

12. Voter Registration

12.1 Background

On May 20, 1993, President Clinton signed the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993 which requires voter registration services to be offered at all public assistance agencies. On May 4, 1995, the U.S. District Court ordered the State to implement the NVRA by June 19, 1995. This law was passed to encourage participation in elections by increasing access to voter registration.

In 2014, Senate Bill 113 was signed into law. SB 113 allows voter pre-registration for eligible 16 and 17 year olds once the California's state voter registration database, VoteCal, was certified. VoteCal was certified in September 2016.

12.1.1 Mandatory Annual NVRA Training

Eligibility Workers must register and complete the "Annual Voter Registration" online training course annually. This course reviews the NVRA and Senate Bill 35 requirements and how to assist clients with voter registration and is a **mandatory training**.

12.1.2 Reception Areas

This section describes the procedures that are mandated by the NVRA.

In addition to the specific NVRA requirements, Voter Registration Cards (VRC) must be available to the public at all times in the lobby area of each district office.

12.1.3 EW Requirements

Voter registration requirements apply to all aid programs including CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal and General Assistance. EWs must offer clients the same level of assistance in completing the VRCs that would be offered in completing any other agency forms.



Note:

These requirements only apply to Foster Care when the child's guardian or parent completes the face-to-face interview.

Eligibility Workers (EWs) must:

- Give clients the opportunity to register to vote by issuing the form, “Would You Like To Register To Vote?” (SCD 508) AND a Voter Registration Card at each application, Review/Recertification/Redetermination (RRR) or when there is a change of address.
- Provide the VRC and SCD 508 to any adult applying for benefits on behalf of a minor child (i.e. non-needy caretaker relatives) and any 16 and 17 year old minor living in the home and receiving benefits.
- Provide the VRC and SCD 508 (available in the DEBS Forms Library) in the appropriate non-English language when requested by the client.
- Offer assistance to clients in completing the Voter Registration Card.
- Accept and mail Voter Registration Cards to the Registrar of Voters Office WITHIN 3 DAYS if the cards are returned to this agency.



Note:

Send them to the Registrar by regular mail. Do not batch and/or mail Voter Registration Cards, as delays could result in clients missing voter registration deadlines for local, state or national elections.

- Not screen clients for voter eligibility. VRCs must be given to all adult clients and all 16 and 17 year old minors receiving assistance.
- Not attempt to influence the client's decision to register to vote or the client's choice of a political party.
- Not withhold or delay assistance because of voter registration requirements. Public assistance benefits shall not be affected by the applicant's decision to register, or not to register, to vote.
- Attempt to make a second contact with the client if they do not return the SCD 508.
- Provide voter registration services whether the transaction is conducted in person or remotely, i.e. via phone or Benefits CalWIN application.

12.1.4 Who May Pre-Register to Vote

Pre-registration for 16 or 17 year olds can be completed online at <http://registertovote.ca.gov/> or by filling out a Voter Registration Card (VRC). Pre-registration does not change the voting age, which is still 18. California youth who pre-register to vote will receive a confirmation postcard after turning 18 years old, stating that their voter registration is active.

Pre-registration is available to California youth who are 16 or 17 year olds and are:

- A United States citizen,
- A resident of California,
- Not currently imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony, and
- Not prohibited from voting by a court because of mental incompetency.

12.1.5 Who May Register

To register to vote in California, an individual must:

- Be a United States citizen,
- Be a California resident,
- Be at least 18 years old by the date of the next election,
- Not be currently in prison or on parole for the conviction of a felony, and
- Not be judged by a court to be mentally incompetent.

12.1.6 SCD 508

The form, “Would You Like To Register To Vote?” (SCD 508) must be given to all applicants at intake, RRRs, or whenever there is a change of address. The SCD 508:

- Defines who may register to vote.
- Advises clients of their rights pertaining to our Agency's responsibilities and provides the Secretary of State's toll-free number and address, should clients wish to file a complaint.
- Provides a section for clients to request or decline to register.
- Is available in English and the following required languages for Santa Clara County; Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese, on the DEBS Forms Library.

Only one SCD 508 must be completed at each application, RRR, and when a change of address is reported. If there is more than one adult and/or 16 or 17 year old minor in the household, EWs must issue additional Voter Registration Cards when requested.



