

FAQ—Voting Issues for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness — November 2020

VOTER REGISTRATION

1. How does a voter who is homeless complete the address section of a registration application form?
The voter completes the diagram (back of form) to show a street intersection or landmark where they return each night. If the voter is staying at a homeless shelter, they use the address of the shelter as the Residence Address (item #4 on the form). If the voter gets mail at an address different from the Residence Address, Mailing Address (item #5 on the form) should also be completed.
2. How does a voter who is homeless complete a registration application if they do not return to the same location every night on a consistent basis?
The voter identifies a location (a landmark/intersection or homeless shelter) that they most often return to, even if they do not return to this same location every night. Voter Intent to return is the standard.
3. How does a voter who is temporarily homeless, e.g. husband and wife separated, but who intends to return to their home at some point in the future, complete the registration application?
If the voter intends to return home at some point in the future, they can continue to vote from their home address where they are registered.
4. How does a voter who is homeless show proof of residence when registering to vote?
For proof of residence for voter registration, the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) permits the use of a letter/affidavit from a shelter for the homeless or from a private or public social service organization providing services for homeless individuals. The letter includes a brief description of the location that serves as a temporary residence such as a homeless shelter or the location “where the homeless individual may spend time or return to.” The WEC provides a template for this agency letter. (This letter is similar to the letter template provided by the Department of Transportation; see question #7 below). If there is a question about how to use the address or location on the affidavit as proof of residence, contact the municipal clerk for guidance.

VOTER PHOTO ID

5. How does a voter who is homeless document proof of Wisconsin residency when obtaining a state ID from the DMV?
An individual who is homeless can prove their Wisconsin residency with a letter/affidavit from a shelter for the homeless or a private or public social service organization providing services for homeless individuals. The letter/affidavit includes a brief description of the location that serves as a temporary residence such as a homeless shelter or the location where the homeless individual may spend time or return to. The DOT provides a template for this agency letter: <http://wisconsin.gov/Documents/dmv/shared/homeless-residency.pdf>. (This letter is similar to the letter template provided by the Wisconsin Elections Commission; see question #4 above). In Dane County, Department of Human Services staff may complete this letter/affidavit for individuals they have personal knowledge of and for whom they feel comfortable attesting to the information in the document. Department of Human Services staff may not sign the letter/affidavit for individuals they do not know.

6. When a person who is homeless applies for a state ID and uses a social service agency letter as proof of Wisconsin Residency, what address is printed on the ID and to which location is the state ID card mailed?
According to the DMV document “Residency Documentation for Homeless Individuals” (<http://wisconsindot.gov/Documents/dmv/shared/homeless-residency.pdf>), “If a social service agency letter is presented as proof of residency, the agency address will be printed on the ...identification card product, and used as the address for mailing the product.” The voter must confirm with the social service agency that it is willing to receive the ID in the mail on behalf of the voter. In Dane County, the Department of Human Services has designated the Job Center (1819 Aberg Ave., Madison, WI 53704) as the address to which IDs can be mailed. In addition, the Salvation Army accepts IDs in the mail (women and families) and The Beacon accepts all mail for clients who have made prior arrangements.
7. Can a photo ID card with a social service agency address be used as a voter photo ID?
A photo ID card with the agency address can be used as a voter photo ID on Election Day or to get an absentee ballot because a voter photo ID does not need to show any address or the voter’s current address.

POLLING PLACE

8. How is the polling place for a voter who is homeless determined?
The polling place is based on the “residence” identified on the registration application, either the diagram (back of form) that shows a street intersection or landmark where the person returns each night, or the address of a homeless shelter listed as the voter Residence Address (item #4 on the form). If there is a question about the polling place associated with a particular street intersection, the municipal clerk makes the final determination.
9. If a homeless person registers to vote while staying at a homeless shelter and then leaves the shelter but continues to be homeless, does the shelter address continue to be the address used to determine their polling place?
Voter intent is the standard used to make this determination. For example, a homeless person, who may be temporarily banned or out of allotted days at a homeless shelter, can continue to vote at the polling place for the shelter address because they intend to return to the shelter at some point in the future.

RELATED ISSUES

10. Can individuals get a free replacement ID at the DMV?
Yes. If an individual checks the free ID for voting box on the ID application, they will not be charged for a replacement ID. If the individual requests a replacement ID and does not make it clear that the ID is for voting purposes, they will be charged for a replacement. In most cases, once the person is in the DMV computer system, they do not need to provide the documents proving personal information to get the replacement ID. The voter must make arrangements for a mailing address in order to receive the ID.
11. Can individuals get a free replacement DL at the DMV?
No. An individual cannot get a free replacement Driver License (DL) for a lost DL. However, if an individual is willing to “surrender” the DL (since one cannot have both a DL and ID), the individual can get a free ID if they indicate the ID is for voting.
12. How can one replace a lost social security card without having a state ID?
According to the social security website page, Replacement Card for a U.S. Born Adult, (<https://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber/ss5doc.htm>), the individual can use one of the following documents in place of a state ID:
- **Employee identification card;**
 - **School identification card;**
 - **Health insurance card (not a Medicare card); or**
 - **U.S. military identification card.**

In situations where an individual does not have one of the 4 alternatives listed above, they can present a clinic (including a dentist or chiropractor) or hospital record as follows:

- ***must be a letter from the doctor***
- ***must be on clinic/hospital letterhead***
- ***must state that the person is a patient that the doctor sees at that clinic/hospital***
- ***must state name of patient, date of birth, medical record number issued to that patient at that clinic***
- ***letter must have been issued no more than one year before seeking social security card***

13. What is the procedure for obtaining a free copy of a birth certificate in Dane County?

Individuals can get a certified Dane County birth certificate at the Register of Deeds office at no cost if they indicate they are using the birth certificate to get a state ID. The birth certificate is stamped in red "FOR VOTING PURPOSES ONLY." Individuals can present this stamped birth certificate (along with other necessary documents) to the DMV to get a free state ID.

As an alternative, the DMV offers a document verification petition process if an individual does not have a certified copy of their birth certificate. Using the petition process, the DMV verifies the person's date of birth and citizenship but does not obtain a copy of the person's birth certificate. The petition process is free.

<http://wisconsin.gov/Pages/dmv/license-drvs/how-to-apply/petition-process.aspx>

Resources:

[DMV services for questions about a free state ID](#)

DMV ID Card for Voting Hotline: 608-266-1069

[For questions about getting a free state ID, especially for homeless individuals and those with uniquely challenging situations](#)

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[Making It Clear](#)

[Making It Clear](#) is a tool for community members helping citizens navigate requirements for registering and voting in Wisconsin. It clarifies many of the ambiguities surrounding proof of residence and voter photo ID.

[Voter Helpline: 608-285-2141](tel:608-285-2141)

[Wisconsin Elections Commission \(WEC\) Help Desk](#)

Call for technical assistance on voting issues: 608-261-2028