VOTING:

IT'S YOUR RIGHT

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A RESOURCE DEVELOPED BY:

RUTGERS HEALTH
The Boggs Center
on Disability and Human Development
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

In collaboration with New Jersey's
Developmental Disabilities Act Network Partners:

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY
ADVANCING JUSTICE. ADVOCATING INCLUSION.

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This resource will answer these questions about voting:

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What Is Voting?

Voting is a way:

- of making a decision
- of making a choice or picking what you want
- to have your voice heard
- to express an opinion

When you vote in an election, you choose the government officials that you would like to represent you.

Have you voted before?

Put a ✓ next to the times you've had a chance to vote.

I've had a chance to vote:

☐ at a self-advocacy meeting

☐ as part of a board or committee

☐ in a government election

The reason voting is important to me is:

Why do you vote?

"It is our basic right."

"To vote for people we trust to help us and will set the right rules for government."

"To have a say in how things are run."

What should I know about my voting rights?

- You have the right to vote even if you have a developmental or intellectual disability.
- You have the right to vote even if you live in a developmental center, group home, or other place where you receive residential care.
- You may have the right to vote even if you have a guardian (depending on the terms of the guardianship).
- You have the right to vote if you are waiting in line when the polls close.
- You have the right to make up your own mind about how you want to vote.
- You can choose to talk about the candidates and the issues or **NOT** to talk about the candidates and issues.
- You do not have to tell anyone who you vote for unless you want to.

What kinds of elections are there and when do they happen?

Different kinds of elections take place at different times during the year.

A **General Election** for Federal and State Government is when you vote for:

- President of the United States
- Governor of New Jersey
- Senators
- Congressmen/Congresswomen
- County and local officials

General Elections take place on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

You can vote for any candidate you want to in the General Election, even if they are from a different party than the one you belong to.

A **Primary Election** is when the Republican and Democratic political parties decide who will run as their candidate in the general election.

Primary Elections in New Jersey take place on the Tuesday after the first Monday in June.

- You can only vote in a primary election if you are registered as a **Republican** or a **Democrat**.
- If you are registered as an **Unaffiliated Voter (Independent)**, you can become a member of the **Republican** or **Democratic Party** to vote in the Primary Election up to and on Primary Election Day.
- You must vote for a candidate in your political party.
- If you are currently registered as a **Republican** or **Democrat**, but wish to change your party, you must submit a **Political Party Affiliation Declaration Form** at least 55 days before the Primary Election.

Who can vote in a government election?

In order to vote, a person has to:

- be **18** years or older
- be a United States citizen
- be registered to vote
- understand the concept of voting and have the ability to make a choice

AND

- cannot be currently serving time in jail for a felony

Can you vote in a government election?

Put a ✓next to all the things that describe you.

☐ I am 18 years-old or older.

☐ I am a United States citizen.

☐ I am registered to vote.

☐ I understand the concept of voting and have the ability to make a choice.

☐ I am NOT currently serving time in jail for a felony offense.

If you put a ✓on all 5 lines, you are somebody who can vote.

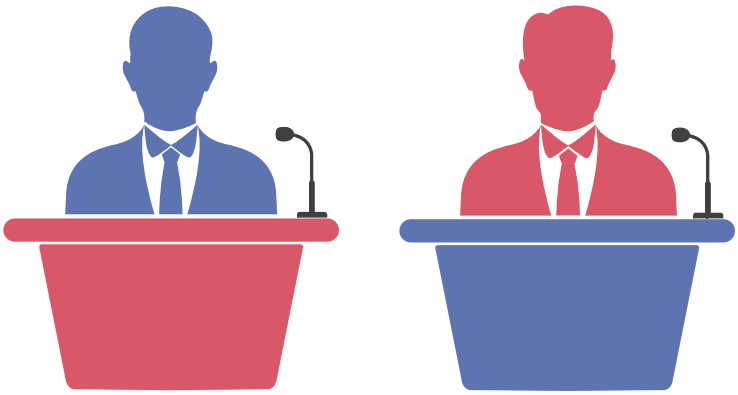
What should I do to prepare to vote?

You have to **register** to be able to vote.

It is good to learn about the candidates and issues, either by reading the newspaper or watching the news. You can also learn about the candidates and issues by going to town meetings.

You can find information about candidates on some websites. A few helpful websites for reading about candidates are listed here:

- League of Women Voters of New Jersey: http://lwvnj.org
- League of Women Voters Education Fund: http://www.vote411.org
- REV UP New Jersey: Alliance Center for Independence: https://www.adacil.org/voting
- REV UP: Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power: https://www.aapd.com/advocacy/voting/
- Project Vote Smart: http://justfacts.votesmart.org
- Ballotpedia: https://ballotpedia.org/elections



When and how can I register to vote?