Note:

If a client chooses not to complete the SCD 508, a blank copy with the client's name must still be scanned into the IDM system under F1 - Applications. This does not apply to applications made via MyBCW.

12.1.7 Procedures

EWs are to follow these procedures to ensure that the requirements of the National Voter's Registration Act (NVRA) are met.

Intake/RRRs - Face to Face Interview

Include the SCD 508 and the Voter Registration Card with the intake/RRR packet.

At the face-to-face interview:

- Ensure that the client understands that the decision to register or not to register to vote has no affect on eligibility for public assistance and that all information is confidential.
- The applicant should check one answer, then sign and date the SCD 508.
- If the client wishes to register, the client may complete the pre-addressed, postage paid mail-in Voter Registration Card in the office and leave it for the EW to send to the Registrar's office. [\[Refer to "Voter Registration Card Completion," page 12-7\].](#)
- If the client has a 16 or 17 year old minor in the home who wishes to vote, a VRC may be provided to the client to give to the minor child.

The EW must complete the "Agency Use Section" of the SCD 508.

- Check "NO" after "Voter registration form completed" if the client refuses to register or if the client decides to complete the form at home, as there is no certainty that the applicant will follow through.
- Check "YES" after "Voter registration form completed" only when the Voter Registration Card is completed and mailed from the office.
- Have the SCD 508 scanned into the IDM system under F1 - Applications.
- Mail completed Voter Registration Cards to the Registrar of Voters immediately and ALWAYS WITHIN THREE DAYS OF RECEIPT. Use regular mail. Do not batch or use the Pony.

Intake/RRRs - Mail-In, Telephone Interview or Benefits CalWIN Applications

The SCD 508 and the Voter Registration Card must be sent with the Intake/RRR packet.

- EWs must ensure that the client understands that the decision to register or not to register will have no affect on eligibility for public assistance and that all information is confidential.
- The applicant should check one answer, then sign and date the SCD 508.

- If the client wishes to register, the client may complete the pre-addressed, postage paid mail-in Voter Registration Card at home and mail it to the Registrar's office.
- If there is a 16 or 17 year old minor living in the home who wishes to pre-register to vote, mail them a VRC with instructions to mail it to the Registrar of Voters office.

The EW must complete the "Agency Use Section" of the SCD 508.

- Check "NO" if the client refuses to register or if the client completes the Voter Registration Card at home, as there is no certainty that the applicant will follow through.
- Check "Mailed to client" and enter the date the intake/RRR Informational packet, including the Voter Registration Card was sent to the client, when there is no face-to-face interview and the client has returned the SCD 508 requesting to register or applied online via Benefits CalWIN.
- Check "YES" only when the Voter Registration Card is completed and mailed from the office.
- Mail completed Voter Registration Cards to the Registrar immediately and ALWAYS WITHIN 3 DAYS OF RECEIPT. Use regular mail. Do not batch or use the Pony.

Address Changes

Persons who are registered to vote must re-register whenever they move, regardless of where they move. Clients must also be offered another opportunity to register to vote when they have a change of address. The EW must:

- Ask the client, "If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to register today?"
- Note the client's name and their response on an SCD 508.
- Send the Voter Registration Card to the client's new address.

Second Contact

If the client fails to complete and return the SCD 508, EW staff must attempt to follow up once with the client to find out whether the client would like to register to vote and if they need assistance in completing the forms. This is required for intakes, RRRs and reported address changes that occur by mail, phone or Benefits CalWIN (BCW). If the client fails to return the SCD 508 after an attempted contact, EWs must submit a blank SCD 508 with the client’s name written on it to IDM.

If second contact is by...	Then...
Phone and the Client Answers the Call,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if the client if they would like to register to vote and if they need assistance in completing the SCD 508 and/or VRC. • Note the clients response on an SCD 508. • Complete the “County Use Section” of the SCD 508. • Mail the VRC to the client if applicable.
Phone and the Client Does Not Answer the Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave a voice mail informing the client if they would like to register to vote and if they need assistance in completing the SCD 508 and/or VRC to contact the appropriate district office. • Document the outcome of the second contact in the Maintain Case Comments window in CalWIN. • Write clients name on a blank SCD 508 and submit to IDM.
SCD 50,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the client if they would like to register to vote and if they need assistance in completing the SCD 508 and/or VRC. • Write clients name on a blank SCD 508 and submit to IDM.



