



Guide to NonPartisan Voter Registration & G.O.T.V. Drives

NAEYC 2004

Conducting a Voter Registration Drive

Why should you vote? Being a part of the political process is important as individuals and as a group of nonpartisan early childhood professionals whose expertise and experience is needed to promote good practice and policies with young children and their families. If early childhood groups and professionals take the initiative to register and vote for children, we can raise the level of awareness of high quality, affordable early childhood education.

There are two times to vote in an election cycle: the primary and general election. The primary election determines who will be on the ballot for each party in the general election. It is important to vote in both the primary and the general election. Remember, every vote counts!

NAEYC has put together this packet as a means to help affiliates and members organize **nonpartisan** voter registration drives in your states and communities. These drives are to register people to vote for national, state, and local elected offices. We encourage you to pass along this manual to others who you feel may benefit from it. We hope that you will find this manual to be of use as you organize registration drives and increase voter registration in your communities.

CAUTION: You may **not** on behalf of NAEYC or an affiliate, engage in activities that appear to directly or indirectly influence a campaign for elected public office at any level of government. The goal is to encourage voter registration without direction or motivation to register or vote for candidates of a particular political party. You can, however, remind voters that every vote counts and that public policies are decided by elected officials.

*Please read the guide on Do's and Don't's in an Election Year on the NAEYC web site at <http://www.naeyc.org/affiliates/acb/guide.pdf> and in *Rules of the Game*, published by the Alliance for Justice, which can be ordered at www.allianceforjustice.org*

**** There are special rules that apply to Head Start programs. Contact the National Head Start Association with your questions.**

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GOTV Do's and Don't's for Your Association

Generally, a 501(c)(3) organization may conduct nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote programs. NAEYC and affiliates are 501(c)(3) organizations. **BUT YOU MUST CAREFULLY FOLLOW THE FEDERAL AND STATE TAX AND CAMPAIGN LAWS OR YOU WILL RISK LOSING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S TAX EXEMPT STATUS AS WELL AS OTHER PENALTIES.** Below is guidance on what a 501 (c)(3) organization may and may not do. This document is not a legal guide and you should contact a lawyer who specializes in this area before going forward.

As a 501 (c)(3), you may continue with your nonpartisan advocacy and public education efforts, again following the rules on how much you spend on direct advocacy and grassroots advocacy as well as other regulations.

You must **NOT** in any circumstance:

- Recommend, endorse, or suggest that one candidate is better than another candidate;
- Tell registrants which candidates support child care and education;
- Tell voter registrants or members which party to register under or who to vote for;
- Coordinate activities with a candidate or campaign or political party;
- Target for your voter registration efforts any particular ideological group such as Republicans, Democrats, or Independents, or based on candidate preferences.

You **MAY**

- Tell people how to register to vote
- Let people know the dates of the primary and general election and how to find out where to vote

Who is a candidate? Anyone who has announced candidacy for office or who is being promoted publicly to join a race and become an official candidate is treated as a candidate.

Here are some examples of what you cannot say while registering voters:

You **CANNOT** say:

“Stop the reactionary Congress/State legislature/School board.

“Elect [Name].”

“Governor/Legislator/Congressman voted against child care funding.”

“Vote for those who vote for child care/Head Start.”

****Remember, the purpose of a Get Out The Vote drive is to REGISTER voters, not to support or oppose particular candidates!!**

Please note: A Federal Election Commission regulation requires that you post a sign or give written notice to people you are registering or helping to vote, stating:

Our voter registration services are available without regard to the voter's political preference. Information and other assistance regarding registering or voting, including transportation and other services offered, shall not be withheld or refused on the basis of support for or opposition to particular candidates or a particular party.

PLEASE PUT THIS LANGUAGE ON YOUR MATERIALS

Steps for Conducting a Voter Registration Drive

Step One-- Developing a Plan of Action

****Please note: People who are paid with public funds (state, federal, etc.) should contact an attorney or your lead agency to determine which, if any, voter registration activities you can participate in.**

Before you start to organize your Voter Registration and Get Out The Vote drive, you need to make some decisions. In order to conduct the registration drive, you need someone to plan, organize, and develop and gather materials. We know it can be hard to find time, so here are some suggestions to make the process easier:

- **Who is in Charge?**
 - You can designate either one person as the main point person or a group of people to be in charge of your GOTV drive.
 - Those in charge of the drive should gather the materials and find a location, day, and time for the drive.

