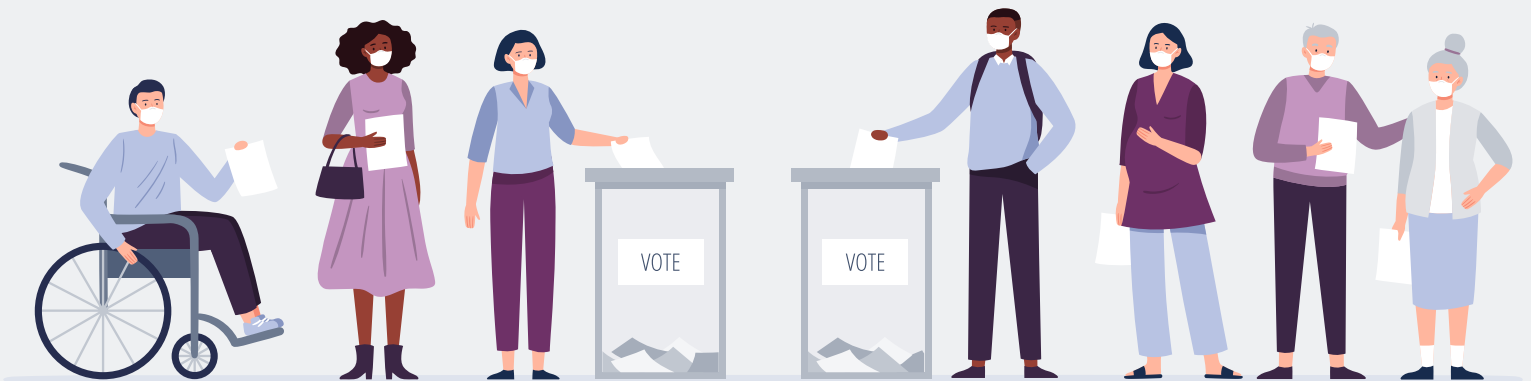


# VOTING IN PENNSYLVANIA FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



The 2020 General Election is approaching, and programs can help survivors of domestic violence register and cast their ballots in Pennsylvania.

## REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Online or In-person: **October 19, 2020**

By mail: **Must be received by October 19, 2020**

### Registering to Vote

1. Help the survivor check to see if they are registered to vote, and where they are registered to vote. You can check their voter registration at <https://www.vote.org/>.
2. If they aren't registered to vote in Pennsylvania, you can help them register.
3. They can register either online, by mailing in a completed Pennsylvania voter registration application (a link to this application is found below), or in-person at your local county elections office.<sup>1</sup>

### What about the address for homeless or sheltered survivors?

1. In Pennsylvania, people do not need a mailing address to register to vote. They, however, cannot use a P.O. Box. Pennsylvania voter registration applications contain a cross-streets diagram where those experiencing homelessness can mark their place of residence. If the survivor is receiving mail at an address, best practice is to list that address as their mailing address as long as that address is safe, and they can still access the mail they are receiving there.
2. If the survivor is in Pennsylvania's Address Confidentiality Program, they will receive a ballot directly and will use this ballot to vote.
3. If they are currently receiving mail or residing at the domestic violence program shelter/hotel they can put that mailing address as theirs. Please use the program's actual street address, not the P.O. Box. You don't need to include the program name. (We will address confidentiality and public inspection of voter rolls below.)

## VOTING DATES & DEADLINES

Election Day: **November 3rd, 2020**

Last Day to Request a Mail-in Ballot: **October 27, 2020**

<sup>1</sup> A list of the county election offices with contact information is available on most paper voter registration applications.

## In-person voting vs. mail-in voting

1. If survivors want to vote by mail-in ballot, they need to request a mail-in ballot on top of registering to vote. They can do this by downloading, printing and mailing the ballot application to the county elections office. They can also apply for a mail-in ballot in person at the county elections office.<sup>2</sup> They will receive their mail-in ballot at the mailing address listed on their registration form.
2. For some survivors especially those still living with their abusers, completing a ballot at home and mailing it may not be safe, or free from the abuser's interference. Therefore, voting in-person may be a better option. If they vote in-person, they will vote in the precinct in which their mailing address or cross-street diagram is located. However, identification is still required for first-time voters.
3. Survivors can choose whatever voting option is best for them. There are benefits and drawbacks to both. Survivors may fear running into their abuser at the polls on Election Day. Mail-in voting is helpful to avoid this and protect their safety. In addition, since identification is required for first-time voters, mail-in voting is a suitable option for many survivors who lack proper identification.<sup>3</sup>

## What about survivor safety and confidentiality?

1. Personal voter information including the voter's address could be made available through public inquiry putting the survivor's safety at risk.<sup>4</sup>
2. However, survivors of domestic violence can apply to use an alternate mailing address such as their work address to register to vote to protect their privacy and safety.
3. The following individuals can submit a request to their local elections office to have their home address kept confidential at any time:
  1. Those who have received a Protection from Abuse Order on their behalf.
  2. Those who have received a protection order<sup>5</sup> due to stalking, are a victim of the crime of stalking when the defendant has been convicted of stalking under Pennsylvania law, or
  3. Other individuals who can demonstrate that their personal safety is endangered by revealing their home address.
4. Your local elections office should have an approved form the survivor needs to complete and submit to request to keep their home address confidential.
5. If there is not an approved form the request should be made in writing. The request should contain an explanation as to why the voter is requesting that their home address be confidential and any supporting documentation that supports the accuracy of that explanation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Please be aware that county elections officials may ask for identification in response for a mail-in ballot request. This may not be a viable option if the voter does not have proper identification.

<sup>3</sup> Remember to let survivors know that if they show up to vote in-person on election day and are refused because they lack proper identification they can always request and submit a provisional ballot.

<sup>4</sup> If the survivor is in Pennsylvania's Address Confidentiality Program their confidential mailing address provided to them will be what is listed on voter rolls.

<sup>5</sup> "Protection order" are not specified here and arguably can encompass any protection order granted to a survivor based on stalking.

<sup>6</sup> Keep the explanation simple and related to the requirements for voters to request their home address kept confidential. It is never a good idea to provide more information than is necessary.



## Resources for Voters

NNEDV, Voting, and Survivor Privacy

<https://www.techsafety.org/voter-registration-privacy>

"You Don't Need A Home to Vote," Homeless and Low-Income Voter Rights Manual

<https://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-Manual-for-web.pdf>

Pennsylvania Department of State, VotesPA,

<https://www.votespa.com/Pages/default.aspx>

Election Protection administered by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law,

<https://www.votespa.com/Pages/default.aspx>

Including the Election Protection Hotline: 866-OUR-VOTE

Registering to Vote Without A Permanent Address,

<http://866ourvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Registering-to-Vote-without-a-Permanent-Address.pdf>

Online Pennsylvania Voter Registration Application,

<https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx>

Pennsylvania Application for a Mail-In Ballot,

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewjOxfvy-oTsAhWulHIEHQzeB-QQFjACegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.votespa.com%2FRegister-to-Vote%2FDocuments%2FPADOS\\_mailinapplication.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0YqXeyDMB-MHK7csj1d9W5](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewjOxfvy-oTsAhWulHIEHQzeB-QQFjACegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.votespa.com%2FRegister-to-Vote%2FDocuments%2FPADOS_mailinapplication.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0YqXeyDMB-MHK7csj1d9W5)