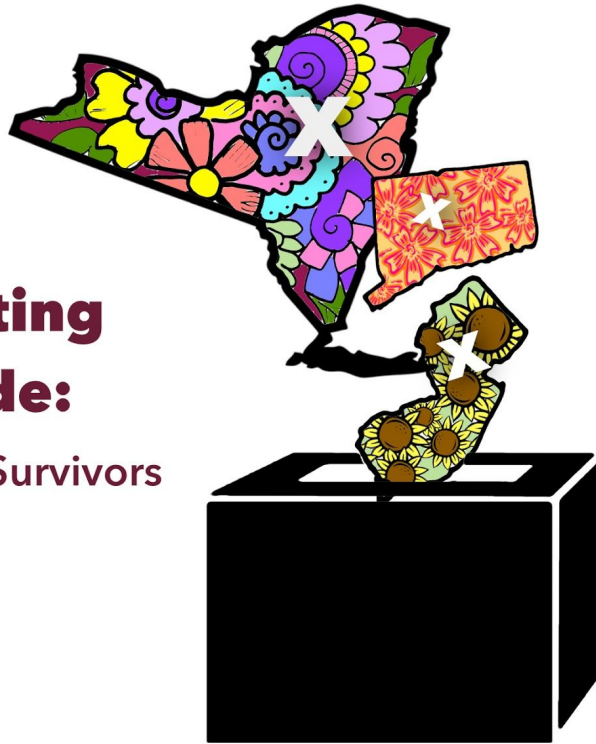


Tri-State Voting Rights Guide: Domestic Violence Survivors



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Why is it important to vote?

Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, allows you to engage with your elected representatives, and helps ensure you're represented by those who will advocate for you best. However, far too few people vote, and the United States has one of the lowest voter turnout rates of any developed democracy. It's common for individuals to believe their vote won't make a difference; this is completely untrue. Local and state elections, which experience lower voter turnout, are often won by just a few votes, and your vote can change who represents you and the policies they put forward. Furthermore, your ability to vote should not be taken lightly: suffrage rights were earned via considerable struggle for numerous groups, including women, African Americans, Native Americans, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

This guide will detail the voter registration process, then explain voting issues specific to survivors of domestic violence, such as how to ensure your address and personal information remains confidential. If you have further questions beyond the scope of this guide, please contact The Andrew Goodman Foundation, a nonpartisan voting rights nonprofit organization, at <https://andrewgoodman.org/contact-us/> for further assistance.

[Register to Vote in New York:](#)

1. The New York State voter registration form is available as the last page on a Social Services application form, or online at:
<http://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/voting/voteform.pdf>.
2. Answer all questions on the registration form, if applicable (if you have not voted before, you do not need to answer question 11. The deadline to register to vote
3. Question 7: You are allowed to use your shelter as an address, or register with an approximate address (eg, "Main Street Park between 7th and 8th Street") if you are homeless.
4. Question 8 (Address where you receive mail): if you receive mail to a different address than the one listed on Question 7, fill out this question. If you receive mail at the same address in Question 7, skip this.
5. Question 12 (Identification): enter either your New York State DMV number (found on your driver's license) or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not have either, check the box that says "I do not have a New York State driver's license or a Social Security number." You will have to provide a form of identification at the polls the first time you vote. A copy of a valid photo ID, current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or some other government document that shows your name or address are all valid forms of identification in New York State.
6. Question 13 (Political Parties): If you wish to register with a party, you may do so here. If your party of choice is not listed, write it in under other. Oftentimes, people choose to enroll in a party in order to vote in the primaries. New York has closed primaries, meaning that you must be enrolled in a party to vote in their primary (e.g. be a registered Democrat or Republican to vote in the Democratic or Republican presidential primaries). If you do not wish to register for a party (aka be an Independent), check "I do not wish to enroll in a party." Do not check more than one party, this will invalidate your registration form.
7. Question 14 (Optional Question): If you know you will need to vote with an absentee ballot, check "I need to apply for an Absentee ballot." If you would like to work at the polls on Election Day, check that box. Both boxes are completely optional.

General Tips: **do not select more than one box when filling out the registration form** (e.g. Questions 12 or 13), as this will invalidate your form. The Board of Elections is not required to notify you if your registration form is incomplete, and it is very likely they will not. If you are not sure if you are a registered voter, go to: voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us. If you are registered under the Address Confidentiality Project, your information will not appear on this website.

