

Red Cross shelter residents should have access to voting opportunities in the upcoming elections. If shelter clients face obstacles to voting due to displacement, Red Cross External Relations contacts local election officials to request assistance. At the same time, the Red Cross workforce must honor our fundamental principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence. As a 501(c)(3) charity, the Red Cross is prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, intervening in, or attempting to influence a political campaign. The following guidance explains what Red Cross workers may and may not do to facilitate voting by shelter clients.

Supporting Voting Access in Red Cross Shelters

Voting regulations, including dates for early voting and absentee voting, vary among states and among counties. To address voting access inquiries from congregate and non-congregate shelter residents:

Step	Responsible Party	Action
Scheduling Voting Access		
1	Shelter Site Manager	Informs the HQ Sheltering Manager of the need for voting access at their shelter
2	HQ Sheltering Manager	Provides a list of shelters seeking voting access to the AD of External Relations
3	AD of External Relations	Coordinates with Government Operations staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact local election officials at the earliest opportunity to determine their availability to visit shelter facilities to distribute and collect voting materials and help voters with issues or questions related to voting; • Coordinate between Shelter Site Managers and election officials to determine which hours election officials are allowed in a shelter to minimize disruption. • Ensure that, in advance of any visit, all election officials are aware of Red Cross COVID-19 protocols, including wearing a face covering and maintaining six feet of distance from others.
Day of Election Officials' Visit		
4	Shelter Site Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with election officials to ensure they are stationed in a clear, accessible space near the entrance of the shelter and have clear identification; • Ensure visiting election officials follow Red Cross COVID-19 protocols (wearing a mask or face covering and maintaining six feet distance from others) before entering a Red Cross-managed shelter, and at all times while in the facility.

Restrictions

Red Cross shelter workers may not coordinate voting access activities with political parties or campaigns. For example, no personnel from a political party may enter a congregate shelter to distribute political materials or otherwise promote any candidate.

ONLY ELECTION OFFICIALS may provide voting materials or any assistance to prospective voters in shelters regarding voting matters. If shelter residents ask Red Cross staff or volunteers for voting assistance, they MUST be directed to their local county election officials. Red Cross workers are not permitted to help shelter residents vote, answer voting questions, or provide transportation to or from voting facilities or political events. Red Cross shelter managers are responsible for ensuring that staff and volunteers are aware of these restrictions.

Voting for Red Cross Responders

For Red Cross paid staff, guidance regarding voting from the Red Cross Employee Handbook reads:

Voting for Staff Deployed to Disaster Operations

Time Off to Vote or Caucus

Employees who cannot reach their polling place outside their scheduled working hours will be permitted time off to vote or caucus on Election Day, with pay. The time off to vote or caucus should not exceed four (4) hours and it is not charged to available paid time off benefits. Employees should arrange their specific time off to vote or caucus in advance with their supervisor no later than one week prior to the Election Day.

Red Cross volunteers work with their supervisors to arrange time to vote or caucus.

For any questions about this guidance, please contact the Elected Official Liaison Network or Government Operations contact for the disaster operation or Respond@redcross.org.