

BARRIERS TO STUDENT REGISTRATION AND VOTING

Students are often newer to the voting process and may even be in a new community or new state with different election laws than they are familiar with. Additionally, students can face unique challenges such as having the necessary proof of residency or identification for registering and voting. Below are some common barriers:

1. Lack of Knowledge

Students are less likely to register and vote if they feel they lack adequate knowledge about the voting process or policies and positions of candidates, or the connection between issues they care about and voting.

- You can work with your institution to deliver basic information about the process, dates, locations and requirements to register, request an absentee ballot, vote early, or on Election Day. Campus Vote Project has student voting guides (www.campusvoteproject.org/studentguides) covering these issues for all 50 States and DC.
- You can educate students on local, state, and national issues by creating an open dialogue. Host lunch discussions, organize events with speakers focused on topical issues, or create flyers highlighting the main points of important issues.

2. Residency

Symm v. United States, a 1979 U.S. Supreme Court case, upheld that students have the right to register and vote in the community where they attend college if they so choose.

- Contact your housing office for the street addresses of on-campus residence halls. If there is no address for a certain residence hall, contact your local elections office to find out what address students can put on their voter registration forms as their residential address.
- Residential addresses may differ from the mailing addresses students use on campus, so make sure students understand the difference and place them on the right lines on the voter registration application.
- Let students know they also have the right to register and vote at their home address.

3. Election Day Polling Location

Many students don't know their polling location.

- Find the polling location nearest to your campus by visiting Vote.org (www.vote.org/polling-place-locator) and organize a transportation system if it is far from campus. You can also work with administrators and your local elections office to bring a polling place or early voting site to your campus.

4. Early Voting Options

Many students don't understand options for early or absentee voting in their college community or at their home address.

- Options for early voting and absentee voting vary by state. Students are often unaware of options and deadlines to vote before Election Day, for their college address or their home address.

5. Local Election Officials

Keep local election officials informed of your efforts and see if they can help with voter registration or voter turnout events.

- Let the local election officials and volunteers at polling places know when you are arriving with large groups of students so they can prepare for the influx of voters.

There are significant statutory and non-statutory barriers to student voting such as:

1. ID Requirements

Students, especially out-of-state students, may lack the ID required to vote where they attend college.

- Our state student voting guides (www.campusvoteproject.org/studentguides) have information on voter ID laws for all 50 states and DC. You can also check if student IDs are accepted as voter ID in your state at www.campusvoteproject.org/administrators/student-id-as-voter-id.

2. Deadlines

Voters must be aware of deadlines to register, vote early, and apply for and return absentee or mail-in ballots.

- Check here www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines to see the deadline in your state to register before an election or when to submit your absentee ballot application. Check out the CVP state student voting guides (www.campusvoteproject.org/studentguides) for more information.

3. Confusion with Forms

Confusing language on forms can deter voters.

- Voter registration, absentee ballot applications, and other forms can be confusing. Call your local elections officials or CVP for assistance.

The best way to overcome these barriers is to help students make a plan well before registration deadlines and Election Day! Plan when and what students need to register to vote, and how, when, and where they are going to vote before or on Election Day. The “Help Students Make an Election Day Plan” section has more information on how!