

YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR VOTE!

Part Two of a Two-Part Document Series

A Case Example of Promoting Voting from the
Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute



**DEVELOPED BY ANYA MASINDET-SHULER,
HANNAH WELLS, & JULIE GRAZIANE**



PENNSYLVANIA
PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE

A Penn State Health enterprise





Temple University Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

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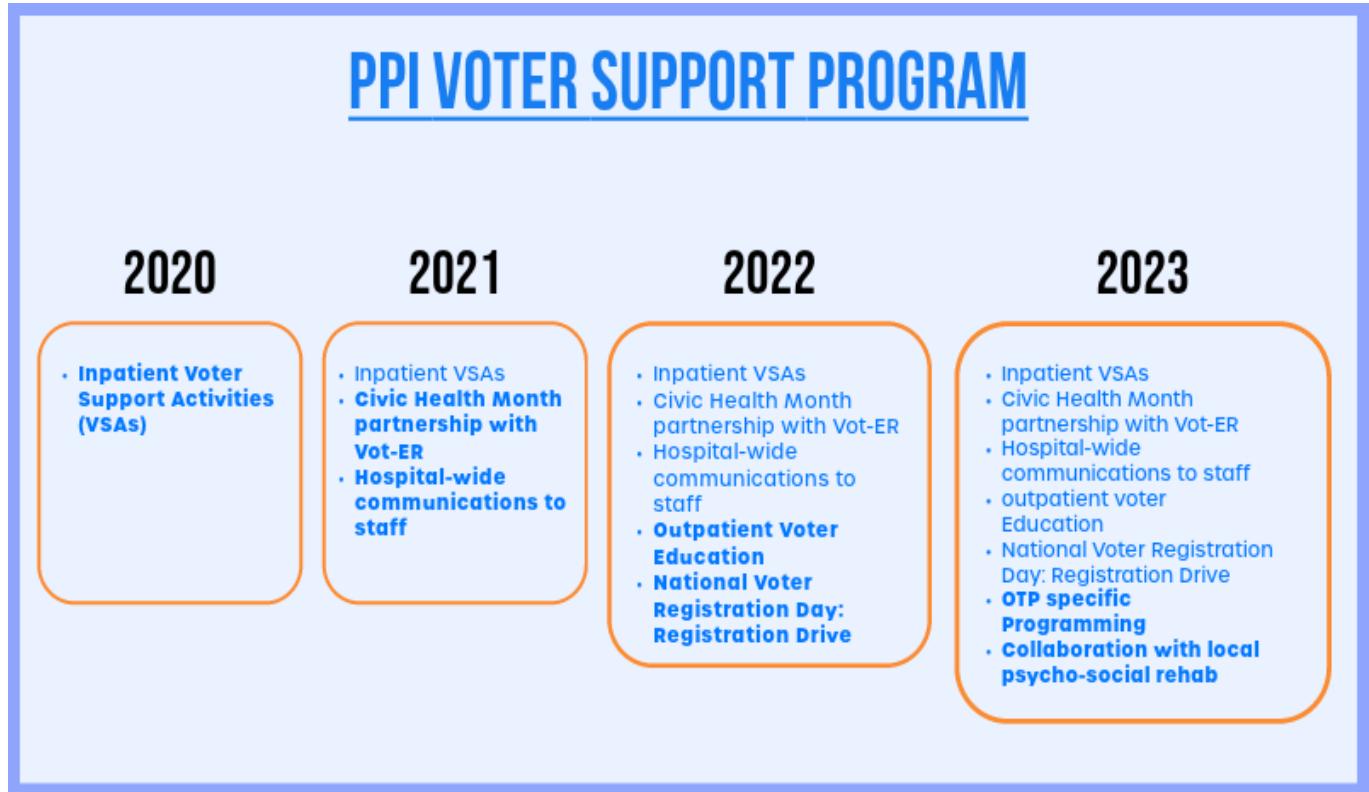
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Check out the companion document on our website to learn more about why voting matters and how voting can impact both individuals and communities.

This additional document is entitled Why Voting Matters: Exploring Personal and Community Impact.

Program Highlight: Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI)

The Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI) is an academically affiliated community psychiatric hospital located in Harrisburg, PA. Their wide range of services include 3 adult inpatient units, 2 child/adolescent units, a partial hospital program, general and specialty outpatient programs, a dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) program, and an opioid treatment program (OTP).