- **Gather and Develop Materials**
 - You will need voter registration information and flyers and buttons to advertise the drive and to encourage people to vote. We have included examples of flyers and buttons you can use in your efforts, please feel free to use these or design your own.
 - Be in touch with your Local Election Office and your local League of Women Voters office. They can provide you with basic nonpartisan registration materials (flyers, buttons, booklets) as well as further information on conducting a Get Out The Vote campaign. The League of Women Voters may also be able to set up a registration booth at your conference. We have provided contact information on each state's information sheet.
 - **Don't forget to put the Federal Election Commission disclaimer on all materials (see page 3).**

Step Two—Decide How You Will Conduct the Drive:

There are two ways to conduct your Get Out the Vote drive:

- 1.) You can set up a table or booth at conferences, neighborhood fairs, and other events to inform members of your community of the voter registration dates, requirements, and the locations where they can pick up a form and register. Use the state specific sheet that we have provided for all of the necessary information.

OR

- 2.) You can register voters yourself at a table or booth. Contact your Local Election Office to find out the regulations for voter registration. Some states require you to take an oath to become an honorary registrar.
 - o In order to get copies of the voter registration form, you can use the National Voter Registration Form available on the Federal Election Commission website (www.fec.gov) and print as many copies as you need.

Special Rules for the National Voter Registration Form

- **North Dakota** does not have voter registration.
- **New Hampshire** town and city clerks will accept this application only as a request for their own absentee voter mail-in registration form.
- **Wisconsin** town, village and city clerks will accept this application only as a request for their own voter mail-in registration form.
- **Wyoming** by law, cannot accept this form at this time.

The following six states **do not** accept voter registration applications completed on **standard lightweight printer paper** and will only accept applications that have been completed on specified heavy card stock:

- **Illinois**
- **Massachusetts**
- **Missouri**
- **New Mexico**
- **Ohio**

- o Your local election office can also provide you with Voter Registration Forms. The number of Voter Registration Forms distributed to an organization is at the discretion of the chief State election official.

Step Three—Planning a Voter Registration Drive

Planning a registration drive does not have to be a stressful or time-consuming experience. Before planning a registration drive, there are a few easy ways to start.

Are your members registered to vote?

Put a reminder to register and vote in emails, listservs, newsletters, and conference flyers. Remind them of the importance of voting and provide your members with all of the necessary information to register (or you can have them contact you for more information). **Remember to include the disclaimer on page 3 of this manual on your materials.**

Ways that Members Can Expand the Drive:

Your colleagues, family, and friends are all potential voters:

- At your program, encourage the parents and staff to register!
- Post fliers around the center with registration information and remind them that every vote counts.
- Keep voter registration forms in easily accessible common areas.
- Have staff members distribute voter registration forms to parents.
- To make voter registration a little more exciting, you can work with other programs to develop a healthy voter registration competition (keep a record of the number of people who register thru each program).

Working with other groups:

You do not have to conduct a Get Out The Vote Drive by yourself. Registration Drives can be conducted in partnership with other 501 (c)(3) organizations but not other partisan groups. You can connect with other local child care organizations or centers, or other groups you may already work with. A group that can be of great help is your local League of Women Voters. For example, **Minnesota AEYC** has worked with the League of Women Voters at a conference that they co-sponsor. The League moderated one of the events and then had a booth for individuals to register to vote.

In order to conduct a drive, you will need a LOCATION:

- To make the registration drive a little easier, pick an event that your organization may already be sponsoring. Examples:
 - **Colorado AEYC** does this at their statewide Spring and Fall Conferences by setting up a voter registration table in the exhibit area. They advertise that fact by putting the following in their brochures: “REGISTER TO VOTE. If you have not registered to vote in Colorado's elections, please stop by the CAEYC membership table and fill out a Colorado Voter Registration form. Children need everyone to vote on issues concerning them since they cannot vote!! Please make your voice heard!!”
 - **Massachusetts AEYC** does a voter registration drive at a major conference that is co-sponsored by **Boston AEYC**. They get volunteers to staff the

booth and in return they receive free admission to the conference (volunteers alternate so they can attend the workshops at the conference).

- You can also set up a registration drive in your center. Example:
 - **Virginia AEYC** sets up some times at the centers and someone sits in the foyer in the evenings and encourages the parents to register to vote
- Engaging Student Members:
 - College campuses are also excellent locations to conduct registration drives and it is an excellent opportunity to connect with and engage your student members; just remember that you may need to receive permission to conduct the drive on private property.

