to complete.
- Inform a client who is registered to vote that he/she needs to re-register if they change their name and/or address.
- Inform a client that he/she will receive a voter identification card from the county voter registration office if their VRMA is approved; if a card is not received within two weeks, he/she should contact the county voter registration office.
- Review the VRMA for completeness **before** a client leaves your office.
- Ensure that when requesting VRMAs from the Department of State you indicate the correct agency or category. This will allow the Department of State to accurately track agency voter registration totals statewide.
- Do not display any political party preference or attempt to influence a client's political preference or party affiliation.
- Do not attempt to discourage a client from applying to register to vote.
- Inform a client that his/her decision to apply or decline to apply to register to vote will not affect the availability or degree of services or benefits from that agency.
- Do not transmit Preference Forms to a county voter registration office; they must be maintained on-site for at least 24 months. See your site coordinator for further instructions.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What if a client's family member, friend or member of the general public would like to apply to register to vote at our office?**

By all means, please provide a Voter Registration Mail Application form (VRMA) to them. However, you should **not** give them the "pre-coded" form or complete a Preference Form or include such a request in your monthly report. Please print a VRMA at [www.VotesPA.com](http://www.VotesPA.com).

### **What if someone asks about who is running for office, which political party they should register with, or the difference between the political parties?**

By law, you are required to remain non-partisan and **not** make any recommendations, and should inform the person of this legal restriction. You may, if you wish, suggest that he/she contact the local political parties' headquarters to obtain more information.

### **Why should I not put my name or any agency/office information anywhere on the VRMA?**

The NVRA and the Pennsylvania state law specifically require that you maintain your clients' confidentiality. .

### **What if the client refuses to complete or sign the Preference Form or participate in the voter registration opportunity?**

Make a clear notation on the client's Preference Form and provide as much information as possible in the event you are required to explain at a later date why that client did not apply to register to vote. Also, initial and date the Preference Form and file as you would all other Preference Forms (see your site coordinator for further instructions).

### **What should I do if the client does not understand my offering this opportunity for him/her to apply to register to vote?**

Use your professional judgment or ask your site coordinator. If you truly believe the client does not understand your offer, discontinue the voter registration application procedure and follow the procedures indicated in the previous answer above.

### **What if the client informs me that they have not heard anything about the status of their VRMA in over two weeks?**

Please refer them to the appropriate county voter registration office listed on the inside of the VRMA; processing of VRMAs can take two weeks or longer depending upon the time of year. You are not required to contact the county voter registration office for the client.

**Is my office required to pay for the postage on the VRMAs?**

Yes, if your office does not hand-deliver them to the appropriate county voter registration office, and if the client returns the VRMA to your office for transmittal after he/she completed it at home. To save costs, you may group the VRMAs into one package as long as you mail them within 10 days; however, if you are within 5 days of the voter registration deadline, you must transmit them within 5 days.

**What if the client cannot complete the VRMA and/or sign it without assistance?**

If requested, you must assist and complete the VRMA as per the client's instructions. In addition, enter only your agency code in the box "Name of person who assisted in the completion of this application" (Box # 10) and indicate on the client's Preference Form that you assisted in the completion of this VRMA and why assistance was given.

## CONTACT US

The names of all county election directors, addresses, phone and fax numbers for all 67 county boards of elections may be obtained through our educational Web site, [www.VotesPA.com](http://www.VotesPA.com).

If you have a question or concern, contact your agency coordinator or contact the Department of State at:

Pennsylvania Department of State  
Bureau of Commissions, Elections & Legislation  
Division of Voter Registration  
Room 210 North Office Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: 717-787-5280 or 1-877-VOTESPA

Fax: 717-705-0721

E-Mail: [ST-VOTERREG@state.pa.us](mailto:ST-VOTERREG@state.pa.us)

# The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993

42 U.S.C § 1973 gg-1 *et seq.*

## Section 7. Voter Registration Agencies

- (a) Designation—(1) Each state shall designate agencies for the registration of voters in elections for Federal offices. (2) Each state shall designate as voter registration agencies—(A) all offices of the state that provide public assistance; and (B) all offices in the State that provide State-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities.
- (4)(A) At each voter registration agency, the following services shall be made available: (i) Distribution of mail voter registration application forms in accordance with paragraph (6). (ii) Assistance to applications in completing the voter registration application forms, unless the applicant refuses such assistance. (iii) Acceptance of completed voter registration application forms for transmittal to the appropriate State election official.
- (5) A person who provides service described in paragraph (4) shall not: (A) seek to influence an applicant's political preference or party registration; (B) display any such political preferences or party allegiance; make any statement to an applicant take any action the purpose or effect of which is to lead the applicant to believe that a decision to register or not to register has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits.
- (6) A voter registration agency that is an office that provides service or assistance in addition to conducting voter registration shall—(A) distribute with each application for such service or assistance, and with each recertification, renewals, or change of address form relating to such service or assistance—(i) the mail voter registration application form described in section 9(a)(2), including a statement that: (I) specifies each eligibility requirement (including citizenship); (II) contains an attestation that the applicant meets each such requirement and (III) requires the signature of the applicant, under penalty of perjury; or (ii) the office's own form if it is equivalent to the form described in section 9(a)(2)m unless the applicant, in writing, declines to register to vote; (B) provides a form that includes- (i) the question "If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?";

## Section 8. Requirements With Respect To Administration of Voter Registration.

- (6) Ensure that the identity of the voter registration agency through which any particular voter is registered is not disclosed to the public.