Where can I get a hard copy voter registration form?

- **At the New Jersey Division of Elections website: https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml**
- **At the office of the County Commissioner of Registration or from your municipal clerk**
- **At a government office where you apply for assistance or service, including the Division of Developmental Disabilities and your county welfare agency**

You must register at least 21 days before the election after living in the same county for 30 days.

- You can register to vote online by visiting https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register. You will need to provide a driver's license, non-driver identification (ID), or your social security number.
- You can register by mailing in the Voter Registration Application to the County Clerk's office in the county where you live.
- You can register in person at the office of the County Commissioner of Registration.
- You can register to vote at a motor vehicle agency while applying for or renewing a driver's license or non-driver identification (ID) card. The Motor Vehicle Commission will send your information to the New Jersey Division of Elections.

You only need to register one time, unless you move to a different county or out of New Jersey, or are released from prison.

- If you move to a different county or state, you need to register to vote again.
- If you are released from prison, you will need to register to vote again.

If you move within the same county, you need to fill out a Voter Registration Application to change your address.

If you move less than 30 days before an election, you must go to your old polling place to vote on election day.

What will I be asked to decide when I register to vote?

When you register to vote, you will be asked what party you would like to join.

You can choose to be:

- Republican
- Democrat
- Unaffiliated Voter (people often call an unaffiliated voter an Independent)
- Other parties such as Libertarian, Green Party, etc.

Are you registered to vote?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered “no,” but would like to register, use the information on **page 9** to find out how.

Not sure if you’re registered?

Enter your name and date of birth in New Jersey’s Division of Elections Voter Search online to find out:
https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/registration-check

Did you know?

- **To vote in a primary election you must be registered as a Republican or a Democrat, and you can only vote for a candidate in your chosen party.**
- **Regardless of political party, any person can vote for any candidate in the General Election.**

Do I need identification?

Did you know?

You must provide a signature when you register and when you vote. Any mark can be a signature, but you must make sure you have a signature on file. Because your signature identifies you when you go to vote, you should update your signature on file if it has changed. Contact your County Clerk to do so.

You will only be asked to show identification to prove you live at the address you provide:

- when you register to vote

OR

- the first time you vote in person or by mail.

Identification can include items such as:

- Passport
- Student ID
- Driver's License
- Government-issued ID
- A document with your name and address on it, such as:
  - A bank statement
  - A government check (like a Social Security check)

Do you have identification?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is a sample ballot?

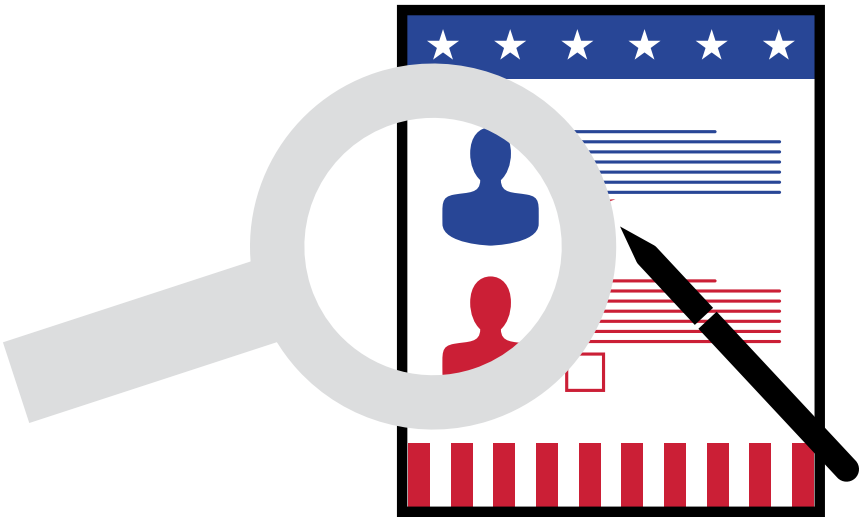
A week before an election, you will receive a **sample ballot** in the mail.

A sample ballot is a paper that lists:

- the candidates running for office
- any **ballot questions** to be voted on (a ballot question gives voters a chance to approve or reject some issue about government)
- your assigned polling place

The sample ballot looks the same as the ballot you will vote with on Election Day.

Reading your sample ballot is a good way to get ready to vote.



What options do I have for casting my vote?

It's important to have a plan for how you will cast your vote. You can vote in person at your assigned polling place or by mail. You do not need an excuse to vote by mail.