Register to Vote in New Jersey:

1. The New Jersey voter registration form is available online at:
http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/form_pdf/voter-regis-forms/76-voter-registration-english.pdf.
2. The deadline to register is 21 days before an election. You must be a resident in your county for at least 30 days prior to the next election.
3. Answer all questions on the registration form, if applicable. If you leave a non-optional question blank, you will not be registered to vote and the county is not required to inform you that you have not been registered.
4. Question 5 (ID): If you do not have a NJ driver's license or a SSN, or the information you provide cannot be verified, you will be asked to provide a COPY of a current and valid photo ID, or a document with your name and current address on it to avoid having to provide identification at the polling place.
5. Question 6 (Address): If you are homeless, you are allowed to use a shelter as an address, or register with an approximate address (eg, "Main Street Park between 7th and 8th Street") if you are homeless. **If you would like to keep your address private, do not fill out this section and instead refer to the instructions on Page 4.**
6. Question 7 (Address where you receive mail): if you receive mail to a different address than the one listed on Question 7, fill out this question. If you receive mail at the same address in Question 7, skip this. **If you would like to keep your address private, do not fill out this section and instead refer to the instructions on Page 4.**
7. Question 10 (Political Parties): If you wish to register with a party, you may do so here. If your party of choice is not listed, write it in under other. Oftentimes, people choose to enroll in a party in order to vote in the primaries. New Jersey has closed primaries, meaning that you must be enrolled in a party to vote in their primary (e.g. be a registered Democrat or Republican to vote in the Democratic or Republican presidential primaries). If you do not wish to register for a party (aka be an Independent), check "I do not wish to enroll in a party." Do not check more than one party, this will invalidate your registration form.
8. Question 11 (Gender): You must specify your legal sex.

General Tips: **do not select more than one box when filling out the registration form**, as this will invalidate your form. The Board of Elections is not required to notify you if your registration form is incomplete, and it is very likely they will not. If you are not sure if you are a registered voter, go to: voterlookup.elections.state.nj.us. If you are registered under the Address Confidentiality Project, your information will not appear on this website.

Register to Vote in Connecticut:

1. The Connecticut voter registration form is available online, in both English and Spanish, at: <http://www.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?q=489908>. You can also register to vote online.
2. The deadline to vote in a primary election is 5 days before the primary if by mail or online and 12 P.M. the last business day before the primary in person. The deadline to vote in a general election is 7 days before the election.
3. **If you are registering to vote for the first time in Connecticut, you will need to show an ID when you go to the polls for the first time, and it is useful to bring a photo ID to the polls each time you vote. If you do not have any, you may sign an affidavit in lieu of presenting ID.**
4. Answer ALL questions on the registration form, if applicable (if you have not voted before, you do not need to answer question 11).
5. Question 4 (Identification): enter either your Connecticut DMV number (found on your driver's' license) or the last four digits of your Social Security number.
6. Question 5: If you are homeless, you are allowed to use your shelter as an address, or register with an approximate address (eg, "Main Street Park between 7th and 8th Street") if you are homeless.
7. Question 6 (Address where you receive mail): You MUST have a mailing address to register to vote. Your mailing address could be a local shelter or post office if you do not have a permanent address or are homeless.
8. Question 9 (Political Parties): If you wish to register with a party, you may do so here. If your party of choice is not listed, write it in under other. Oftentimes, people choose to enroll in a party in order to vote in the primaries. Connecticut has closed primaries, meaning that you must be enrolled in a party to vote in their primary (e.g. be a registered Democrat or Republican to vote in the Democratic or Republican presidential primaries). If you do not wish to register for a party (be an Independent), check "I do not wish to enroll in a party." Do not check more than one party, this will invalidate your registration form.

General Tips: **do not select more than one box when filling out the registration form** (e.g. Questions 12 or 13), as this will invalidate your form. The Board of Elections is not required to notify you if your registration form is incomplete, and it is very likely they will not. If you are not sure if you are a registered voter, go to: <http://www.dir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx>.

You may register and vote in person on Election Day if you are eligible, but you must register at a designated Election Day registration locale, *not* your polling place. You should contact your registrar of voters for information and ID requirements; while Connecticut does not have universal voter ID laws, you will need to show proof of identity and residency if you register to vote on Election Day.

Voting Rights Issues Faced By Domestic Violence Survivors:

How to Keep Your New Address Confidential When Registering to Vote:

When you register to vote, the default is that your voter registration information becomes public -- your name, the party you registered with, and your address. Individuals who have access to your first and last name, date of birth, county of residence, and ZIP code can find your address using the NYS Voter Lookup online tool or, more easily, pay for a voter roll (traditionally used in campaign work to canvass and send candidates advertisements) and access your address. Victims of domestic violence may not want their new address to be public.

In **New York State**, individuals with just cause (including domestic violence) can participate in the **Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)** and have their personal address remain private.

