

II. REGISTRATION BASICS

Who is eligible to register to vote?

Anyone can register to vote if they are:

- A United States citizen,
- A resident of California,
- 18 years old or older on Election Day,
- Not currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony (for more information on the rights of people who have been incarcerated, please see the Secretary of State's Voting Rights Restored, and
- Not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court

Who is eligible to pre-register to vote?

To pre-register to vote in California, a person must:

- Be 16 or 17 years old, and
- Meet all of the other eligibility requirements to vote.

They will automatically be registered to vote on their 18th birthday.

How long before an election does a client need to register to vote?

California's voter registration deadline is 15 days before Election Day. A client's paper application must be postmarked by the 15th day before the election, or the client can register to vote at RegisterToVote.ca.gov until midnight on the 15th day before the election. The voter registration deadline will always be available on the Secretary of State's website at sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/. The registration deadline, your client can use the "same day" voter registration process and register after the 15-day voter registration deadline. For more information, please go to sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/same-day-reg/.

How long does a client need to be a California resident in order to register to vote?

A person is immediately eligible to vote after moving to California if they meet the other eligibility requirements. There is no waiting period.

Does a client need to re-register if they have moved or changed their name?

Yes. If they have moved since they last registered, their election materials (e.g., voter information guides, ballot, etc.) will go to the wrong or change their political party preference after the voter registration deadline (14 days or less before an election), they may do so by submitting a written request at their county elections office or polling location.

If a client did not vote in the last election, do they need to re-register?

No. In general, a voter's registration is permanent as long as they remain at the same address.

Many of our clients are uncertain if they are registered to vote or registered to vote at their current address. What should they do in these situations?

Clients may check their voter registration status at voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/. When in doubt, always have a client register to vote. There is no penalty if a client re-registers when they are registered already. In fact, it helps the county elections office keep your client's information current. If a voter registration record already exists for that client, the record will be updated with the information and signature on the most recent voter registration card.

Can a client be registered to vote in two counties at the same time?

No. The counties communicate with each other to remove the voter from the previous county and keep the voter in the most recent county. However, if for some reason the voter remains registered to vote in two counties, they may only vote in one county. Voting twice in the same election is a felony.

Does a person need a driver license, state identification, or a social security number in order to register to vote in California?

No. Your client can register to vote even if they do not have a California driver license, state identification, or a social security number as long as they meet other eligibility requirements. Just leave those fields blank. The county elections official will assign a unique identification number to the voter. However, if your client does not provide one of the three forms of identification when registering to vote, they will be required to show a form of identification or proof of residency when they vote for the first time.

Will a client need ID when they go to the polls to vote?

California does not have a voter ID requirement. However, if your client is voting for the first time and they did not provide a California driver license, state identification, or a social security number when they registered to vote, they will be asked to show a form of identification or proof of residency.

A variety of documents, such as a utility bill, will suffice as identification or proof of residence. If they do not have a government-issued ID, they should check with their county elections office before Election Day to determine what to bring to the polls, or review the complete list of acceptable forms of voter identification at: sos.ca.gov/elections/hava-id-standards.

Can a client register to vote if they cannot read or write?

Yes. Being able to read and write is not a requirement to register to vote or to vote in the United States. If the client wishes to register to vote, assist the client with the voter registration application to the same degree as you would assist the client with your agency's own forms.

What if a client needs a Voter Registration Card in a language that is not available at the agency's office?

The client can register to vote online in ten (10) different languages using the California Online Voter Registration (COVR) application available via your agency's unique URL. The client may also contact their county elections office to see if that office has a Voter Registration Card in the language they need.

Page 4 of 15 Revised April 2024

Can a client register to vote if they are unhoused?

Yes. Having a home is not a requirement to register to vote or to vote in the United States. If a client does not have a home, they can describe where they live on the Voter Registration Card. They must then provide a mailing address. The mailing address can be a post office box, church, shelter, or any other place where the client receives their mail.

Does a client have to choose a political party?

No. If the client does not wish to choose a political party preference, they should choose "No Party/None." They will be registered as No Party Preference.

NOTE: During a presidential primary election, your client may not be able to vote for a political party's presidential candidates unless they are registered with that party.

Many of my clients with criminal records assume they cannot vote. Is that true?

In California, that is not true. If the client is not currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony, and meets the other qualifications to register to vote, they are eligible to register to vote. For information about voter eligibility rules for people with prior criminal convictions, please visit the Secretary of State's web page sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/who-can-vote-california/voting-rights-californians.

If a client who is a registered voter does not vote in a primary election, will they be able to vote in the following general election?

Yes.

If a client registers to vote, can they be called for jury duty?

Jury duty lists are compiled from a variety of sources, including the Department of Motor Vehicles records and the voter registration file.