How do I decide whether to vote in person or by mail?

The section below will help you think about whether you would like to vote in person or by mail.

Reasons you might want to vote in person:

- You will be in town on Election Day or within the 9 days before it
- You have transportation to your assigned polling place or early voting location
- You are not able to mail your ballot to the County Board of Elections
- You have the support you need to vote in person (either a person or assistive technology)
- You want to join others in your community as you cast your vote

Reasons you might want to vote by mail:

- You will be out of town for the 9 days before and on Election Day
- You do not have transportation to your assigned polling place or early voting location
- You are able to mail your ballot to the County Board of Elections
- You do not have the support you need to vote in person
- You have the support you need to vote from home (or somewhere else) on or before Election Day

In the next sections, you will learn more about how to vote in person and by mail.

How do I vote in person?

If you want to vote **in person** on Election Day, you must vote at your assigned polling place. Everyone has an assigned polling place, and all polling places must be accessible. Sometimes polling places are in schools, churches, or libraries.

You can look up your assigned polling place on the Division on Elections website: https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/polling-place-search

Polling places in New Jersey are open from **6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.** on Election Day.

If you want to vote in person, you must use a voting machine.

Can I vote in person before Election Day?

You can vote in person up to nine days before Election Day when it is convenient for you. If you choose to vote early, you can do so at any early voting locations in your county.

You can learn more about early voting, including your county's early polling locations and hours on the Division of Elections' Voter Information Portal: https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/vote.shtml

What if I need help voting in person?

If you need help voting, you can ask someone for help.

You can ask family, friends, poll workers, or someone else you choose to help you vote. The only people that are not allowed to help you vote are your employer or union representative.

If you ask poll workers to help you vote, they should send poll workers from 2 different parties.

You have the right to have someone show you how to use the voting machine during early voting or on Election Day. You also have the right to request use of an accessible voting machine if you need it.

You may vote by saying your choice to an assistant. This is called **voting orally**.

You can ask for more time when you vote.

You can ask for an accommodation, such as a chair to sit on, when waiting to vote.

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If you have an issue related to voting, call Disability Rights New Jersey:

1-866-493-0023

What if my name is not on the list when I go to vote in person?

If your name does not appear on the registration list:

- You will be able to sign a special form (affidavit) claiming that you are registered.
- You will be given a **provisional ballot**. A **provisional ballot** is a temporary ballot that you can use so you don't miss a chance to vote while the election officials are checking to see if you are registered.

If the poll worker asks you to see your ID and you do not have ID with you, you will be able to vote with a **provisional ballot**. You will have 48 hours to show your ID at the county election office. At the polls, they will tell you which county election office to take your ID to.

You may also go to your county court to argue your ability to vote.

- If you get a court order allowing you to vote, you will be given a regular ballot and your vote will be counted.

What should I know about voting and accessibility?

Voting should take place in an integrated setting where all people with and without disabilities can vote in the same place.

All polling places must be accessible.

One accessible polling machine must be available at every polling place to allow individuals to vote, verify their vote and cast their ballot without assistance and in private.

People with disabilities also have a right to other reasonable accommodations that make it possible for them to vote. This includes things like:

- Assisted listening equipment
- Registration forms in Braille and large print
- Ramps

How do I vote by mail?

New Jersey allows no-excuse voting by mail. This means anyone can request a **Vote By Mail Ballot** without needing to provide a reason. Follow the steps below to vote by mail.

Step 1: Complete and return your Vote By Mail Application

- You can download a Vote By Mail Application online at: https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/vote-by-mail.shtml
- **OR** call the office of the New Jersey Division of Elections at 609-292-3760
- After completing the application, you can either:
  - mail it to the County Clerk up to 7 days before the election
  - **OR** you can return it in person to the office of the County Clerk until 3:00 P.M. the day before the election.

Step 2: Complete your Vote By Mail Ballot

- After receiving your application, the County Clerk will send you the **Vote By Mail Ballot**.
- Follow the instructions on the ballot to vote. You must follow the directions on the ballot **exactly** or your vote may not be counted.

Step 3: Return your Vote by Mail Ballot one of the following ways

- Return your **Vote By Mail Ballot** by mail. Your ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received by the County Board of Elections within 6 days of the election.
- Place your **Vote By Mail Ballot** in one of your county's **Secure Ballot Drop Boxes** by 8:00 P.M. on Election Day. Drop box locations can be found at VOTE.NJ.GOV.
- Deliver to your county's Board of Elections Office by 8:00 P.M. on Election Day.

Did you know?