## Section 11. Civil Enforcement and Private Right of Action

- (a) ATTORNEY GENERAL- The Attorney General may bring civil action in an appropriate district court for such declaratory or injunctive relief as is necessary to carry out this Act. (b) PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION- (1) A person who is aggrieved by a violation of this Act may provide written notice of the violation to the chief election official of the State involved.

# Pennsylvania State Law

25 Pa.C.S § 1325 Government Agencies

- (a) **General rule-** The secretary shall administer a system where-by all offices in this Commonwealth that provide public assistance, each county clerk of orphan's court, including each marriage license bureau, all offices in this Commonwealth that provide State-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities and all armed forces recruitment centers do all of the following:
- (1) Distribute voter registration application with each application; reapplication; and application for recertification, renewal or change of address.
  - (2) Assist applicants with completion of the registration application unless assistance is refused.
  - (3) Accept completed registration applications
  - (4) Transmit completed applications to the appropriate commission.
- (b) **Forms-** An agency designated in subsection (a) shall provide a form for office visit or, if the agency provides services to persons with disabilities, for home visits which contains all of the following:
- (1) The question "If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote today?"
  - (2) If the agency provides public assistance, the statement "Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency."
  - (3) Boxes for the applicant to check to indicate whether the applicant would like to register or decline to register to vote. In prominent type: "IF YOU DO NOT CHECK EITHER BOX, YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THIS TIME."
  - (4) The statement "In order to be qualified to register to vote, you must be at least 18 years of age on the day of the next election, you must have been a citizen of the United States for at least one month prior to the next election and have resided in Pennsylvania and the election district where you plan to vote for at least 30 days prior to the next election."
  - (5) The statement "If you would like to help in filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek help is yours. You may fill out the form in private."
  - (6) The statement "If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote or your right to choose your own political party or other political preference, you may file a complaint with the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania Department of State, Harrisburg, PA 17120." The secretary shall establish and publish a toll-free telephone number for the purpose of receiving complaints.
- (c) **Effect-** failure to check either box under subsection (b)(3) shall be considered a declination to register to vote.
- (d) **Staff-** Agency employees assisting in the completing of voter registration applications shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the following principles:

- (1) They shall not seek to influence an applicant's political preference or party registration or display political preference or party allegiance.
- (2) They shall not make any statement to an applicant or take any action the purpose of or effect of which is to discourage the application from registering to vote.
- (3) They shall not make any statement to an applicant or take any action the purpose of or effect of which is to lead the applicant to believe that a decision to register or not to register has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits.

Agency employees who violate this subsection shall be removed from employment, provided that the agency at its discretion may impose a penalty of suspension, without pay for at least 30 days, but not more than 120 days, if it finds the violation does not warrant termination.

- (e) **Encouraging registration-** An agency designated in subsection (a) shall provide reasonable space for nonpartisan signs or posters encouraging voter registration. The signs and posters shall be provided by the secretary.
- (f) **Transmission-** An agency designated in subsection (a) shall forward all completed applications to the appropriate commission within ten days after the date of receipt. If a voter registration application is received within five days before the last day to register before an election, the application shall be transmitted to the appropriate commission not later than five days after the date of its receipt by the agency.
- (g) **Confidentiality-** The identity of the voter registration agency through which any particular voter is registered in accordance with this section shall not be disclosed to the public.
- (h) **Use of information-** No information relating to a declination to register to vote in the connection with an application made at an office described in this section may be used for any purpose other than voter registration.
- (i) **Assistance-** Each agency shall provide to each applicant who chooses to register to vote the same degree of assistance with regard to the completion of the registration application form as is provided by the office with regard to the completion of its own forms unless the applicant refuses such assistance.
- (j) **Regulations-** The secretary shall promulgate regulations regarding the maintenance and destruction of forms used pursuant to this section.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF COMMISSIONS, ELECTIONS AND LEGISLATION

2010 PENNSYLVANIA ELECTIONS  
IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

First day to circulate and file nomination petitions .....	February 16
Last day to circulate and file nomination petitions .....	March 9
First day to circulate and file nomination papers .....	March 10
Last day for withdrawal by candidates who filed nomination petitions .....	March 24
Last day to REGISTER before the primary .....	April 19
Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot .....	May 11
Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted civilian..... absentee ballots	May 14
<b>PRIMARY</b> .....	May 18
First day to REGISTER after primary .....	May 19
Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted military and..... overseas absentee ballots (must be postmarked no later than May 17)	May 25
Last day to circulate and file nomination papers .....	August 2
Last day for withdrawal by candidates nominated by nomination papers	August 9
Last day for withdrawal by candidates nominated at the primary .....	August 9
Last day to REGISTER before the NOVEMBER election .....	October 4
Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot .....	October 26
Last day for County Boards of Elections to receive voted civilian..... absentee ballots	October 29
<b>GENERAL ELECTION</b> .....	November 2
First day to REGISTER after November election .....	November 3
Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted military and..... overseas absentee ballots (must be postmarked no later than November 1)	November 9

Note: All dates in this calendar are subject to change without notice.