



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
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Long Term Care Facility Caregiver's Guide To Absentee Voting

General Election 2020 – November 3, 2020

Introduction

Residents of long-term care facilities have the right to vote. If going to the polls is difficult, these voters may request and vote an absentee ballot (aka mail-in ballot) as a safe and easy way to participate in the 2020 General Election.

Applying for an Absentee Ballot

In order to vote absentee, a registered voter must first submit an application for an absentee ballot to the local county clerk.

It is important to apply for an absentee ballot as early as possible to give election officials and the post office ample time to complete the full process.

There are a number of ways to submit an application for an absentee ballot:

- A paper application form may be submitted to the county clerk:
 - Some but not all county clerks will be automatically mailing applications to registered voters in their county.
 - Voters may also receive an application in the mail from another election related organization.
 - Voters may call and request that an application be mailed to them by their local county clerk.
 - Facilities may provide paper applications to interested residents.
- An online application may be submitted at nmvote.org

Voters must return the application for an absentee ballot to the county clerk no later than October 20, 2020. This is to allow enough time for the county clerk to mail the ballot and for the voter to return the ballot by the deadline of Election Day, November 3, 2020 at 7:00 PM.

Completing the Absentee Ballot

Beginning 28 days prior to Election Day, county clerks will begin mailing absentee ballots to voters who have applied for one.

The absentee ballot packet sent to the voter will consist of a few parts:

- The ballot, which will be two sided in most cases
- A privacy envelope
- A return mailing envelope with pre-paid postage
- Instructions

It is important to follow the instructions to complete the ballot including the required information on the return envelope. The voter is required to sign in the designated location and provide the last four (4) digits of their social security number for voter identification purposes. If this information is not provided, the ballot will be rejected by the county clerk.

Returning the Ballot

The return envelope includes pre-paid postage and is pre-addressed for delivery back to the county clerk so a voter may simply drop it off in a mailbox or post office.

The voter may also hand deliver the sealed absentee ballot envelope to the county clerk's office or to any absentee or early voting polling location. Some counties may also offer express or drive up drop boxes for hand delivering absentee ballots.

Pursuant to state law only a voter, caregiver to that voter or member of that voter's immediate family may deliver that voter's absentee ballot to the county clerk in person or by mail. "Immediate family" means the spouse, children, parents or siblings of a voter. If any one of these authorized people returns the mailed ballot of the voter, they must sign and provide their printed name and relationship to the voter on the official mailing envelope.

In all cases, the ballot must be delivered by 7:00 PM on Election Day or else it will not be counted.

Tracking an Absentee Ballot

The voter may track the status of their absentee application or ballot at nmvote.org. This website will provide information regarding whether or not the ballot was received by the county clerk and whether it has been accepted.

A voter may also call their local county clerk for information on the status of their absentee application or ballot.

Caregiver Restrictions

Absentee Ballot Delivery

As noted above, caregivers or immediate family members may assist the voter by delivering their absentee ballot to the mailbox, drop box, or to a polling location or county clerk's office. In this case, the authorized person must sign and provide their printed name and relationship to the voter in the designated location on the official mailing envelope.

Voting Assistance

Under New Mexico law, there are restrictions on who is eligible to request assistance with voting. A voter may request assistance with voting only if the voter is:

- Blind;
- Physically disabled;
- Unable to read or write; or
- A member of a language minority who has an inability to read well enough to exercise the elective franchise.

A person who is eligible for assistance may be assisted by a person of that voter's own choice but not by the voter's employer, an agent of that employer, or by a candidate whose name appears on the ballot.

It is important that caregivers, relatives, staff or other politically interested parties do not subject voters residing in long term care facilities to undue influence when they chose to participate in the voting process.