How to Comply with the National Voter Registration Act

A Toolkit for Agency Staff, NVRA Coordinators, and Election Officials
Introductory letter to NVRA Agency staff members from SoS Debra Bowen.
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Thank you for using the NVRA Toolkit. Answer the questions below to determine which sections of the Toolkit are right for you.

1. **Do you help people**
   (a) fill out applications for benefits or services,
   (b) recertify benefits or services plans, or
   (c) help clients change their addresses, at any of the following programs or in any of the following offices?

   - CalFresh
   - CalWORKs
   - Medi-Cal
   - Women, Infant and Children (WIC)
   - In-Home Supportive Services
   - Covered California, California’s health benefit exchange
   - Department of Rehabilitation - Vocational Services
   - Independent Living Centers
   - Department of Developmental Services Regional Centers
   - Offices contracting with the Office of Deaf Access
   - State and county mental and behavioral health departments, and private practitioners providing services under contract with those departments.

   If so, **you have an obligation to provide voter registration to clients** under state and federal law. This toolkit will tell you how. Please read the section titled, “When & How to Provide Voter Registration Services,” and carefully read pages 7 - 15.

2. **Every office subject to the NVRA is required to identify one person who ensures compliance** with the office’s voter registration responsibilities. Are you that person?

   You are an “NVRA Coordinator.” Please read the section titled, “Responsibilities for NVRA Coordinators,” beginning on page 17.

3. **Do you handle NVRA compliance for your county elections office?** Do you handle requests from agencies asking for voter registration cards? Do you prepare reports for the state on voter registration card returns?

   You are the NVRA coordinator for the county elections office. Please read the section titled, “A Guide for Elections Officials,” beginning on page 22.
How the NVRA and SB35 Work

Step 1: Offices accepting applications for public benefits programs and offices serving people with disabilities are called “NVRA agencies.” Each NVRA agency chooses a staff member to serve as an “NVRA coordinator”; if an agency has multiple sites or offices, each site or office should have its own NVRA coordinator. NVRA coordinators contact the county elections office to order voter registration cards in all required languages.

Step 2: The county elections office sends blank voter registration cards (VRCs) to NVRA agencies. These cards have tracking numbers on them, so the county elections office will know how many completed registration each NVRA agency is responsible for.

Step 3: NVRA agencies give VRCs to clients, and help clients fill them out when clients wish to register to vote. NVRA agencies then mail completed VRCs back to the county elections office. VRCs are postage-paid.

Step 4: Each county elections office counts the number of registrations from each NVRA agency in its county and sends a monthly report to the California Secretary of State.

Step 5: The Secretary of State is California’s chief elections officer, and is responsible for California’s compliance with the NVRA. The SOS compiles all county NVRA reports and publishes a statewide report on its website. Each month, the public can see the number of completed voter registrations generated by each NVRA agency in the state.
The Basics

When & How to Provide Voter Registration Services

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was passed more than 20 years ago to increase the political participation of populations that have historically been underrepresented in our democracy. When you meet the terms of the NVRA, you are often providing someone the first opportunity of their lifetime to take part in the political process that governs their benefits, their services, and, in many ways, their everyday lives.

The NVRA requires you to provide voter registration services every time a person:
- Applies for benefits or services,
- Renews or recertifies benefits or services, or
- Submits a change of name or address.

What does “voter registration services” mean?

For each of the “triggering” transactions listed above—those times when you must provide voter registration services—you need to:

1) Provide the voter preference form. The voter preference form asks individuals if they would like to register to vote, and makes clear that their benefits and services will not be affected by their answer. Completed voter preference forms must remain on file in your office for two years.

2) Provide the Voter Registration Card. If individuals indicate on the voter preference form that they would like to register, offer assistance in filling out their voter registration cards. Accept completed cards and drop them in the mail daily. Voter registration cards are pre-addressed and postage paid.

✓ Your office may be required by law to have voter preference forms and voter registration cards in non-English languages. Ask your office’s NVRA coordinator what your “required” languages are, or consult page 18 of this document. If a client interacts with you in one of the required languages, provide forms in that language.

✓ You do not play any role in screening your clients for eligibility to vote. Provide voter registration opportunities to all clients; your county elections official will screen voter registrations to

Department of Family and Children Services
make sure only people who are eligible to vote join the voter rolls. If someone registers to vote but is actually ineligible to do so, the county elections official will inform him or her that the registration was rejected.

If you suspect a client is a non-citizen, you may say, “You must be an American citizen 18 or older to vote” when handing the client the voter preference form and voter registration card.

