

GCSW Voter Engagement and Political Justice Initiative

Preparing social workers to engage with and expand the electorate throughout their social work careers

Expanding access to voting is integral to social work practice

Social workers can help clients & communities challenge individual & systemic barriers to voting:

- ✓ Voting **empowers** individuals and communities – supporting them in finding their voices and promoting **self-determination**
- ✓ Voting **improves mental health, health behaviors, and community connections** – enhancing the **well-being** of individuals, families, and communities
- ✓ Voting **increases representation** – promoting **meaningful participation in decision-making**
- ✓ Voting **impacts policy outcomes** – advancing policies that further **social justice**
- ✓ Voting **challenges long-standing disenfranchisement efforts** disproportionately experienced by communities of color – respecting each person’s **inherent dignity and worth**

What can social workers do to expand access to voting?

- ⇒ Become deputized to register voters
- ⇒ Conduct or participate in voter registration drives
- ⇒ Make registration forms and information available to clients in agency waiting rooms
- ⇒ Educate clients and communities about how to register and how to vote
- ⇒ Provide non-partisan information to clients and communities about candidates, upcoming elections, their voting rights
- ⇒ Offer transportation or interpreter assistance to clients to vote
- ⇒ Challenge policies that disenfranchise voters

“As social workers, it is essential for us to remember that empowerment practice is not a matter of our picking and choosing what areas we will address with our clients. All life domains that are in need of empowerment-based intervention should be addressed at assessment, in goal setting, and in our activities with our clients. If all areas including voting and civic engagement are not included in empowerment-based practice, the worker is effectively preventing the person’s full participation as a citizen, not by commission but by omission” (Davis, 2010).

Know Your Texas Voting Rights

Each of the following rights is outlined in Texas and/or federal law:

Identification Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To vote, if you are registered in Texas and present any of the following 7 approved forms of ID at your voting location: <i>Texas Driver License, Texas Handgun License, U.S. Military ID card with photo, U.S. Citizenship certificate with photo, U.S. Passport, DPS-issued Texas Election ID Certificate; or a DPS-issued Personal Identification Card.</i>
General Rights to Vote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To vote at any polling location during an Early Voting period. To vote if you are inside your polling location or in line when the polls close. To be notified if your Election Day polling location changes. To cast a provisional ballot if you believe you are mistakenly not on your precinct's voter list, or your ID is not accepted. (Within 6 calendar days of the election, you must present an approved ID at the county voter registrar's office. If you cannot obtain an approved ID or need a waiver due to a declared natural disaster, you may sign a Reasonable Impediment Declaration and provide an alternative ID.)
Conflicts with Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To take paid time off for voting on an election day, unless you have at least two consecutive hours to vote outside of working hours.
Individuals who need Language Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To bring an interpreter to a polling location. To ask for a translator or sign language interpreter. All Texas polling locations must provide assistance in Spanish. All Harris County locations are also required to provide assistance in Vietnamese and Chinese.
Individuals with Criminal Histories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To vote if charged with a crime, but not convicted. To vote by absentee ballot if convicted of a misdemeanor and still in jail. To vote (and register) if you have completed the punishment for a felony conviction (incarceration, parole, supervision, probation period; or have been pardoned).
Survivors of Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To keep your address confidential when registering to vote through the Texas Address Confidentiality Program, if you are a survivor of family violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking.
Older Adults; Individuals with Differing Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To request a mail-in ballot if you have a disability or are over 65 years old. To have accessible polling locations. (This includes: ground floor location or accessible by a sufficiently wide elevator; entrances and exits at least 32 inches wide; curb cuts or nonslip ramps by main entrance; stairs with handrails on both sides and a nonslip ramp; no barriers impeding a voter's path). To ask for assistance in marking a ballot if you are unable to write, see, or mark the ballot due to a physical disability; or to ask for curbside voting if you physically cannot enter a polling place. To request voting order priority if you have a substantial mobility challenge, e.g., lung disease, cardiac deficiency, severe limitations with walking, wheelchair confinement. To vote regardless of intellectual or mental challenges, unless a court has specifically determined that you lack the capacity to do so.
Individuals who are Homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To vote, even without a home address. You may register to vote using a specific geographic location (e.g., street corner, park, shelter); however, you must meet ID requirements, provide a mailing address (shelter address, post office general delivery).