In recent years, the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI) has decided to tackle the issue of low voter rates by working to mitigate the voting barriers faced by the individuals they support.

In 2020, PPI launched their Voter Support and Civic Wellness Program to learn more about the voting barriers encountered by the individuals they support and to provide optional voter support activities for them to engage in.

In 2021, PPI utilized free resources from Vot-ER, a nonpartisan, non-profit focused on increasing healthcare-based voter registration, in order to host Civic Health Month activities. Additionally, they implemented hospital wide communications to staff members about the importance of voting.

In 2022, they held their first annual voter registration drive on National Voter Registration Day. They also began providing outpatient voter education, which included: tips for voters, election

dates, registration information, registration/voting mailing ballot deadlines, etc. Many of the voter support activities offered were provided by student volunteers from the Penn State College of Medicine.

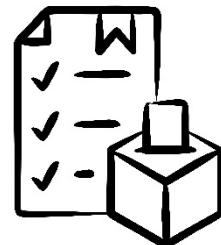
In 2023, PPI expanded into offering specific programming in their opiate treatment program. They also collaborated with Aurora Social Rehabilitation to promote voting among members who have mental health challenges and/or developmental disabilities in a different setting.

Tips and Tricks from the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI)

If you are interested in supporting individuals to vote in the next election, here are a few things to keep in mind. PPI has learned these tips and tricks in their work promoting voting among their clients.

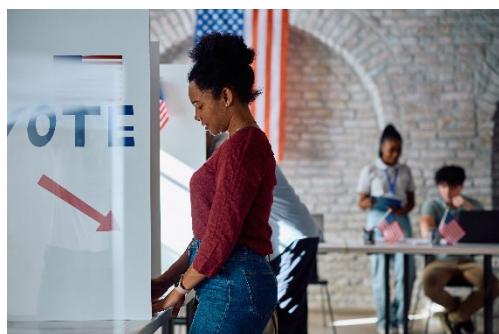
General Voting Guidelines

Voter registration, ability to vote by mail, and ID requirements to vote in-person vary by state, so it's important to be aware of your state's voting laws. Your specific state's Department of State website is a good place to find this information.



Remaining Nonpartisan

It is also crucial that you remain nonpartisan when talking to the individuals you support about voting. This means not endorsing or supporting specific political parties, candidates or policies and respecting the desired affiliation of any person you speak to about voter registration. This will ensure that every voter has all the facts, regardless of individual beliefs or political affiliation.



Voter Registration Deadlines

Many states have voter registration deadlines that occur before the election date, and do not allow same day voter registration. Finding out when these deadlines are is important.

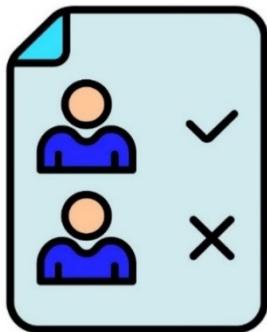


Voting In-Person

If the person you support decides to vote in person, they may have questions or want to know what to expect when they go to vote in person. If this is the case, be sure to help them understand what the experience may entail so they feel prepared.

Mail-in Ballot Information

Talk to the person you support about whether or not they have to and want to vote in person on election day. They may be able to vote by mail, depending on the state. Voting by mail allows you to vote from home instead of going to a polling place. There are important deadlines and other guidelines to follow to vote via mail. More information on how to start the process of requesting a mail-in ballot can be found on your specific state's Department of State website.



Voters with a Criminal History

In some states, individuals with any felony convictions cannot vote, either temporarily or permanently. These voting rules vary by state, which is why it's important to familiarize yourself with your state's voting requirements.

Creating a Voting Plan

Consider talking to the person you support about making a plan to vote. Items to include in the plan:

- Are you registered to vote?
- Are you voting in person or by mail?
- If voting in person, do you know where (polling place) and when to vote?
- Do you have a plan for transportation to get there?



What can practitioners do to support voting?

If you are interested in learning more or doing more to increase voter engagement within your community, there are a plethora of strategies you can use to do so.