In order to conduct a drive, you will also need MATERIALS

- You should already have the Voter Registration Forms from Step Two. If not, contact your Local Election Office for regulations and forms. Or you can use the National Form available online if your state allows it, just remember to get in touch with your Election Office to find out the registration regulations in your state.
- To register citizens who are not proficient in English contact your Local Election Office to determine the languages your State Form is available in. The National Voter Registration Form is available in Spanish, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog (Philippino).
- You should also have contacted the Election Office or your local League of Women Voters for registration materials. They can often provide booklets and flyers that can be of use to you and any potential registrants.

In order to conduct a drive, you will also need STAFF

- Staff members, volunteers, or members can staff the registration table—as long as they can assist people in filling out forms.

In order to get people to the drive, you need to ADVERTISE:

- Post reminders in newsletters
- Send out an email to parents, members, staff, and other members of the community
- Post flyers and posters at conferences, board meetings, and in teacher lounges.

Step Four—Conducting the Voter Registration Drive itself

Now that you have information, materials, a location, staff, and have advertised, it's time to conduct the drive!

You will need to set up a table or booth that you can staff to distribute the Voter Registration information. An alternative is to invite another group, such as the League of Women Voters to do this at an event.

The key to voter registration is to provide accurate, easy to use (**and nonpartisan**) information to the potential registrants. Potential registrants will most likely have many questions about registering. Please refer to the list we have provided for answers to the most common questions. If you do not know the answer to their question, you can provide them with the contact information of your local election office.

If you are providing registration forms, you have two options:

- You can either collect the forms yourself, and then mail or take them in person to your election office
- OR you can have the individuals simply take the form and mail it in themselves.

If you plan on mailing the forms in yourself, be sure to factor the cost of postage into your budget. Should you choose to have registrants mail the form in themselves, be sure to inform them of the deadlines. If people choose to not to register, you can also inform them of other locations where they can pick up a form or register in person.

You can also distribute buttons, flyers, or other materials that encourage people to register and also includes the dates of the primary and general elections. We have included some examples that you can use or simply use them as ideas for your own fliers and buttons.

Remember, voter registration can be a year round process, so you can keep a stack of voter registration cards in your center or office all year!

Voter Registration is also a good organizing tool. Get the names, emails, and addresses from those you help to register to see if they are interested in working with you on early childhood issues.

Step Five—Post Registration

Voter *registration* is key, but helping people get to the polls on Election Day is also essential. Again, you can't tell people who they should vote for. Here are some nonpartisan steps you can take to encourage voter turnout:

- Place flyers around the community or in your center to publicize voting hours
- Keep flexible hours on Election Day to make it easier for parents to vote before or after work and make sure they are aware of them
- Distribute buttons and flyers that encourage people to go to the polls and vote

Questions You May be Asked by People Registering to Vote

Am I eligible to register and to vote?

Use your state election page to determine eligibility.

Must I be able to read or write English in order to register or vote?

No. You can take someone who can assist you in the voting process, but they may not vote for you.

When can I register?

You can use your state election page to find the deadlines for your state.

Does registration cost anything?

No, it is free.

How do I know if I am already registered to vote?

If you are not sure if you have registered before, you should call your Registrar of Voters or City/County Elections Office and ask if you are registered.

Am I registered once I fill out and mail the registration form?

You must receive your voter registration card in order to be registered. If you have not received your card you can call your Registrar of Voters or City/County Elections Office and ask if you are registered.

Do I have to register every time I vote?

No. The only times you have to reregister are when you move, change your name, want to change your political party, or if you have completed all conditions of a felony charge.

If I didn't vote in the last election do I need to register again?

If you registered but did not vote you are still registered and do not need to register again.

What if I am out of town on Election Day?

If you are out of town on Election Day, you will need to vote by absentee ballot. You may request an absentee ballot by contacting your local, county, or city election official. Depending on your State, this individual may be the County Clerk, County Auditor, County Registrar or Supervisor of Elections, or the Board of Elections.

What if I move within the state right before the election?

If you move before the deadline for voter registration has passed, you need to reregister in your new precinct. If you move after the deadline for voter registration in your new precinct, you must vote in your former precinct in person or by absentee ballot.

What if I move out of the state right before the election?

If you move before the deadline for voter registration in your new state has passed, contact your local election office to register there. If you move after the deadline for voter registration in your new state, you can vote by absentee ballot in your former state.