N.Y. Election Law (5-508) allows victims of domestic violence who obtain a court order in the county where they are registered to have their voter registration record kept separate and apart from other registration records and not be made available for inspection or copying by the public or any other person, except election officials acting within the course and scope of their official duties. Under a separate section of the law (11-306), you can also be excused from going to your polling place to vote and get a special ballot. The process differs by county, and you should contact your County Board of Elections for more specific procedures.

Upon certification as an ACP participant, the participant will be provided with an ID card which will contain his/her name, unique ID number and the substitute address, which is a Post Office box in Albany, New York. The card will also indicate the expiration date for the program participant. ACP contact information is on the back of the ID card. The participant should use this substitute address in all dealings with state and local agencies, which are required by law to accept this address. Private companies such as utility providers, stores and other companies may not automatically accept the substitute address. Participants should show their ACP ID card to any of these entities when attempting to use the substitute address.

To apply for the ACP, you must obtain a court order, and bring that order to the Board of Elections. The entire process is confidential, and you should ask to speak directly to the commissioner. Most counties have both a Republican and a Democratic commissioner so you can register via someone in your party if that makes you more comfortable.

New Jersey has an established Address Confidentiality Program where survivors of domestic violence can receive a substitute mailing address that does not reveal their location, and their voter registration does not make their address public; one can enroll in the program similarly to how one would enroll in New York's ACP (above), and you can receive more information by calling 1 (877) 218-9133.

However, New Jersey also has a domestic violence law that specifically pertains to voting. **The "Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 1994" allows victims who have obtained a permanent restraining order against a defendant and who fear further retaliation by the defendant to participate;** if you do not have legal documentation of your abuse, you are not eligible. If you are eligible, you can leave the space for a street address on the voter registration form blank and attach a copy of a restraining order. You must also include a note which indicates that you fear further violent acts from your abuser, and which contains a mailing address.

Election officials would provide you with a map of your town, showing the various voting districts. You would then indicate the voting district in which you resides, and be permitted to vote at the polling place for that district. Because this process takes additional time, we recommend that you either bring your registration to the county Elections Center or make sure to register several weeks before the standard deadline to register for whichever election you would like to vote in (typically 21 days for general elections).

Connecticut has a similar program, **Safe At Home: The Confidential Address Program**. Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, as well as their housemates, can make your address confidential if you are moving to a new address; if you are residing at an address which your name was previously publicly linked to, you are not eligible for the program.

Upon acceptance as a Safe At Home participant, first class mail as well as local and state records, driver's licenses, library cards, voter registration, and school records will be registered to a substitute address. The Office of the Secretary of the State then forwards your mail to your new, actual home address. On the voter registry, your name will appear but your street and house number will not be listed.

You must complete an application at a local domestic violence or sexual assault crisis center, and you will be mailed a certification card with your new address upon approval. **You should register to vote after you have been approved for the Safe At Home program.** [You can learn more about Safe At home here.](#)

How to register if you live in a shelter or temporary housing:

Fill out a voter registration form and write a location where you can be found. If the address you have isn't a formal address, you can write something such as "Bench on Central Park on 86th Street", as the address where you live. You will be assigned a poll site based on this address. Write the address of a shelter, P.O. Box, or family member as the address where you receive mail. Your voter card will be sent to this address.

How to vote after you have legally changed your name:

If you legally change your name, you **must** re-register to vote using your new name. Fill out a new registration form, and where you are asked to enter your former information, put in your previous name.

How to vote by mail:

New York State requires voters to have just cause for voting by mail, which is limited to:

- You are absent from your county or New York City on Election Day.
- You cannot appear at the polls due illness or disability; or because you are the primary caregiver of disabled persons.
- You are a resident or patient of a Veterans Health Administration Hospital.
- You are detained in jail awaiting Grand Jury action or in prison after conviction for a non-felony offense.

New Jersey allows vote by mail without just cause; your county must receive your vote by mail application seven days before the election (if you mail your application, it's recommended to do so 14 days or more before an election). Applications are available online: <http://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voting-information-vote-by-mail.html>

Connecticut has strict laws regarding who can vote by mail. An absentee ballot can be found at the following site: <http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3179&q=533084>. In order to receive an absentee ballot, you must fit one of the following criteria:

- You are a member of the armed forces
- You will be out of town during ALL hours of voting on Election Day
- You have an illness that will prevent you from voting in person on Election Day
- You have religious beliefs that prevent you from performing secular activities on Election Day
- You will work as an election official at a different polling place during all hours of Election Day
- You have a physical disability that prevents you from voting in person.

Voting is a right for all Americans. If you have any questions about how to register to vote or would like assistance registering, please contact The Andrew Goodman Foundation at <https://andrewgoodman.org/contact-us/>. If you face discrimination or other troubles on Election Day, talk to the poll watcher from your party, call The Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE or 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (en español), or call the U.S. Department of Justice Voting Rights Hotline at 800-253-3931.