



What You Need to Know Before Voting

Voting is a fundamental right that is guaranteed to all eligible citizens of the United States, including people with disabilities. By voting, you get to help select the key decision makers that make and enforce policies that matter to you. It is important to vote so that you can voice your own opinion about who represents you in the government and what policies are implemented.

Here is a step-by-step guide to prepare to vote in the next election!

Accessibility Tips

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Massachusetts General Laws, everyone who is eligible to vote has an equal right to do so. Therefore, all election-related processes—including registering to vote, voting by mail, voting early, and voting in-person—must be accessible to people with disabilities.

Voters with IDD and autism have the right to ask poll workers, family members, direct support professionals (DSPs), or other staff for help registering to vote, choosing how to vote, and filling out and submitting their ballot. Everyone also has the right to a private, accessible place to vote.

If you believe your voting rights have been denied or reasonable accommodations were not provided, talk to your election warden or report issues online on the [Disability Law Center's website](#).

Step 1. Determine if you are eligible to vote

In order to be able to vote, you need to meet these requirements:

- Live in Massachusetts
- Be a citizen of the U.S.
- Be at least 18 years old
- Not be in prison for a felony conviction

Step 2. Check your registration status

Visit <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/>. Click “Check Registration Information,” and fill out your name, date of birth, and zip code in the form.

If your voting status is **ACTIVE**, that means that you are registered to vote! Now, make sure all of your information, such as your address, name, and political party is correct. If everything is correct, skip Step 3 and move on to Step 4.

Voting Status: **ACTIVE**

If your voting status is **INACTIVE**, that means that you are not registered to vote. Move on to Step 3 to learn how to register.



Step 3. Register to vote or update your information

If you are not registered to vote, or if your information is incorrect, you must update the registration at least 10 days before the election that you want to vote in.

If you have a valid driver's license, you can register or update your information **online** at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/>. Follow the directions on the website to register or update your information.

You can also register **by mail** by printing out a voter registration form and filling it out. Then, you can mail it to or drop it off at your local election office. You can ask someone else to mail it or drop it off for you as well.

Finally, you can register **in-person** by visiting your local election office and asking them for a voter registration form.

People with IDD and autism may choose to use a support person to help them with any of these options.

Step 4. Decide how you want to vote

You have multiple options on where and how you can vote:

1. You can **vote in-person** at your polling location on election day. Determine your polling location on this website: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/WhereDoIVote/>.
2. You can vote in-person at select locations during the **early voting period**. Your city or town's clerk's office will have more information about where to vote for early voting.
3. You can **vote by mail**. For this option, you must request an absentee or mail-in ballot. You can do this on the [Secretary of the Commonwealth's vote by mail webpage](#).

All of these options are required to provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

Step 5. Research candidates and decide who to vote for

An important step before you vote is thoroughly researching each candidate to learn about their goals, policies, and values. That way, you can make an informed decision about who you want to represent you in the government. You can do this by searching the candidates' names online, or by researching particular elections and policy issues. Websites like [MA Voter Table](#) have guides in multiple languages on the different candidates.



More Resources

- For more detailed guidance on how to vote, see [The Arc's Plain Language Voter Guide](#).
- For more general information on current voting policy issues, visit [The Arc's Voting Fact Sheet](#).
- Visit <https://thearcofmass.org/voting/> for more information on voting for people with IDD.
- Visit [Disability Law Center's REV UP Massachusetts](#) for more information on voting accessibility and guidance on how to vote.
- The [AAPD Election Engagement Hub](#) also has more tools and supports available to help people with disabilities vote!