What if I am on military or reserve duty on Election Day?

You will need to vote by absentee ballot. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) in the Office of the Secretary of Defense is responsible for administering the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act. This law provides that members of the U.S. Uniformed Services and merchant marine and their family members may vote absentee while away from their place of voting residence, wherever stationed, within or outside the United States. For detailed information on registering and obtaining an absentee ballot call 1-800-438-VOTE.

How do I know where to vote?

The address of your polling place will be on your registration card, or you can contact your county election official.

I have to work, how late are the polls open?

Most polling places open early in the morning and stay open until late in the evening, check the state hours page for more information on your particular state.

Is my employer required to give me time off to vote?

It is legally required in many states for employers to give employees time off to vote, however, it may be without pay. As this varies by state, please check with your state and your employer for more information.

I'm a college student do I register to vote here or in my home state?

You can either register in your home state and request an absentee ballot or you can register in this state.

State Polling Hours as of December 2003

State	Polls Open	Polls Close
Alabama	No later than 8am.	6/8pm
Alaska	7am.	8pm.
Arizona	6am.	7pm.
California	7am.	8pm.
Colorado	7am.	7pm.
Connecticut	6am.	8pm.
Delaware	7am.	8pm.
District of Columbia	7am.	8pm.
Florida	7am.	7pm.
Georgia	7am.	7pm.
Hawaii	7am.	6pm.
Idaho	8am.	8pm.
Illinois	6am.	7pm.
Indiana	6am.	6pm.
Iowa	7am.	9pm.
Kansas	6/7am.	7/8pm.
Kentucky	6am.	6pm.
Louisiana	6am.	8pm.
Maine	6/10am. *	8pm.
Maryland	7am.	8pm.
Massachusetts	No Later than 7am.	8pm.
Michigan	7am.	8pm.
Minnesota	7am.	8pm. *
Mississippi	7am.	7pm.
Missouri	6am.	7pm.
Montana	7am./12Noon *	8pm *
Nebraska	7/8am.	7/8pm.
Nevada	7am.	7pm.
New Hampshire	11am.	7pm. at the earliest
New Jersey	7am.	8pm.
New Mexico	7am.	8pm.
New York	6am.	9pm.
North Carolina	6:30am.	7:30pm.

North Dakota	7/9am.	7/9pm. *
Ohio	6:30am.	7:30pm.
Oklahoma	7am.	7pm.
Oregon	7am.	8pm.
Pennsylvania	7am.	8pm.
Rhode Island	7am./12Noon	9pm.
South Carolina	7am.	7pm.
South Dakota	7/8am.	7/8pm.
Tennessee	6/8am.	7/8pm. **
Texas	7am.	7pm.
Utah	7am.	8pm.
Vermont	6/10am.	7pm.
Virginia	6am.	7pm.
Washington	7am.	8pm.
West Virginia	6:30am.	7:30pm.
Wisconsin	7/9am.	8pm.
Wyoming	7am.	7pm.
* Depends on the size of the jurisdiction.		
** 7pm. CST - 8pm. EST.		

MATERIALS

Here are some examples of flyers and buttons to hand out or post around your community or program.

**Election Day is
November 2, 2004**

**Don't miss the deadline to
register to vote!!**

**Contact (*insert your organization's name and
contact information here*) for more
information and registration forms**

Be Heard. Register to Vote!!

In order to vote, you must be registered—Every vote counts!

**You can register to vote at
(*enter location and time here*)**

Can't make the registration drive?
Contact (*insert your organization*)
for more information on how to
register to vote

**Kids can't VOTE
but YOU can!**

REGISTER



**I'm registered
and I vote!
Are You?**

**Election Day is
November 2, 2004**

Resources

The Alliance for Justice

<http://www.allianceforjustice.org>

The Federal Election Commission

<http://www.fec.gov>

<http://fecweb1.fec.gov/votregis/vr.htm>

<http://www.fec.gov/pages/faqs.htm>

http://fecweb1.fec.gov/votregis/state_voter_reg_requirements02.htm

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

Child Care Voter Registration and Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) Packet

National Congress for Community Economic Development

http://www.ncced.org/policy/gotv/howto.html#legal_a

Project Vote Smart

<http://www.vote-smart.org>

A Voter Registration Guide for Non-Profit Organizations in King County

<http://www.realchangenews.org/firstthingsfirst/register%20to%20vote%202003.pdf>