

FAQs: Absentee Voting: Before, During and After Election Day

Q: Page 35 states we need to record "incomplete" certificate envelope (i.e. missing voter signature), in SVRS; is there an option to do this or is this a manual process?

A: There isn't a good option in SVRS to accommodate somehow marking the ballot as being "incomplete" in SVRS. Unfortunately, this will, in part, be a manual process. The voter should be contacted and the clerk determines whether to hold the ballot in the clerk's office (at the voter's request) or mail the ballot back to the voter.

In the first scenario, if the voter opts to come to the clerk's office to cure the deficiency, the ballot must be marked as returned. Whether the voter comes to the office and cures the problem or not, the ballot is sent to the polling place where it will be counted or rejected.

In the second scenario, if the ballot is returned to the voter, the ballot should remain in the Issued status (not be marked Returned). However, because the voter may not vote in person, the clerk should make a notation on the Absentee Ballot Log to indicate that the voter has returned an incomplete ballot. One suggestion would be to mark the returned ballot date column with the date the ballot was received in the clerk's office along with a notation that it was incomplete (e.g. 3/30/15 Incomplete). Poll workers should be trained to read the notation to mean that the only way the voter may vote is by curing their absentee ballot and they may not vote in person. One reason we recommend leaving the ballot as not returned in SVRS is to ensure that a voter checking their absentee ballot status on MyVote would not receive erroneous information.

Q: I would like to hear the question answered right away, I am a one person office clerk and I don't have time to go back and look for the answers later, office of many hats.

A: Thanks for the input.

Q: I thought we had to stay open until 5 on Thursday for anyone to request an absentee ballot by mail?

A: That is correct. Because a by-mail request could come in by means other than USPS.

Q: I have two registered voters who will be joining the Peace Corps in March. Just to verify, which form(s) should I send to them for the April election, and are they able to vote in all elections or just federal elections?

A: Peace Corps electors are considered military electors, coming up.

Q: Do voters need to send proof of residency with FPCA?

A: Not military or perm overseas, but we will get into it in a bit.

Q: If a military voter does not return a ballot from a general election, can we cease sending ballots at that point?

A: Send a notice and discontinue their service unless they contact you and wish to continue.

Q: What makes a facility "Qualified"?

A: The facility fits the definition, Community Based Residential Home, etc., at top of page. If you have five registered voters and at least one absentee on file you have to send SVDs to these facilities.

Q: If not certain if they intend to return, do you treat them as perm overseas?

A: If that's what they indicate on the FPCA, yes.

Q: Is the absentee request deadline 5 p.m. Friday for calendar year regular absentee voters?

A: Yes, the calendar year request does go through the Friday, 5 p.m. deadline. It may be corrected legislatively.

Q: Can SVRS be modified to mark the addresses of these residential care facilities (group homes, etc.) that we are required to track for 5 registrations and 1 absentee request?

A: There isn't a way in SVRS today to easily "mark" an address as being a care facility. However, there is a way to find and identify whether a specific care facility meets the requirement of 5 registered voters and 1 absentee request. Follow these steps:

1. In the Voter node of SVRS, search for the address of the care facility. (Note that this may be done by searching both House Number and Street Name. If a care facility uses multiple house numbers, search only by Street Name and the sort by address to show the list in order of house number.) If there are 5 or more registered voters listed at the facility, print the list or note the names of the voters.
2. In the Absentee Application node, search for an approved absentee application for a voter from the voter list. This can be done by searching for all voters with Application Status of Approved. If there are more than 1000 approved absentee applications in the municipality, narrow the list by searching by voter name (either their full name or the first initial of their last name). For longer results list, click the Name header to sort by voter name.

Though SVRS currently doesn't have the capability of marking addresses as being associated with a residential care facility, the ability to do so is being considered as the new and improved database is being developed.

Q: Isn't the voter's written request to be taken off the absentee list sufficient and sufficient at any time of the year? Do they have to be sent a 30-day notice letter?

A: If voter gives you a written request you don't need to send the 30-day notice.

Q: Can the absentee ballot log generated out of SVRS be modified to include a comments form for documenting these things? It can take hours on the weekend before an election to manually document all of this information?

A: We are not currently able to accommodate this in SVRS. However, if you have specific questions or needs, contact a SVRS Specialist to determine whether there may be an alternative solution.

Q: What if a voter comes to the polls on Election Day and needs to register. They state they are Military. Since military doesn't need to register, do they have to fill out the GAB-131 and if so, do they have to provide proof of residence?

A: Fill out the GAB-131 and provide POR if they show up in person.

Q: We are normally open until 4p.m. every weekday. The Friday before the election, do we need to extend our hours to be open until 5p.m. for in person voting?

A: You may have post in-person voting hours the Friday before the election, but you need to be open or available for other 5 p.m. deadlines that day, such as voter registration and absentee application for certain military and indefinitely confined voters.

Q: If individuals send a letter instead of using the AB application, can we require their date of birth be in the letter?

A: Not if you can identify who the voter is.

Q: Before leaving, I've had snow birds come in to my office in December wanting to apply for AB in 2015 - is this acceptable?

A: Yes, as long as they indicate particular elections in 2015 or calendar year 2015.

Q: If the original witness is not available, does the voter have to revote?

A: The can only do so if they are within the time limit (by mail absentee, in person absentee) to spoil their ballot and be issued another ballot.