

Program to Provide Ballots to Voters in Hospitals and Care Facilities

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Background

The Department began providing a “service” to deliver ballots to voters in hospitals several years ago.

The service grew into a “Program” as we received increased numbers of requests to deliver vote-by-mail ballots.

As requests increased, we had to better prepare for ballot deliveries, especially since 90% of requests for ballots occur the day before and on Election Day.

Each election we expect the Program to serve several hundred voters.



Background

Disability Rights California Voting Hotline receives more calls the day before, and on, Election Day from people unable to vote at their polling places due to medical emergencies, than other reasons. The second most frequent call is equipment issues, followed by inaccessible polling places.



Background

Before each election, the Department organizes resources for the Ballot Delivery Program:

- ★ Developing notices and posters on voting and important election dates.
- ★ Scheduling personnel to distribute notices and posters, retrieve voter registration cards and vote-by-mail ballot applications, and provide outreach to patients, social workers, and other personnel.
- ★ Assigning personnel and vehicles to retrieve voted ballots from various facilities beginning seven days before, and through, Election Day.



Increasing Awareness

We actively seek to increase awareness of the Program in multiple ways:

- ★ Identifying additional sites by speaking with attendees of outreach events associated with health care facilities.
- ★ Posting notices at events that highlight voting options for people unable to vote in person, such as those in health care facilities.
- ★ Providing posters to sites such as VA facilities and centers for seniors and people with disabilities.
- ★ Collaborating with the Department's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) members.



Increasing Awareness

We also provide information to personnel at care facilities on how they might assist patients in voting.

- ★ Rules on providing assistance to a patient in marking the ballot and ensuring voter intent.
- ★ Signature and marking/witnessing procedures for those who are unable to sign but can make an “X” on vote-by-mail envelopes and various forms.



Administration

To administer the Hospital Ballot Delivery Program, the Department seeks to:

- ★ Identify a primary contact at each facility, to streamline communications.
- ★ Get information to primary contacts so they can share it with patients and their families.
- ★ Follow up with phone calls, emails, and site visits if we do not receive a response from a facility.
- ★ Fulfill all ballot delivery requests within one day.



Feedback



After each election, the Department emails a survey to our contacts asking for their input on several topics:

- 1 How did the care personnel learn about the program?
- 2 How does the facility prefer to receive ballots for its patients?
- 3 When and how do health care personnel want to receive information and visits from the Department?
- 4 What communication methods are most effective/convenient?
- 5 Can a facility assign someone as the ballot delivery liaison with the Department?
- 6 When would outreach and training be most useful?
- 7 If there are any comments or suggestions on the Program?

Feedback

Increasingly, we benefit from input from our VAAC members.

For instance, we learned from VAAC that most care facilities have social workers who could facilitate providing voting materials to voters, and that physical therapy and rehabilitation centers also serve people who may be away from their homes for several days during an election.



Challenges

The timing of when most people request ballot deliveries is one of the biggest challenges to administering the Program.

- ★ Requests for ballots arrive during the busiest times in the election cycle when many other priorities also require attention.
- ★ Contacts at the care facilities change from election to election, sometimes need follow up calls or messages, or need additional materials provided to them.
- ★ Vote-by-mail packets require several hours of manual assembly by many personnel, the drop off and pick up of voted ballots requires a dedicated team of drivers and vehicles assigned to the Program, and pre-planned travel routes to the many sites during specific time periods so that voters know when to expect their ballots and we can better organize our resources.

Key Elements

We focus on key elements to increase the reach of the Program and to assist more people with each succeeding election:

- ★ Continue to organize resources to meet our goal of delivering all ballots within one day of receiving requests.
- ★ Continue to use multiple methods to contact liaisons at the hospitals (phone, email, visits, etc.) and include Program information during other community outreach efforts.
- ★ Consider improving materials we provide personnel at care facilities, as well as to patients' family members and friends about the Program.



Thank you!