

Your Right to Vote If You Live in an Institution

A Plain Language Summary of the Connecticut Secretary of the State's Opinion on Voting for People in Institutions

This document explains the voting rights of people who live in institutions in Connecticut. An **institution** includes nursing homes, hospitals, mental health centers, drug treatment centers, and assisted living facilities. If you live in one of these places, you still have the right to vote — and this document explains how. The **Secretary of the State** is in charge of elections and voting. People who can vote are called “**electors**.”

The Opinion tells us what the Secretary says the law requires to protect the rights of voters in institutions in Connecticut. The Opinion tries to make sure that electors know their rights and that people who help them are not confused.

Signing Up to Vote (Voter Registration)

- If you live in an institution, you have the same right to sign up to vote as everyone else. You should get enough time and help to do it.
- Election workers can come to your facility to help people register. They are not allowed to give you less time to sign up than the law allows.

Voting When Officials Visit Your Facility

This is called “**supervised absentee voting**.” It means election workers come to your facility so you can vote without leaving. Here is what you need to know:

- You and anyone who helps you vote must be told ahead of time when the election workers are coming.
- Election workers must make sure the voting area is easy to get to and that the right tools are available if you need them.
- Election workers should try to come back as many times as needed so that anyone who wants to vote can vote. They must come on at least two different days so everyone has a chance to vote.

Voting in Person at a Polling Place

- If you are not prohibited from leaving your facility, you can go vote in person on Election Day or during early voting — even if your facility offers voting supervised absentee voting.

- If you have trouble getting out of your car, you can request that your ballot be brought to you in the curbside voting area outside the polling place.

Mailing in Your Own Absentee Ballot

- Even if your facility has supervised absentee voting, you can still ask for your own absentee ballot in some situations — for example, if you are unable to participate in supervised absentee or in-person voting and you would be unable to vote at all.
- In an unexpected health emergency within 6 days of election day, you may be able to get a special emergency ballot but your designee would have to return this ballot to a drop box or a town clerk.

No One Can Block You from Voting

- Local rules cannot be used to stop you from voting. For example, a facility cannot make you sign up or make you register early.
- Election workers and facility staff must treat you with respect and dignity.
- You must be given clear, correct information about how, when, and where to vote — including your right to get help from someone you choose.
- Election workers and facility staff must be trained so they give you accurate information.
- Voting must be **accessible** to you so that you can physically get to the space to vote, and that you have technology, large print, or other support that you need.

Getting Help to Vote

- You get to choose who helps you vote. It can be a friend, family member, staff person, or another person you trust—anyone except a candidate on the ballot that is not your immediate family member, your boss, or union representative—can be your helper.
- Your helper will not get in trouble for helping you vote.
- Your helper can help with any part of the voting process. The one exception is that when you return your ballot, only certain people can return it for you. That person is called a “**designee**” and can be a family member, someone who provides care to you, a facility staff member, a registrar or assistant registrar of voters, or a police officer.
- Your vote is private. You do **not** have to let election workers help you or see how you have marked your ballot you vote if you do not want to.

Even if You Have a Guardian, You Can Still Vote

Some people have a guardian, a conservator, or someone with a "power of attorney" — meaning another person helps make decisions for them. This does **not** take away your right to vote. Even if your guardian or conservator objects, they cannot legally stop you from voting if you are eligible to vote. They also cannot tell you how to vote- that is your choice and your choice only to make!