

VOTING ASSISTANCE FOR VA PATIENTS

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes policy for providing patients with information on voter registration and voting, as well as policy to assist such individuals to register to vote and vote.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:** None.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** None.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Voluntary Service Office (10B2A) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to 202-461-7300.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Directive 2008-053, dated September 8, 2008 is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of March 2019.

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Under Secretary for Health

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VOTING ASSISTANCE FOR VA PATIENTS

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes a uniform policy for providing information to patients about registering to vote and voting, as well as for assisting patients to register to vote and vote. **AUTHORITY:** 38 U.S.C. 901 and 1721, 38 CFR 1.218(a)(14) and 17.33(a)(4)(iv).

2. BACKGROUND: Registering to vote and voting are rights for VA patients under 38 CFR 17.33(a)(4)(iv), and VHA is committed to assisting patients who wish to exercise these rights. Information about these rights is posted throughout VA medical facilities, and all patients are informed of the opportunity to receive additional information related to voting assistance.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that patients and residents, particularly hospital inpatients and those residents of VHA Community Living Centers and Domiciliaries with limited access to other voter registration and information resources, will be provided with information regarding voter registration and with assistance in registering to vote and voting. Assistance provided by state and local election officials as well as nonpartisan groups is welcome, but must be coordinated with the VA medical facility to avoid disruptions and ensure consistency with 38 CFR 1.218(a)(14).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health is responsible for ensuring that VHA patients and residents are provided with information and assistance concerning voting registration and voting.

b. **Veterans Integrated System Network Director.** Each Veterans Integrated System Network (VISN) Director is responsible for ensuring that each VA medical facility in their respective VISN has a policy to provide information and assistance to VA patients who seek to exercise their right to register and to vote.

c. **Medical Facility Director.** Each medical facility Director must establish a written published policy on voter assistance that ensures the following:

(1) Patients are granted authorized absence, subject to the medical opinions of their health care providers, for such periods of time as necessary to register to vote and to vote.

(2) Patients who are unable to leave the medical facility are provided assistance for registering to vote and for voting by absentee ballot.

(3) Information on voting assistance is posted throughout the medical facility. **NOTE:** *In addition to the prohibition on partisan activity at VA medical facilities imposed by 38 CFR 1.218(a)(14), VA personnel must also be mindful of the Hatch Act's (5 U.S.C. 7321 through 7326) restrictions on the partisan political activities of Federal employees.*

(4) Criteria are established for evaluating the time, place, and manner of voter registration and voter assistance activities to ensure that such activities do not disrupt services offered in VA medical facilities, and that such activities are consistent with 38 CFR 1.218(a)(14).

(5) Procedures are established for coordinating offers of assistance in providing voter registration and voter assistance from state and local governments and nonpartisan organizations, and for consulting with Regional Counsel regarding determining the nonpartisan character of groups offering such assistance.

d. **Medical Facility Voluntary Service Program Manager.** The medical facility Voluntary Service Program Manager or Designee is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring information about voter registration and assistance is posted throughout the medical facility and informing all patients or residents of the opportunity to receive voting assistance information. *NOTE: In addition to the prohibition on partisan activity at VA medical facilities imposed by 38 CFR 1.218(a)(14), VA personnel must also be mindful of the Hatch Act's (5 U.S.C. 7321 through 7326) restrictions on the partisan political activities of Federal employees.*

(2) Ensuring all VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) personnel, including volunteers, prior to providing any information or assistance to VA patients who seek to register to vote or vote, annually review and complete VA Form 10-0462, "Political Activities Fact Sheet and Certification," and that a signed copy of the form is maintained in the volunteer's file.

(3) Obtaining and maintaining all relevant materials used to assist with voter registration and voting. Because the requirements and procedures for absentee voting vary widely by state and because there is currently no single form that allows a voter in the United States to request an absentee ballot from any or all states, VAVS offices at each medical facility need access to timely and accurate state voting information. Nonpartisan voter resources include the following:

(a) National Voter Registration Form available at: [National Voter Registration Form](#);

(b) Information is also available at: [Voter Registration Form Link](#) and [Election Assistance Commission](#);

(c) State, local, and county government Election Officials and Voter Registrars; and

(d) Nonpartisan organizations with an expertise in voter registration.

(4) Ensuring that any request or offer by an outside organization to facilitate voter registration or absentee ballot voting on VA property is forwarded to local Regional Counsel for review to determine the nonpartisan character of groups offering such assistance.

5. REFERENCES:

a. 38 CFR 17.33(a)(4)(iv).

b. 38 CFR 1.218(a)(14).

c. 5 U.S.C. 7321 through 7326.

VA FORM 10-0462

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FACT SHEET AND CERTIFICATION

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) form 10-0462, Political Activities Fact Sheet and Certification, can be found on the Veteran Administration (VA) forms website at: [VA Forms Website](#) or at [VA Forms Website](#) for local reproduction only.



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