Reminder:

Benefits must not be withheld or delayed because of voter registration requirements. Public assistance benefits shall not be affected by the applicant's decision to register, or not to register to vote.

12.1.8 Inappropriate Voter Registration Applications

It is a crime for a person to register to vote if he/she knowingly submits false information on the registration card. Clients may not understand what the Voter Registration Card is or may think that they are required to register to receive assistance. Due to concern for non-citizens and others who might not understand the voter registration requirements, the following policies apply.

- EWs should ask the non-citizen client to mark, “I am already registered to vote at my current address, or I am not eligible to register to vote, and do not need an application to register to vote” on the SCD 508, then sign and date.
- EWs must mail any completed Voter Registration Card to the Registrar of Voters, unless the client wishes to withdraw it after receiving an explanation of the rules.
- EWs should not flag or mark Voter Registration Cards even if they are aware that the applicant does not meet the voter registration requirements.

12.2 Voter Registration Card Completion

12.2.1 General

The Voter Registration Card (VRC) must be provided to all applicants at intake, RRRs, with BCW applications and whenever there is a change of address.

These guidelines are provided to help EWs answer clients questions. EWs are required to offer the client assistance with the completion of the Voter Registration Card.

Print all information in black ink, as clearly and legibly as possible and enter only one letter or number in each box.

12.2.2 SECTION 1 - Name

Print in this section the person’s legal first name and middle name.
Do not use nicknames or initials. Printing must be clear to ensure accuracy.

12.2.3 SECTION 2 - Last Name

Print the person’s last name in this section. Do not use nicknames or initials. Printing must be clear to ensure accuracy.

12.2.4 SECTION 3 - Title

Fill in one of the Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. boxes. However, the information regarding titles is not required to be completed.

12.2.5 SECTION 4 - Home Address

Enter the address where the person lives. It is very important that the exact address where the person lives is provided. Include the number, street, and apartment number. A business address, mailing address, post office box, or a rural route without a box number may not be used in this space.

If voter does not have a home address, go to Section 6. If the voter is unable to receive mail at this location, a mailing address must be provided in Section 7.

12.2.6 SECTION 5 - Home Address Continued

Enter the city, state, zip code and county where the person lives.

12.2.7 SECTION 6 - No Street Address

If the person does not have a street address, fill in this Section, giving an exact description of where the person lives. Names of identifiable cross streets, bridges or whatever else will help locate their "home" on a map. The election officials will use this descriptive information to place the client in the proper voting precinct and ensure they have the opportunity to vote for all the candidates and issues, as eligible. If the voter is unable to receive mail at this location, a mailing address must be provided in Section 7.

12.2.8 SECTION 7 - Mailing Address

If the person gets his/her mail at an address other than his/her home address, enter the mailing address in this section. Include the number, street, and apartment number.

If the person entered no address in Sections 4 and 5, an address where the person can be reached by mail MUST be entered in Sections 7 and 8.

12.2.9 SECTION 8 - Mailing Address

Enter the city, state, zip code and county of the person's mailing address.

If the person entered no address in Sections 4 and 5, an address where the person can be reached by mail MUST be entered in Sections 7 and 8.

12.2.10 SECTION 9 - Date of Birth

This is the date of birth. First indicate the month, then the day, and finally the year in which they were born. This information helps establish eligibility to vote and helps election officials identify duplicate records in the voter file.

12.2.11 SECTION 10 - Place of Birth

In this space, enter where the person was born; the name of the state in the United States, or the name of the country if they were born outside of the U.S.

12.2.12 SECTION 11 - California Driver's License or CA ID

Enter the person's California Driver's License or California's Identification Number, if the person has one. If the person does not have a driver's license or ID card, enter the last four digits of the person's Social Security Number.

If this information is not filled in on this form, the person will be required to provide identification when he/she votes.

12.2.13 SECTION 12 - E-mail Address

Enter the e-mail address. Every character including dashes, dots, slashes and underscores should be in a separate box. This entry is optional.

12.2.14 SECTION 13 - Telephone Number

Enter a phone number, if there is one. It is not required, but is useful in case the election's office has a question about the Voter Registration Card or voting materials and they need to contact the person. If a phone number is provided, be sure also to include the three-digit area code first. This number is posted in precincts on election day.