1. As a first step, you can start by learning more about your state's voting & registration laws, by visiting Voter.org, VOTE411.org, Vote.gov, or USA.gov. As you prepare to launch your own voter engagement initiative, take time to familiarize yourself with important dates, deadlines, and voter registration requirements.
2. Each state also has different state-specific voting laws- be sure to familiarize yourself with these! The [Bazelon Center](http://BazelonCenter.org) is a national legal advocacy organization with a focus on advancing rights of individuals with mental disabilities. As a practitioner it may be beneficial to review the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law's website, to learn more about how the people you support might be impacted by state voting laws.
3. Additionally, you can make a commitment to spread information about voting to your colleagues, participants, and/or administration. This can happen through discussing your own plans to vote or by highlighting [National Voter Registration Day](http://NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org) each year.
4. Use [conversation starters](#) to talk to the people you support about voting!
5. Help people explore how voting can directly impact their lives!
6. You can utilize the Voter Support Activities (VSAs) provided by PPI, to survey the individuals you support to gauge their current levels of civic involvement and to support them in becoming more involved.
7. Creating voter support and education cards that can be distributed to clients and consumers with information about voting deadlines and tips for voting to increase their number of resources related to promoting voting amongst the individuals they support.
8. Discover ways that you and your organization can partner with other organizations geared towards increasing civic engagement.
9. Explore [existing resources](#) to see what you may be able to utilize to promote voting!

Resources Related to Voting

There are a ton of resources available to help folks vote! Please check out the next few pages to find more information about resources you may be able to utilize.

Resource	Resource Description	Highlighted Resources
<u>League of Women Voters</u>	Over a century ago, the League of Women Voters (LWV) was founded to be a nonpartisan political organization dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy. The LWV works to ensure fair and equitable access to the ballot, providing nonpartisan election information, and advocating for public policy issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning Voter Registration – Tip Sheet• VOTE411 – “Initiative of the LWV that allows users to register to vote, check compare state issues, and access sample ballots.”
<u>Committee of Seventy</u>	The Committee of Seventy is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing representative, ethical, and effective government in Pennsylvania. Through its educational programs, advocacy effort, and community resources, it strives to create a more transparent, accountable, and effective government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interactive Voter Guide (PA specific)• WeVote – Initiative that promotes a culture of voting. Provides access to sample ballots, voter registration, and polling place information.• 2024 Election Calendar (PA, DE, NJ)• Find Your Polling Place• Voter Registration Resources• Voter ID for First Time Voters• Voter Experience Survey• Build your ballot – digital tool
<u>Vot-ER</u>	Vot-ER is a non-partisan organization that integrates voter registration and civic engagement into the healthcare system, empowering individuals & staff to participate in the democratic process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversation starters and voter scripts• Civic Health Month Online Conference• Civic Engagement Program• Civic Health Month Social Media Toolkit• Partnership Opportunities

Resource	Resource Description	Highlighted Resources
<u>Vote Riders</u>	Vote Riders is a nonpartisan organization focused on ensuring that every eligible voter has the identification required to vote. They provide education, assistance, and resources to help voters navigate voter ID laws and obtain the necessary identification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Free Voter ID Assistance</u> • <u>Voter ID Information Cards – Order Form</u> • <u>State Voter ID Rules Tool</u> • <u>Resources for LGBTQ+ Voters</u> • <u>Info for Voters with Disabilities</u> • <u>Rule for First-Time Voters</u> • <u>Partner Toolkit</u> – (tools and services include -> voter ID assistance, voter ID clinic and virtual voter ID support, voter ID helpline and chatbot, voter ID info cards, direct voter contact partnerships, and training • <u>FREE Voter ID Helpline</u> (call/text): 866-ID-2-VOTE • Voter Support Services they offer – documents you need to show who you are (e.g. you birth certificate or naturalization certificate), a copy of your social security card, your ID, a free ride to the DMV
<u>National Voter Registration Day</u>	National Voter Registration Day is nonpartisan civic holiday dedicated to ensuring that every eligible American is registered to vote. Celebrated annually, it aims to increase awareness of voter registration opportunities and encourage participation in the democratic process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Register to Vote Tool</u> • <u>Check your Voter Registration Tool</u> • <u>Sample Social Media Text</u> • <u>National Voter Registration Day Social Hub</u> • <u>Voter Registration 101</u> (guide) • <u>Tips for Talking to Voters</u> • <u>National Voter Registration Day Checklist</u> • <u>National Voter Registration Day Event Locator Tool</u> • <u>Webinars</u> • <u>Election Protection Hotline</u> (866-OUR-VOTE)

