

# Voters in Assisted Living Facilities

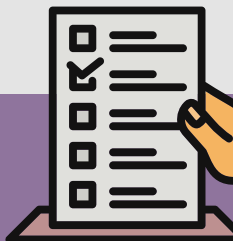
## THE 2020 RULES

North Carolina has “no excuse” absentee-by-mail voting. This means that a voter does not need to go in person or on Election Day to vote, and can request an absentee ballot without providing a reason or excuse for doing so.

Many voters in hospitals, assisted living facilities or nursing homes have historically utilized absentee-by-mail voting, but others have preferred voting in person and have utilized rides to the polls to vote in person.

Because of the pandemic and the medical vulnerability of residents of such assisted living facilities, many are on lockdown, with residents unable to exit the building. Furthermore, North Carolina is now in “Phase 2.5” of reopening, which means that long-term-care facilities are to continue to restrict visitation of all visitors and non-essential care personnel except for certain end-of-life situations. This may prevent family from helping residents to vote in person as they may have in the past. If the public health crisis persists, voters in these facilities may have no choice but to vote using absentee-by-mail.

### ABSENTEE-BY-MAIL IS A TWO-STEP PROCESS IN NORTH CAROLINA



# 1

**STEP ONE: Voters must request an absentee ballot**

**Voters can request an Absentee Ballot Request Form at: <http://bit.ly/NCAbsenteeBallot20> or call 888-OUR-VOTE to have an Absentee Request Form sent to them.**

## ABSENTEE-BY-MAIL IS A TWO-STEP PROCESS IN NORTH CAROLINA, CONTINUED



- ★ Voters who need assistance filling out the absentee request form can get assistance from their near relative, legal guardian or a member of a Multipartisan Assistance Team (MAT). Alternatively, a voter's near relative or legal guardian can also request a ballot on behalf of the voter.
- ★ The request form does not need a "wet ink" signature. Instead, if a voter requests a ballot online, a voter can use a stylus or finger, like when paying with credit card at a grocery store, but the signature must be unique and readable.
- ★ After filling out the request form, voters can return the form to the county board of elections by fax, email, mail or in person. The third page of the request form lists the address, fax number and email address where request forms should be sent for each county.
- ★ Starting September 1, voters will also be able to use an online portal available on the State Board of Elections website.
- ★ While absentee ballot request forms can technically be submitted up until 5 p.m. on October 27, the USPS advised North Carolina that voters submitting request forms by mail should do so at least 15 days before the election (October 19) to ensure they receive and are able to vote their absentee ballots in time.
- ★ Absentee ballots and their envelopes (which are called the absentee ballot "applications") will be sent by county boards of elections starting September 4. The State Board recommends that voters call their county boards of elections if they have not received their absentee ballot within 10 days of sending in their request form.





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**STEP TWO: Voters must mark their ballot in the presence of a witness, and then the voter, the witness and anyone assisting the voter must fill out all required information on the absentee ballot's envelope.**



**Voters must mark the ballot in the presence of an eligible witness older than 18 years of age. The following categories of people cannot witness a ballot:**

- **A candidate for office, unless the candidate is the voter's near relative.**
- **An owner, manager, director or employee of the hospital, clinic, nursing home, or resting home in which the voter is a patient or resident.**



**After watching the voter mark the ballot (but not the voter's actual choices), the witness must complete and sign the envelope in the space marked for Witness Certification.**



**Any person who assisted the voter in marking the ballot (if the voter needs physical assistance marking the ballot) must also sign and date the certificate in the proper place (Voter Assistant Certification).**



**Once the ballot is marked, the voter or person assisting the voter must seal the ballot in the return envelope and fill out all required information on the envelope application.**





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**STEP THREE: Voters must return the absentee ballot to their county board of elections either by mail or in person in time to be counted.**

**★ If a voter chooses to return a ballot in person, they must return the ballot no later than 5 p.m. on Election Day. The ballot may be returned in person during the early voting period to any early voting site or the county board of elections office. However, if returned on Election Day, the ballot must be returned to the county board of elections office, and not any other voting location. Only the voter, the voter's near relative or a legal guardian may possess the absentee ballot to return it to the county board of elections.**

**★ For ballots returned through the mail, they must be postmarked on or before Election Day and arrive at the county board of elections office no later than 5 p.m. on November 6.**

- It is important to note that not all USPS mail is postmarked with the date, so delivering the envelope to the USPS on Election Day does not guarantee that the ballot can be counted, even if delivered by the receipt deadline.**
- Furthermore, the USPS advised North Carolina that voters should mail their ballots at least one week (on or before October 30) before the due date to ensure timely delivery.**





## **ACCORDING TO NC LAW, WHO CAN HELP VOTERS IN THE ABSENTEE-BY-MAIL PROCESS?**

- ★ **NC counties are supposed to assemble MATs to assist voters who may need some help requesting or submitting an absentee ballot.**
- ★ **Volunteers are needed to serve on MATs, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that voters can receive the assistance they need.**
- ★ **There may be exceptions where MATs can further assist voters with disabilities – for more information, please contact 888-OUR-VOTE.**



### **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?**



- ★ **If an elderly voter is in a facility that is not locked down, or they are homebound but do not live in an assisted living facility, you may be able to help ensure that voter can exercise the franchise.**
- ★ **Sometimes, voters may have a near relative who can assist them with the absentee-by-mail process – they just need help identifying who qualifies as a near relative.**
  - **A near relative includes: a spouse, brother, sister, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, stepparent or stepchild.**
  - **Groups can provide transportation or guidance to those near relatives wanting to assist voters.**



★ You can serve on a county MAT and thus assist voters who otherwise would not have access to assistance. We need trusted messengers and community members to take these important civic roles.

★ Sign up at the North Carolina State Board of Elections website: [www.ncsbe.gov/get-involved](http://www.ncsbe.gov/get-involved) (look at the bottom of the page)

- The State Board will connect people interested in serving on MATs or interested in setting up a MAT appointment to those people's local county board office.
- For more information on MATs:
  - <http://bit.ly/voteraccessibilityMATs>
  - <http://bit.ly/MATsNC>
- While MAT members are generally volunteers, some counties do compensate MAT members for their time.
- Service on a MAT is not a huge time commitment but can make an enormous impact by helping voters who cannot vote without assistance.