12.2.15 SECTION 14 - Choice of Party

Section 14 is for selecting a political party. Fill in the box by the name of the political party with which the person wishes to register. If the person wishes to register with an unlisted party, fill in the box by "Other" and enter the name of the party. If the person does not wish to register with any party, fill in the box by the statement "No Party Preference".



Reminder:

EWs must not attempt to influence the client's choice of a political party.

12.2.16 SECTION 15 - Vote by Mail Ballot

This section allows the voter the option of receiving their voting ballot by mail. If the person chooses this option, have them enter his/her initials in the space provided.

12.2.17 SECTION 16 - Prior Registration (Optional)

The prior registration information section is optional and asks if the voter has been registered to vote before. If the person has been previously registered to vote, the information regarding the prior registration is optional in this section.

- The name under which the voter was previously registered;
- The address at which the voter was registered, including city, state, zip code and county. If the voter cannot remember the prior address, fill out as much as he/she can remember;
- The political party for which he/she was previously registered.

12.2.18 SECTION 17- Citizenship and Age

In this section, the individual must indicate if they are a U.S. citizen and if they will be at least 18 years of age by the next election date. Fill in the box by the correct YES or NO answer to the questions “Are you a citizen of the United States of America?” and “Will you be 18 years of age on or before election day?”

12.2.19 SECTION 18 - Signature

Before signing, the client should read very carefully the voter declaration and warning which is printed above the signature box. This is a declaration under penalty of perjury that the voter has read and met the requirements for registering to vote. The voter must sign and date the affidavit/Voter Registration Card.

If the voter cannot sign his/her name, the voter should place an “X” or make a mark in the signature box. When the voter is unable to sign, the “Did someone help you fill out or deliver this form?” section must be completed.

EWs must sign the card ONLY if they completed the Voter Registration Card for the client. The EW’s phone number is not required. (Other persons who are paid by organizations to recruit voters are required to enter their phone number in this section; however, this rule does not apply to our Agency.)

12.2.20 Optional Section

Survey

This section is an optional survey to determine if the person registering to vote is interested in helping with the election by becoming a polling place worker or by providing a polling place site. Fill in the appropriate box if the person is interested in helping with the election. If the client is not interested, leave this section blank.

Ethnicity/Race

This is an optional section used to capture ethnic information. Ask if the person wishes to provide this information. If yes, fill in the box by the ethnic group based on the information the client provides. If the client does not wish to provide the information, leave this section blank.

Language Preference

This section allows the voter to choose in what language he/she prefers to receive his/her voting materials. Mark the box by the language the voter chooses. (Required languages for Santa Clara County include; Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.)

12.2.21 Affidavit Receipt

The “affidavit receipt” or stub at the bottom of the registration card must be initialed and dated by the EW only when the client gives the completed card to the EW for mailing.

Advise clients to keep the receipt as proof that they have registered, even when they complete the card at home and mail it themselves.

12.3 Mailing the Voter Registration Card

12.3.1 To Client

The entire Voter Registration Card must be folded and mailed to the client upon request, unless provided in person.

- Fold the card so that the Registrar of Voters address is in the upper left hand corner.
- Write the client's address on the card.
- Staple the card once (middle, at bottom), or use tape.

12.3.2 To Registrar of Voters

Tear off the completed, pre-addressed registration card and immediately send it to the Registrar of Voters office. Send it by mail (not pony).

12.4 Online Voter Registration

In the event that the Voter Registration Card (VRC) is not available in the language the client requires the client should be referred to the California Online Voter Registration website at

<http://registertovote.ca.gov/>

12.5 Special Indicator Codes

For tracking purposes, EWs will enter one of the Special Indicators listed below when an Intake/RRR is processed or when a change of address is reported:

CalWIN Special Indicator	If the SCD 508 and the VRC were provided at...
SCD 508/VRC - Intake	An intake application
SCD 508/VRC - RRR	An RRR
SCD 508/VRC - Change of Address	After a reported change of address

The “SCD 508/VRC...” Special Indicator code should be entered with an Effective Begin Date corresponding to the date of the interview or date the address change is reported.

12.6 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) Coordinator

The duties of the NVRA Coordinator reside with the Program Unit. Responsibilities include; re-ordering of Voter Registration Cards (VRCs), ensuring eligibility staff enroll in annual NVRA online training courses and other duties related to NVRA.

Any concerns or questions regarding voter registration responsibilities that are not answered in this handbook section should be referred via the district office liaison to the Program Unit (408)755-7540.