



Informational Memo

MH/MR Voter Registration Responsibilities

ODP Communication Number: Memo 063-11

Audience: Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR) Directors (Administrative Entities, (AEs), and Voter Registration Site Coordinators

Purpose: To inform MH/MR offices of their responsibilities pertaining to voter registration.

Background: In response to the decline in voter participation, Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993 to make it more convenient for eligible citizens to register to vote in elections for federal office. The NVRA required Pennsylvania and other states to change certain voter registration procedures and provide more opportunities for voter registration.

In 1995, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted a state law, the Pennsylvania Voter Registration Act (PVRA), to conform to Pennsylvania's voter registration system to the NVRA and to adopt the NVRA's new registration procedures for state as well as federal election purposes.

All offices primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities must offer the individual the opportunity to register to vote, as required by NVRA and PVRA. The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is such an agency, and therefore must comply with these laws. The goal of these requirements is to establish procedures that will increase the number of eligible citizens who register to vote in elections for Federal, State, and Local governments.

Discussion: Each County MH/MR office is considered to be a site location under ODP. Therefore, each office must give all individuals the opportunity to register to vote during the application for services, re-application for services, application for re-certification, renewal, and/or change of address processes. In addition, each office is required to have a site coordinator who is responsible for voter registration activities. The site coordinator must ensure that each employee is knowledgeable on how to carry out the agency's voter registration program. An MH/MR office may delegate the responsibility of services listed above

to independent entities. These entities are required to have compliance with the voter registration laws included in their contracts.

The following is a list of responsibilities for site coordinators:

- Coordinate the implementation of the voter registration program at his/her work site.
- Train employees to perform voter registration duties.
- Ensure the timely and accurate transmittal of completed Voter Registration Mail Applications (VRMAs) to the appropriate county voter registration offices where the applicants reside. All VRMAs must be transmitted to the appropriate county voter registration office within 10 days of receipt, or within 5 days of the receipt during the last five (5) days before a voter registration deadline, which occurs 30 days before each election. Your agency coordinator will inform the site coordinator, who will inform his/her colleagues of these deadlines for each election. The Department of State recommends that VRMAs be transmitted on a weekly basis.
- Provide timely and accurate monthly voter registration site statistics to the agency coordinator.
- Maintain an adequate inventory of forms and registration supplies such as VRMAs, Preference Forms, posters, and pamphlets.

The above responsibilities should be included in the job description of the site coordinator to ensure that the activities are continued.

Please contact the ODP Agency Coordinator, Ms. Lee Stephens, at lstephens@state.pa.us within **15 business days** when a site coordinator changes, or the position is vacant and an interim site coordinator is named.

The site coordinator must submit a monthly agency report to the ODP agency coordinator. A combined MH/MR report may be submitted by the County MH/MR office or they may elect to submit the information in a separate MH report and/or separate MR report. ODP acts as the DPW agency lead, therefore the report(s) does not need to be submitted to the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (OMHSAS). The ODP agency coordinator will then send the complete aggregate of these reports to the Pennsylvania Department of State.

Monthly agency reports are now due via email to the ODP Agency Coordinator by the 10th of the following month. The monthly agency report is posted to the ODP Consulting website at [ODP Consulting Website](#). Go to 'ODP Resources' on the left side, and then click on 'Publication and Other Resources' to find a blank copy of this report. Please note: The ODP agency coordinator must be notified by the site coordinator if for any reason the monthly agency report will not be submitted in a timely manner. The site coordinator will inform the ODP agency coordinator when the report will be submitted. If an issue with email occurs, reports may be faxed to the attention of Ms. Stephens at fax number 717-783-5141.

Site coordinators are encouraged to communicate the importance of timely report submission from all employees which they receive information. This is extremely important because these statistics are included in the Department of State's Annual Report to the General Assembly and the United States Department of Justice.

Site coordinators must ensure that the monthly reports are accurate; a current submission form is included at the end of this memo. Instructions are listed below:

- The name of the county must be included in the name of the agency or program
- The correct month for the report must be indicated
- Box number 1 and Box number 2 of the form should be identical (if not, a brief explanation must be provided). The number of people offered the opportunity to vote should equal the number of people served.
- The sum of Box numbers 3, 5, and 6 must equal box 2 (if not, a brief explanation must be provided)
- The number of people who have refused the opportunity to register, the number of people who mail the form themselves, and the number of completed applications mailed or delivered by the agency should equal the number of people offered the opportunity to register to vote. If the total for a question is zero, do not leave the box blank.

When requesting Voter Registration Mail Applications (VRMAs) from the Department of State, site coordinators must indicate the agency or category that they represent. This will allow the Department of State to accurately track agency voter registration totals statewide. Site coordinators should not request VRMAs from the local Board of Elections office. Those forms are not pre-coded and will not indicate the category of agency to allow for accurate tracking.

Please contact the **ODP Customer Service Line at 1-888-565-9435** should you have additional questions or concerns regarding the voter registration reporting process. The *2010 PA Guide to Agency Based Voter Registration* and *Voter Registration: What You May Not Know*, both issued by the PA Department of State, are posted to the ODP Consulting website at [ODP Consulting Website](#) for your reference. Go to 'ODP Resources' on the left side, and then click on 'Publication and Other Resources' to find these documents.