

DO'S AND DONT'S: ELECTION ACTIVITIES IN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

DO'S

The IRS affirmatively states that 501(c)(3) organizations **MAY** conduct voter engagement or connect with candidates on a **non-partisan** basis.

1. ORGANIZE VOTING EVENTS¹

- Facilitate voting/registration drives at your nonprofit or in your community.
- Promote voting/registration through your communications, website, or events.

2. EDUCATE VOTERS ON THE VOTING PROCESS

- Share details on how and where to vote, including information on polling locations, absentee ballots, and local election offices.
- Remind people of important deadlines and election dates.

3. HOST A CANDIDATE FORUM

- Collaborate with community partners to host forums featuring all candidates.
- Encourage community members to attend these forums.

4. PREPARE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRES

- Ask all candidates questions about community and local issues.
- Publish their full responses on your website or in a nonpartisan voter guide.

5. PROVIDE SAMPLE BALLOTS OR NONPARTISAN VOTER GUIDES

- Display or distribute official sample ballots and nonpartisan voter guides from trusted partners.

6. ENGAGE IN ISSUE-BASED EDUCATION

- Provide information and educate patients and staff on issues that may impact them.

7. ENGAGE IN BALLOT MEASURE ADVOCACY¹

- Educate the public on your stance within the limits of your normal lobbying activities.
- Allow your board to take positions on ballot measures and involve community leaders in discussions about these issues.
- *Note: May trigger IRS and State reporting, subject to federal lobbying limits.*

8. PROMOTE VOTING

- Remind staff, patients, and community members about the importance of voting.
- Conduct get-out-the-vote activities that encourage participation without endorsing specific candidates.
- Offer services like free rides to the polls, making voting more accessible.

¹Community health centers working under the MVMH TCE grant are prohibited from using grant dollars to engage in voter registration, lobbying, and/or opposing or supporting a ballot measure.

DONT'S

HOWEVER, 501(c)(3) organizations **MAY NOT** engage in **partisan** political activities.

DO NOT:

1. ENDORSE OR OPPOSE CANDIDATES

- Do not support or oppose any candidate through statements or actions.

2. MAKE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

- Avoid using organizational funds or resources for campaign contributions or expenditures.

3. RANK OR RATE CANDIDATES

- Refrain from giving candidates grades or rankings based on their positions on issues.

4. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR VOTING

- Do not offer money, gifts, or anything of value in exchange for voting or registering to vote.

5. EXCLUSIVE USE OF RESOURCES BY CANDIDATES

- Ensure any use of facilities or resources by candidates is equally available to all candidates at fair market value.

6. PARTISAN ACTIVITIES

- Remember to maintain a nonpartisan stance in all voter engagement activities.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- **Nonpartisanship:** Conduct voter engagement and education within the scope of your educational and civic mission, without supporting or opposing any candidate.
- **Legal Compliance:** Follow all relevant federal, state, and local regulations regarding voter engagement and election activities.

Resources

Nonprofits, Voting and Elections: A 501(c)(3) Online Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Engagement, www.nonprofitvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/nonpartisan-election-activities-501c3-nonprofits-1.pdf

Can a Nonprofit Provide Incentives to Encourage Citizens to Register to Vote or Vote? <https://afj.org/resource/can-a-nonprofit-provide-incentives-to-encourage-citizens-to-register-to-vote-or-vote/>

The Restriction of Political Campaign Intervention by Section 501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Organizations <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/the-restriction-of-political-campaign-intervention-by-section-501c3-tax-exempt-organizations>