

## Frequently Asked Questions about Voting in Long-term Care Facilities

If you have any questions, call the Secretary of State's office at (617) 727-2828. They typically answer the phone quickly and can answer your questions quickly. They are also willing to send Vote by Mail applications and Voter Registration forms to long-term care facilities if they need more.

If you feel your right to vote has been violated in any way, call then Elections Division at 1-800-462-VOTE / 1-800-462-8683 or [elections@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:elections@sec.state.ma.us).

In addition, you can call your local elections office/town clerk with questions.

Brianna Zimmerman, Systems Change Advocate at Stavros CIL is also available to answer questions/help with voter registration at [bzimmerman@stavros.org](mailto:bzimmerman@stavros.org) or (413) 256-0473 Ext. 121.

Special thanks to Greater Springfield Senior Services Ombudsmen Office and volunteers for their thoughtful questions.

1. **QUESTION:** Can I get an example of an electronic ballot to show activities staff/social workers/residents?

**ANSWER:** It looks like it is not possible to see what an electronic ballot will look like before receiving one. However, you will be able to see a sample of what will be on your election ballot by visiting

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/WhereDoIVote>

2. **QUESTION:** Absentee vs. mail-in ballots: Who needs an emergency absentee ballot vs a mail-in ballot, particularly in a rehabilitation facility?

**ANSWER:** According to REV UP Massachusetts, the only difference between absentee and vote by mail application is Special Circumstances. **According to the Secretary of State Office, voting by mail is recommended over absentee ballots because no proof of excuse is required. But, you should fill out an absentee ballot application rather than vote by mail application IF:**

- You are a US citizen residing overseas
- You are on active military duty
- You are currently incarcerated for a reason other than felony conviction
- You are requesting **an emergency ballot due to hospitalization/being admitted to a healthcare facility** (rehabilitation facilities are healthcare facilities).
  - o If admitted to a healthcare facility within **1 WEEK of the election**, you can use the absentee ballot application to designate someone of your choice to deliver a ballot to you. **This same person** will need to bring the signed application to your local election office, pick up your absentee ballot, bring it to you, and return it for you by the close of the polls on election day.

**Emergency ballots can be requested up until the close of the polls.**

### SOURCES:

- Rev Up Massachusetts: <https://revupma.org/wp/vote/absentee-ballots/>
- MA Secretary of State: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleabsentee/absidx.htm#absentee>
- Spoke to MA Secretary of State Office

**PRINTABLE ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION:**

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/absentee/English-Absentee-Ballot-Application.pdf>

3. **QUESTION:** Is electronic voting secure? If someone needs to vote electronically but does not want to submit a ballot electronically can they do that?

**ANSWER:** It is up to you to decide whether you feel voting online is safe and secure. Some people with disabilities feel that voting electronically is their only way to truly vote independently with privacy. Others would prefer to submit their ballot by mail, drop box, or in person to their local election office. It is really up to the individual to make this decision.

**You DO have the option to fill out a ballot electronically and then submit the ballot in person, by drop box, or by mail if you do not feel comfortable submitting it electronically.**

According to the Secretary of State:

*"If you'd like to return your ballot by mail, drop box, or in person, **you must inform your local election official** so they can send you a secrecy envelope and a return mailing envelope. You must inform your local election official of your request **prior to the Vote by Mail application deadline**.*

*The secrecy envelope will have a signature line marked by a hole punched in the envelope. The mailing envelope will be postage pre-paid and pre-addressed to your local election official.*

*To return a ballot by mail, drop box, or in person, you must be able to print your ballot. Once you have completed marking your ballot, print your marked ballot on paper and fold your printed ballot into thirds. If your ballot is printed on multiple pages, fold all the pages together. Seal your folded ballot inside the secrecy envelope.*

*Complete the affidavit included on the secrecy envelope by placing your signature on the designated line to the right of the hole-punch. If you are unable to complete the affidavit on the secrecy envelope, complete and print the Electronic Affidavit of Compliance, including date and signature. Signatures may be hand-drawn using a mouse or stylus. You may type your signature instead, if you affirm you are unable to independently insert a hand-drawn signature.*

*Once you have completed the affidavit, insert the secrecy envelope (and, if you used it, the printed and completed Electronic Affidavit of Compliance) into the mailing envelope. Seal the mailing envelope.*

*To return your ballot by mail, place the mailing envelope into the mail using any USPS collection box.*