- **You can only vote one time in any election.**
- **If you requested or received a Vote By Mail Ballot but did not return it, you may still go to your polling place and vote by provisional ballot on Election Day.**
- **If you like voting by mail, you have the option on the application to apply for a Vote By Mail Ballot for all future elections so that you will automatically receive the Vote By Mail Ballot.**

Which election official should I contact?

Reasons to contact your Commissioner of Registration:

- To **register** to vote
- To file a **change of name**
- To file a **change of address**

Reasons to contact your County Clerk:

- To obtain a **Vote By Mail Application** and **Vote By Mail Ballot**

Reasons to contact your County Board of Elections:

- To change which **party** you are registered with
- To find **information about elections** in your county
- To report if your polling place is **inaccessible** to you as a person with a disability
- To report if you experience **difficulty obtaining accommodations** or help from poll workers when voting

A listing of Commissioners of Registration, County Clerks, and county Boards of Elections can be found at:
https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/county-election-officals.shtml

A list of phone numbers for each of these officials can be found on the next few pages.

I live in _____ County.

Commissioner of Registration

In some counties, the Commissioner of Registration is called the Superintendent of Elections.

Reasons to contact your Commissioner of Registration:

- To **register** to vote
- To file a **change of name**
- To file a **change of address**

A listing of Commissioners of Registration can be found at:
https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/county-election-officals.shtml

Atlantic County: 609-343-2245

Bergen County: 201-336-6101

Burlington County: 609-265-5111

Camden County: 856-401-8683

Cape May County: 609-465-1050

Cumberland County: 856-453-5801

Essex County: 973-621-5061

Gloucester County: 856-384-4500

Hudson County: 201-369-7740

Hunterdon County: 908-788-1190

Mercer County: 609-989-6750

Middlesex County: 732-745-3471

Monmouth County: 732-431-7780

Morris County: 973-285-6715

Ocean County: 732-929-2167

Passaic County: 973-881-4515

Salem County: 856-935-7510
ext. 8331

Somerset County: 908-231-7084

Sussex County: 973-579-0950

Union County: 908-527-4123

Warren County: 908-475-6313

County Clerk

Reasons to contact your County Clerk:

- To obtain a **Vote By Mail Application** and **Vote By Mail Ballot**

A listing of County Clerks can be found at:
https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/county-election-officals.shtml

Atlantic County: 609-625-4011

Bergen County: 201-336-7020

Burlington County: 609-265-5122

Camden County: 856-225-7219

Cape May County: 609-465-1013

Cumberland County: 856-453-4860

Essex County: 973-621-4922

Gloucester County: 856-853-3241

Hudson County: 201-369-3470

Hunterdon County: 908-788-1214

Mercer County: 609-989-6494

Middlesex County: 732-745-4202

Monmouth County: 732-431-7790

Morris County: 973-285-6059

Ocean County: 732-929-2018

Passaic County: 973-881-4127

Salem County: 856-935-7510
ext. 8605

Somerset County: 908-231-7013

Sussex County: 973-579-0900

Union County: 908-527-4996/4997

Warren County: 908-475-6211

Board of Elections

Reasons to contact your county Board of Elections:

- To change which **party** you are registered with
- To find **information about elections** in your county
- To report if your polling place is **inaccessible** to you as a person with a disability
- To report if you experience **difficulty obtaining accommodations** or help from poll workers when voting

A listing of county Boards of Election can be found at:
https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/county-election-officals.shtml

Atlantic County: 609-645-5867

Bergen County: 201-336-6225

Burlington County: 609-265-5062

Camden County: 856-401-8683

Cape May County: 609-465-1050

Cumberland County: 856-453-5801

Essex County: 973-621-5071

Gloucester County: 856-384-4500

Hudson County: 201-369-3435

Hunterdon County: 908-788-1190

Mercer County: 609-989-6522

Middlesex County: 732-745-3471

Monmouth County: 732-431-7802 ext. 7150

Morris County: 973-285-6715

Ocean County: 732-929-2167

Passaic County: 973-881-4527

Salem County: 856-935-7510 ext. 8329 & 8330

Somerset County: 908-231-7084

Sussex County: 973-579-0950

Union County: 908-527-4123

Warren County: 908-475-6313

What should I do next?

Use this page to record the next steps you need to take to make sure you're ready to vote in the next election.

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY

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210 South Broad Street, 3rd Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08608

DRNJ is located in barrier-free, fully accessible offices.

DRNJ can be reached by telephone at:
(800) 922-7233 (toll-free in New Jersey only) OR
(609) 292-9742
(609) 633-7106 (TTY)