

Save Health Care in Washington Advocacy Toolkit

Voter Registration



SaveHealthCareInWA.org



Community Health Centers (CHCs) are a place where people can go to access more than just primary medical care. As a CHC, we connect people to multiple types of health services, as well as community resources and services, like **VOTER REGISTRATION**. Below are some ways in which your CHC can help connect people to this very important service. After all, the people we elect are often making important decisions about YOUR health care, so let them you know you have a voice and that you intend to use it.

Yes! You CAN help people register to vote at your CHC. Here's How.

Whether your CHC wants to encourage people to register to vote, or remind them to vote (Get Out The Vote, aka GOTV), you can engage people in a number of ways such as creating a physical, in-person event, or an “online event.” Either way, planning is necessary and below are some suggestions for how to go about doing that.

1. **Identify Your Audience** - Whether you plan to focus on staff only, staff *and* patients, or others, there are a number of ways in which you may want to engage your intended audience. First identify who you want to address, then decide from there the best ways to reach that audience.
2. **Choose a specific timeframe for your campaign** - Pick a start and end date for your event—whether that event is a physical, or an online event. If you intend to host a *physical* event where you are having people fill out the forms with a volunteer or staff member present for support, we suggest you choose a specific time and date for that event. You will want to advertise the event in advance for several days/weeks and we advise you choose a window of time in which the clinic tends to be busy. We also highly recommend you chose a window of time *no more than 2-4* hours so you do not exhaust your volunteer or staff. If hosting a physical event, remember people love giveaways such as snacks, merchandise, etc. if you have any of that to spare. If you choose to host an *online* event, select a start and end date by which to run your communications. If you are hosting a GOTV online event, please refer to the elections calendar at the WA Secretary of State website: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/>. Remember, absentee ballots are sent out approximately 18 days before every scheduled election day.
3. **Communicate, communicate, communicate** - No matter what type of “event” you decide to host, remember to make sure that it is well known and shared across *multiple* platforms. Refer back to your intended audience and think, “what has been most successful in reaching this audience in the past?” For example: if you choose to focus on *staff only* we suggest you have someone briefly address people in a staff meeting with forms in hand, post fliers in breakrooms and staff restrooms, and send an email reminding people. If you are hosting an event for *everyone*, including patients, consider also posting fliers around the clinic at least two weeks in advance of the event including the wait area and exam rooms. For online events create a schedule laying out exact dates you want to post on social media and what each of these message might say.

For this and other advocacy related materials and updates please visit us at www.savehealthcareinwa.org.

As a 501c3, you MUST remember to stay non-partisan and do NOT tell people *how* they should vote. Our focus should only be to make sure they are registered, that it is up to date, and/or to remind them to cast their vote prior to an approaching election date. Below are some tips on what you can and cannot do. For a more *legal* advisement on this topic, please reference the “NACHC Q&A on CHCs and Voter Registration” link under the “Education” header within the “Voter Registration” Advocacy Tool at <https://www.savehealthcareinwa.org/advocacy-tools/>.

What you CAN do:

- Do work with local, non-partisan, volunteer groups, such as the League of Women Voters or your local County Elections Office, to help with your voter registration efforts. They may have access to people to help, materials, and more.
- Do post fliers or online the dates of any upcoming elections, as well as a simple reminder to vote in time for their ballot to be counted.
- Do remind people that if they have moved in the last 6 months, their voter registration is likely out of date and they may not receive their absentee ballot in time to vote. By filling out a paper form or doing so online at least 30 days in advance of the next election, they can help make sure their ballot reaches them in time.
- Do know that you can register people 16 years old and older, the elections office will pre-register them so that when they turn 18 they are eligible to begin receiving their mail-in, or absentee, ballots. If they do not have a WA state issued driver’s license yet, they can use the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number when completing the form (online or paper) instead. They will use the same paper or online form as everyone else, and their birthdate will tell the elections office how to treat that “Future Voter.”
- Do remind people that WA state is an absentee ballot ONLY voting state (aka “vote by mail”) and its very important their registration and mailing address is up to date.
- Do provide any volunteer or staff designated to help with voter registration any materials or supplies they might need such as a table, chair, mask, pens, hand sanitizer, giveaways or SWAG if you have any for people who engage with them, preprinted forms in multiple languages spoken most at that clinic, a contact person at the clinic if needed for questions.
- Do mail any/all completed voter registration forms to your local county elections office **no later than 5 days** after a form is completed: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/>.

Did you know?

Patient Navigators (Medicaid eligibility workers) at CHCs have the training and the ability to help people register to vote already. This is per the National Voter Registration Act, aka the “Motor Voter Act.”

What you CANNOT do:

- Do **not** ask them how they are going to vote, or make any suggestions to how they should vote.
- Do **not** allow any sort of campaigning materials on your CHC property, unless you are prepared to make materials available for ALL those running for office. We often advise to stay away from campaigning materials all together to keep things clearly non-partisan and in compliance.

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