*To return your ballot by hand delivery, take the mailing envelope with you to any [ballot drop box](#) in your city or town. You may also delivery your ballot to an [early voting location](#) in your city or town during early voting hours or to your local election office.*

*Ballots cannot be delivered directly to your polling place on Election Day."*

**SOURCE:** <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elev/early-voting-by-mail-accessible.htm>

4. **QUESTION:** Does having an assisting person disqualify you from getting an electronic accessible ballot?  
**ANSWER:** No. It is your right to vote electronically if you are blind, have vision impairments, mobility/dexterity disabilities, OR other disabilities that **make it difficult or impossible to access a paper Vote by Mail ballot because of inability to independently read, write, hold, or physically manipulate standard print materials**, REGARDLESS of whether you have someone who can assist you, because it is your right to vote independently and privately.  
**SOURCE:** <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elev/early-voting-by-mail-accessible.htm> \

5. **QUESTION:** When checking the accommodations boxes to get an accessible ballot, does this automatically give you an electronic ballot or some sort of other paper ballot?  
**ANSWER:** The “Accessible Electronic Vote by Mail System” is an **electronic ballot only**. You need to **provide your email address/an email address of someone you designate** in order to receive it. The only way to receive an accessible ballot at home is to do so electronically. If you do not want to fill out your ballot electronically but have disabilities that prevent you from doing so independently, other options include:
- Having someone you trust assist you in filling out a mail-in ballot.
  - Going to vote at your polling location and using the AutoMARK machine, which can magnify ballots, provide high contrast ballots, and orally read a ballot.
  - And/or having someone you trust assist you in getting to your polling place, checking in, checking out, and/or helping you fill out your ballot.

**SOURCES/MORE INFORMATION ON THE AUTOMARK MACHINE:**

<https://revupma.org/wp/vote/automark-machine/>

6. **QUESTION:** How and when would you need to switch someone’s voter registration to the address of a nursing home/long-term facility?  
**ANSWER:** **In sum, it is up to the resident if they want to change their registration address. Some people staying short term may not want to update their address since they are only at the facility for a short time, and others staying long term may have someone such as a family member, friend, or spouse bringing mail to them.**
- 1) The first step is to check voter registration status and information here.  
If residents have the last 4 digits of their SSN and last address they were registered to vote at this should be relatively easy. You can check registration status here:  
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/VoterRegistrationSearch/MyVoterRegStatus.aspx>  
If a facility needs a list of residents registered to vote at their address, they should contact their local town/city elections office. A list of these offices can be found here:  
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elev/ev-find-my-election-office.htm>
  - 2) Long-term residents who are new voters need to fill out a voter registration application. If they have a license or State ID they can register online. If they do not, they can register by mail or in person.
  - 3) Residents can fill out their address either as the facility’s address, OR if they have someone at home to get and deliver their mail to them they can register at their home address-- if they are more comfortable with this.

- 4) If people are registered at their previous address and do not want to update their voter registration to reflect the facility's address, they should write the address they are registered at, regardless of whether they want their ballot delivered to this address, at the top of the Vote by Mail application. If they have someone who can bring them their mail-in ballot and mail it for them and they feel most comfortable doing this, they can also choose to have their ballot sent to this address.
- 5) If they do not have access to their mail from home/their previous address, they can choose to have **their ballot mailed to the nursing home or rehab facility** they are currently staying at, regardless of whether they are registered at the facility's address.  
**According to the Secretary of State Office, voting by mail is recommended because no proof of excuse is required.**

**SOURCE:** Spoke to the Secretary of State office.

Also see this Massachusetts Senior Care Association toolkit for details:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/a3b372fa701/37a493ee-4936-4534-b6a4-f861ecfb2f7e.pdf?rdr=true>

7. **QUESTION:** I need more information on voting rights of people with an intellectual disability – Who can or cannot vote?

**ANSWER:** Note that people with disabilities, including intellectual/cognitive disabilities have the right to vote in MA and if they express interest in doing so they have the right to vote (with some exceptions for people with guardians). **Unless a guardianship specifically prohibits the person under guardianship from voting, you can register and vote.** FYI: Guardianships which prohibit voting are uncommon.

**SOURCE:** Here is the Voters' Bill of Rights from the Secretary of State's office website:

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elerights/rightsidx.htm> and information from REV UP MA: <https://revupma.org/wp/resources/faq/>