

Information for Voters With Special Circumstances

America's community health centers provide care to many communities who traditionally do not turn out to vote in high numbers. One of the reasons that these communities have been traditionally underrepresented may be that they have experienced barriers to voting. When engaging traditionally underrepresented communities, it is important to keep a few things in mind.

Survivors of domestic violence: Because voter registration rolls are public information, survivors of domestic violence could be put at risk by making their address and whereabouts known publicly. Many survivors do not realize that voter registration rolls make their address publicly available to almost anyone. It is important to talk about this issue with survivors and help them to protect their safety while accessing their right to vote. Several states have passed laws that allow survivors of domestic violence to vote while protecting their confidentiality. In order to find out about the laws in your state contact the National Network to End Domestic Violence www.nnedv.org or call 202-543-5566

Persons convicted of a felony: In most states, a former felon can register and vote with the completion of their prison sentence, probation and/or parole. However, laws differ from state to state and some states take away a former felon's right to vote permanently. For more information on registering someone convicted of a felony to vote, please contact the Right to Vote campaign at the Sentencing Project at www.sentencingproject.org or 202-628-0871

Persons experiencing homelessness: People experiencing homelessness obviously do not have a conventional residential address. In most states, homeless individuals can register with the address of a shelter that will accept mail on their behalf. In some cases, the person can name the intersection of an area they spend most of their time and vote in the corresponding precinct. For more information, please contact the National Coalition for the Homeless at www.nationalhomeless.org or 202.462.4822

Non-citizens: If you work with an immigrant population then you know it is important to be sensitive to the fears that new immigrants may face when they come to receive care, particularly if you serve populations who are undocumented. A non-citizen may register to vote if they will be an American citizen by the next election. Because it is often not clear when someone's citizenship will be completed, it can be better to wait until citizenship is completed to register. However, there are many other opportunities for non-citizens to engage and observe the democratic process.

Youth: A young person can register to vote as long as they will be at least 18 years of age by the date of the next election. For more information on youth and voting, please contact CIRCLE at 301-405-2790 or www.civicyouth.org

