

CUYAHOGA COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE VOTER PREPAREDNESS

Since July 2006 the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services (OHS) has partnered with OHIO VOTES to educate homeless providers and clients about voting rights and procedures. OHS has implemented the following components in an effort to insure continuous voter education for CoC agencies.

Develop

GOALS

- That Homeless providers develop and implement a *Voter Preparedness Action Plan* to educate clients about voter rights and voting procedures
- That Agencies motivate clients to become active voters

PROCESS

- Research and document voting laws and regulations
- Host trainings for Continuum providers (Shelters, Transitional/Permanent housing & Support Service Projects)
- Each agency develops a “*Voter Preparedness Action Plan*”
- OHS develops evaluation system for effort

RESEARCHED GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS:

Nonprofit organizations and clients are subject to these perimeters for voting activities.

- **General Rules for 501 (C) (3) Electoral Activity:**

One basic rule: non profits may not support or oppose any candidate for public office. May not endorse candidates, rate candidates, contribute to candidates, or do anything else that might seem intended to help or hurt a candidate.

Nonprofits may educate voters or candidates on the issues, provide opportunities for voters to hear the candidates’ positions, encourage citizens to register to vote, help new voters navigate the voting process and get people to go to the polls on Election Day.

Source: NONPROFITS & VOTING ELECTIONS: A Guide for 501 (C) (3)
Organizations on non-partisan voter participation and education. Page 2
www.nonprofitvote.org

- **Voter Registration On Site at Homeless Agencies:**

If a voting activity is general and non-partisan it is an eligible activity for any agencies receiving federal dollars. Consequently, case managers employed at a homeless agency, can assist their clients in voter registration.

However, any activity that would be partisan or politically influential would not be an eligible activity.

Source: Robert Milburn, HUD Columbus Field Office, January 23, 2007

- **Eligibility and Identification Requirements:**

Client must be a US citizen, 18 years old on or before the next general election, a resident of Ohio and the County for at least 30 days immediately before Election Day, and must be registered to vote.

Clients must have one of the following identifications: valid Ohio driver’s license number, last 4 digits of social security number, current valid photo ID showing name, current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or document showing name and address.

To register to vote clients need a “house address” or “place of residence”. This means a place to which a client can return if absent. Clients may use addresses of friends/relatives where they are residing, and would then necessarily vote in that precinct. Addresses of homeless shelters that receive mail on a client’s behalf would also be acceptable. For those living on the streets, clients may use a “park bench” address but would have to vote at the Board of Elections since this is not a recognized mailing address.

Source: NEOCH, October 2006

- **Ex-Felon Voting Rights:**

When any person convicted of a felony...is granted parole, judicial release, or a conditional pardon or is released under a non-jail community control or a post-release control sanction, the person is competent to be an elector during the period of community control, parole, post-release control, or release or until the conditions of pardon have been performed or have transpired and is competent to be an elector thereafter following final discharge.

Source: Ohio Revised Code 2961: Civil Rights of Convicted Felons www.OHVOTES.org

HOSTED TWO VOTER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS for Agency Staff

July 24, 2006 and October 16, 2007

Presented by OHIO Votes, OHS and NEOCH

24 Agencies and 59 Directors and Staff were present, representing emergency shelters, transitional/permanent housing and supportive services programs.

Topics included:

- Guidelines for the role of non-profit agencies in the voting process:
- Voter Education
 - The Rights of Homeless Persons as Voters
 - Forms and process for voting:
 - Registration, application for Absent Voting Ballot, completion of Absentee ballot
 - Voting systems: manual machines, computer operated, punch card ballots
- Agency role in assuring registration and voting:
 - Assigning dedicated staff or volunteers for registration and absentee ballot completion and delivery, or transportation to polls

Follow-up:

- Each agency prepared *Voter Preparedness Action Plan* that included:
 - Description of how agency will assist clients in becoming Voter-ready:
 - Knowing their rights
 - Knowing how to register, operate voting mechanisms, fill out absentee ballots
 - Identification of a timeline to insure sufficient client preparation for the coming election
 - Development of a tracking system for voter efforts

EVALUATION OF AGENCY EFFORTS

Agencies tracked results for education, registration, absentee balloting, equipment demos, poll working and transportation during the 2006 and 2007 election years. They were requested to submit these results to the Review and Ranking Committee, a neutral group from the community-at-large. This Committee forms annually to review and approve renewal projects. Submission of results to the community-wide Review Committee through the "Renewal Information Form (RIF)" is significant since it means that voter efforts are public information..

Below are the results of voter activities for the March 4th 2008 Primary Election.

RESULTS of VOTER EFFORTS for the MARCH 4th PRIMARY ELECTION

797	Clients received education on voter rights & voting procedures
447	Clients disclosed first time voter registration or re-registration through the assistance of agency staff
196	Clients disclosed use of absentee ballots
161	Clients attended demos on voting equipment through the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
101	Clients became poll workers
91	Clients were transported to polls

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

- Every CoC Program has a Voter Preparedness Plan
- Every Client is Provided Voter Registration and Voting Procedures Information
- The Voter Education Program has become a part of the annual CoC Review Process to assure on-going efforts

RESOURCES

PERMISSIBLE VOTER and ELECTION ACTIVITIES for 501 (C) (3) ORGANIZATIONS www.nonprofitvote.org

NONPROFITS & VOTING ELECTIONS: A Guide for 501 (C) (3) Organizations on non-partisan voter participation and education www.nonprofitvote.org

VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES www.OHVOTES.org

Ohio VOTES Tips on Voting www.OHVOTES.org

GUIDELINES AND IDEAS FOR VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES www.nonprofitvote.org

HOMELESS VOTING INFORMATION IN CLEVELAND www.neoch.neoch.org

BE A POLL WORKER! www.sos.state.oh.us