Resource	Resource Description	Highlighted Resources
USA.gov	<p>USA.gov is the U.S. government's official website portal, designed to provide citizens, businesses, and government agencies with easy access to comprehensive and reliable information and services. This website aims to simplify interactions with the federal government by offering a centralized resource for a wide range of needs. USA.gov is an essential resource for anyone seeking information or assistance for the U.S. government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter Registration • How, when, and where to vote • Decide who to vote for • Find my state or local election office • Congressional, state, and local elections • Voting and election laws • How the president is elected • Inauguration of the president • Results of past elections
US Vote Foundation	<p>The U.S. Vote Foundation (US Vote) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to providing comprehensive voter services and information to American citizens, both domestically and abroad. This foundation aims to ensure that every eligible voter can participate in elections with ease and confidence. By offering comprehensive voter services and educational materials, US Vote helps to facilitate a smooth and informed experience for all citizens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I Registered? • State Voter Requirements and Information • Voting Methods and Options • Election Office Directory • Upcoming Primary Election Dates • Early Voting Dates • How to Vote Guide • Disability Voting Guide • Voting Rights Restoration • US Voter FAQs • Voter Help Desk • Where's My Absentee Ballot? (tracker) • Ballot Return Options • Sample Ballot Lookup • Polling Place Finder

Resource	Resource Description	Highlighted Resources
<u>United States Election Assistance Commission</u>	<p>The U.S Election Assistance Commission (EAC) is an independent, bipartisan commission established by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. The EAC provides guidance, resources, and support to ensure that U.S elections are secure, accurate and accessible. Through its comprehensive resources and guidance, the EAC enhances the integrity and efficiency of the electoral process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter Accessibility Resources • Language Access Resources • EAC Voting Accessibility Fact Sheet • Resources for Voters with Disabilities • Voting In Your State • Military and Overseas Voter Resources • National Mail Voter Registration Form • Voter FAQs • Voter Registration Cancellations
<u>Vote 411</u>	<p>Vote411, a project of the League of Women Voters Education Fund, provides comprehensive, nonpartisan election information to American voters. The platform aims to ensure that all eligible voters have the information they need to participate in every election and make informed decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has resources in Spanish, Arabic, etc. (for individuals with limited English proficiency) • Registration Deadlines By State • Register to Vote • First Time Voter Checklist • Your Voters' Guide (Personalized Ballot and Candidate Information) • Healthy Voting Checklist • Nationwide Voting Rules Quick View • Sponsors and Partnerships
<u>ACLU</u>	<p>The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending and preserving the individual rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know Your Rights • Know Your Rights At The Polls • Voting Rights • Voting Information Tool

Resource	Resource Description	Highlighted Resources
<u>Rock the Vote</u>	Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to building the political power of young people in the United States. Through voter registration, education, and advocacy, Rock the Vote aims to amplify the voices of young voters and promote civic engagement in the democratic process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Get Election Alerts</u> • <u>Find/Contact your Local Election Official</u> • <u>State Voting Information</u> • <u>Register to Vote</u> • <u>Check Your Voter Registration</u> • <u>How to Run a Voter Registration Event</u>
<u>National Alliance to End Homelessness</u>	The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a comprehensive resource dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. This website offers a wealth of information including research, policy analysis, and data on homelessness. It provides tools and resources for advocates, policymakers, and service providers, including best practices, evidence-based solutions, and strategies for community action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Three Steps to Supporting Your Clients Right to Vote</u> • <u>Voter Toolkit</u> • <u>Gathering Information Your Client Will Need</u> • <u>Dos and Don'ts of Registering Your Clients to Vote</u> • <u>Encouraging Your Clients to Vote</u> • <u>Two Ways to Educate Clients on Candidates and Issues</u>
<u>VOTE 4MentalHealth</u>	Vote4MentalHealth is a campaign led by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) that encourages nonpartisan voter participation with a focus on mental health issues. The campaign emphasizes the importance of understanding how elected officials impact mental health policies across various sectors, including healthcare, housing, education, and criminal justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Register to Vote</u> • <u>Sign-up for Reminders</u> • <u>Make a Plan</u> • <u>First Time Voting?</u> • <u>Election Process FAQs</u> • <u>Self-Care During Election Season</u>

