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Supporting the Right to Vote

Quick Guide for DSPs | Missouri

If someone you support wants to vote, help remove barriers, but do not influence how they vote.

Here are some good rules of thumb, reminders, and resources; to help you help people you support exercise their right to vote.



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You can find EVERYTHING a person needs to vote on our website

If someone says, “I want to vote.”

Before voting, you should support the person to:

- Register to vote or check their registration.
- Find their polling place.
- Make a plan – how will they get there? If they need help at the polls, who do they want to do that?
- Find and review a sample ballot from their County’s local election authority.
- Research candidates and ballot issues using neutral, nonpartisan sources. There are some examples and resources in this guide.
- Make sure they have the right ID required to vote, like a drivers or non-driver’s license, nonexpired passport or other government issued photo ID. The Secretary of State’s website has a list of acceptable forms of voter ID: sos.mo.gov

Supporting someone to find information and research candidates is okay. Staff can help the person find information, understand what they are reading, and make their own decisions.



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Getting Ready to Vote

We can provide neutral information. What is “neutral information’? Neutral information gives facts about the voting process without opinions or telling someone how to

Neutral information can include:

- Reading someone a sample ballot, or filling one out per their instructions.
- Finding the names of candidates and the offices they are running for.
- Reviewing the wording of ballot measures.
- Nonpartisan explanations of how voting works.

Resources

Start with official and nonpartisan sources, such as:

Missouri Secretary of State

Information about voter registration, polling places, sample ballots, voting options and voting rights.

Local Election Authority

County or city election officials can provide information about polling places, ballots, accessibility and voting procedures.

Vote 411

Vote 411 provides nonpartisan voter information, including candidate responses to questions, ballot information and voting resources. Candidates’ responses are provided in their own words. VOTE411 does not endorse or oppose candidates or political parties.

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What about candidate websites?

A candidate's website, campaign materials, political party website or political advertisement is not neutral information. They contain opinions about the candidate and sometimes the person they're running against.

A DSP may help a person access or read information from candidates if the person wants to research the candidates. The DSP should not recommend a candidate, summarize information in a way that favors one candidate, or tell the person what the information means, what they should believe, or how they should vote. It's always a good idea to look at the websites of both candidates running for an office.

A good rule:

Help the person find information. Help them understand information. Let the person decide what they think and how they want to vote.



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On Election Day:

A person has a right to assistance when voting.

A voter with a disability may receive assistance from the person of their choice if they need help marking or casting their ballot.

In Missouri, a voter who cannot read or write, is blind, or has another physical disability may choose a person like a friend, family member, DSP or other person to assist them. A person can also request assistance from volunteers helping with the election, called election judges, who will be on site at polling places.

If a person has chosen you to help them to vote:

You may:

- Read the ballot or candidate information to the person.
- Explain how to operate the voting equipment.
- Mark the ballot exactly as the voter directs you.
- Help the person communicate their choices.
- Help the person use an accessible voting system.

You may not:

- Recommend a candidate or ballot issue.
- Suggest how the person should vote.
- Change a person's choice.
- Skip a race because you think the person would not understand it.
- Pressure or discourage the person from voting.

Missouri law specifically says a person assisting a voter cannot influence a voter's choices.

Remember:
Assistance is OK. Influence is not.

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What if the person has a guardian?

Having a disability or having a guardian does not, by itself, mean a person cannot vote.

If the person's voting eligibility is already documented in their plan, or somewhere else in their record, follow that information.

If you are unsure whether the person is eligible to vote, do not make your own determination based on the person's disability or the fact that they have a guardian.

You can ask your supervisor to find out whether the person has retained their right to vote.

What if there is a problem voting?

A person with a disability has the right to an accessible voting experience. Polling places should have accessible voting systems available, and curbside voting.

If there is a problem at the polling place:

Election Protection Hotline
Call or text: 866-OUR-VOTE
866-687-8683
866OURVOTE.org

You can also contact the person's local election authority for questions about ballots, accessibility features of polling places or other specific questions.



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Remember

Want to vote?

⇨ Support access

Want to learn about candidates?

⇨ Help them find and understand information.

Need help marking the ballot?

⇨ The person can choose an assistant.

Problem at the polls?

⇨ Call 866-OUR-VOTE.

They decide how they want to vote.

⇨ We respect and support them to make their choice.



If you have questions about this guide, or want a presentation to your team on voting, reach out via email: advocacy@esmw.org