Resource	Resource Description	Highlighted Resources
<u>When We All Vote</u>	<p>“When We All Vote” is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to increasing voter participation in the United States. It provides resources to help individuals register to vote, check their voter registration status, and understand their voting right. The organization also focuses on combating voter suppression, particularly among marginalized communities, and encourages civic engagement through volunteer opportunities and partnerships/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Know Your Voting Rights</u> ● <u>Pledge To Vote</u> ● <u>How To Vote By Mail</u> ● <u>Fight For Our Vote</u> ● <u>Upcoming Events</u> ● <u>Volunteer With Us</u> ● <u>Become A Partner</u> ● <u>Voter Resources Hub</u>
<u>APIAVote</u>	<p>Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote) is the nation’s leading nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to engaging, educating, and empowering Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities to strengthen and sustain a culture of civic engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>https://apiavote.org/how-to-vote/why-vote/</u> ● <u>https://apiavote.org/wp-content/uploads/template-plan-to-vote.pdf</u>

Conversation Starters for Practitioners

Increasing voting rates among individuals with mental health challenges can be approached through thoughtful and engaging thoughtful and engaging conversation starters. Here are some ideas to consider. These conversation starters aim to engage the individuals you support in a dialogue about civic engagement, making the concept relevant to their personal interests and highlighting the benefits it can bring to their lives and the community. It's important to approach these conversations with sensitivity and respect for each person's unique perspectives.

General Voting Questions

- The election is coming up! What's your plan to vote?
 - There is an upcoming election that could impact healthcare services in our area. Do you need any information on how to register to vote or where to vote?
- It's national voter registration day, are you registered to vote? (National Voter Registration day is around the 3rd week of September)
 - Voting is a powerful way to have your voice heard in the community. Are you registered to vote? Do you need any information on upcoming elections?
- Have you heard about any local events or community meetings happening this month?
- Did you know that participating in community activities can have positive effects on your mental health?
- I've heard from other folks that voting has helped them feel more connected and supported. Have you had any similar experiences?
- Do you find the voting process easy or challenging? What barriers, if any, have you encountered?
- Have you heard about early voting or mail-in voting options? These can make voting more convenient if you're busy on election day.

Personal Experience and Impact

- Have you noticed any community issues that affect your health or your families' health? Participating in local meetings or voting can help address these concerns.
- What are some causes that you feel passionate about? Have you considered how you might make a difference in your community?
- What are some challenges or barriers you've encountered in your community that affect your ability to participate in activities?
- Can you think of any specific community issues, like access to healthcare, public transportation, or safe recreational spaces, that have impacted your life?
- In what ways do you feel your community supports or hinders your well-being and participation in local events?
- How do you feel about the availability of resources like affordable housing, or education in your area?
- What improvements would you like to see in your community that could enhance your health and overall quality of life?

Community Resources Awareness

- Have you heard about the [insert local health initiative] happening in our community?
- Did you know there are neighborhood meetings where you can voice your thoughts on local health services?
- Our community has several resources that can support you and others. Are there any specific needs you have that I might be able to help connect you with?
- The availability and affordability of housing in our area can be impacted by local government decisions. Voting allows you to influence those decisions.

- How we get around town, whether it's public transit or road repairs, is often decided by elected officials. Voting gives you a voice in improving our daily commute.
- Environmental policies, like clean air and water regulations, are influenced by our votes. How you feel about using your vote to protect our environment?
- Ever wondered how your tax dollars are spent? Voting is your chance to influence how your money is used to benefit the community. Public safety policies, like community policing and emergency services, are often shaped by our elected leaders. Voting is a way to have a say in how safe our neighborhoods are.

VOTER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES (VSAs):

- CHECK YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION
- CHECK YOUR POLLING LOCATION
- COMPLETE AN ELECTRONIC VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION
- COMPLETE A PAPER VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION
- RECEIVE A BLANK PAPER VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION
- REQUEST A MAIL-IN BALLOT
- EMERGENCY BALLOT EDUCATION OFFERED