✓ Remember that by law you are not allowed to influence clients’ political party preference when providing voter registration assistance. You are also not allowed, by law, to discourage clients from registering to vote. You can encourage clients to register, however.

**NVRA Implementation in California**

NVRA agencies in California include:

- **Public assistance agencies**, including:
  - County welfare department offices that accept applications and administer benefits for the CalFresh program
  - California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program
  - Medi-Cal program
  - In-Home Supportive Services program
  - All offices, public and private, that accept applications and administer benefits for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

- **State-Funded Agencies Primarily Serving Persons with Disabilities**, which includes Offices of the State Department of Rehabilitation that provide vocational rehabilitation services, Independent Living Centers, Department of Developmental Services Regional Centers, state and county mental health and behavioral health departments and their contractors.

- **Armed Forces Recruitment Offices.**
- The **Franchise Tax Board** and the **State Board of Equalization** district offices.

**SB 35 Writes NVRA Best Practices in State Law**

To ensure that California agencies fully comply with the NVRA, the state legislature passed Senate Bill 35 (Padilla) in 2012, which writes NVRA best practices into state law and is making the state a leader in NVRA implementation.

Under SB 35, NVRA agencies in California must:

- notify county elections offices of each office or site in the county so that voter registration cards can be provided to those sites and properly tracked;
- designate state and local NVRA/SB 35 coordinators;
- provide an annual training for every employee who provides voter registration services;
- offer minority language forms as required by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act; and
- offer applicants an online voter preference form and a link to California Online Voter Registration if the agency offers enrollment, renewal, or change of address transactions online.
Commonly Held Misconceptions

- People with disabilities often decline to register because they believe they will not be able to cast a ballot on Election Day. Federal law requires that every polling place be accessible to people with disabilities. Resources will always be on hand to assist people with hearing and visual impairments.

- People do not need to speak English in order to register to vote.

- People who have been convicted of crimes often think they are ineligible to vote. This is often not true. If an individual is on probation in California, he or she can vote. If an individual has served time in prison, but is now out of prison and off parole, he or she can vote. A misdemeanor never affects your right to vote.

- People do not need to be able to read or write in order to register to vote.

- People should re-register if they have moved or changed their name.

- People often don’t remember if they are registered to vote. When in doubt, register! There is no penalty for re-registering.

When It Gets Close to an Election

The voter registration deadline for an election is 15 days before Election Day. A completed voter registration must get to you, not the county elections office, before the deadline in order to be considered timely. When the registration deadline nears, VCRs should be mailed daily in an envelope with a note that identifies your agency and explains that the registration included is timely.

The law requires you to mail voter registration forms within 10 days of receipt, and within 5 days if close to a voter registration deadline, but it is the best practice (and easy!) to mail them every day. Voter registration cards are pre-addressed and postage is prepaid.

Remember, your responsibility is to provide voter preference forms and voter registration cards. You do not need to screen your clients for eligibility to vote. If you have questions, there are resources available. Contact your office’s NVRA coordinator, or the California Secretary of State’s office.
**Additional Resources**

The Secretary of State provides a variety of resources that can help you learn about the NVRA and your voter registration responsibilities.

**Secretary of State’s Elections Hotline**
(800) 345 - VOTE (8683)

**This Toolkit** The full text of this toolkit is available at: [INSERT LINK]

**Chapter 4 of the Secretary of State’s NVRA Manual:**

**Secretary of State’s Guide to Voting Rights of People with Disabilities:**
http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_dis.htm

**Disability Rights California (Voting Assistance):**
http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/PublicationsVoting.htm

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By providing voter registration assistance, you are giving many people their first opportunity to participate in California’s democracy!

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President Lyndon Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act in 1965.
Voter Registration Checklist

Once a client has filled out a voter registration card ("VRC"), ask yourself:

- **Does the registrant want to vote by mail?**
  Question 15 gives all registrants the option of becoming a permanent vote-by-mail voter. Vote-by-mail voters receive their ballots in the mail and can then return them by mail any time before the election. This gives voters an opportunity to study the ballot ahead of time and to seek assistance with filling it out if need be. If registrants want to vote at a polling location near their house on Election Day, they should leave question 15 blank.

- **Does the registrant need to answer Question 16 on the VRC?**
  Question 16 is optional. If registrants know the address where they previously registered, they can answer this question. If they do not, they can leave it blank.

- **Does the registrant have a language preference other than English?**
  In the "Optional" section of the VRC, registrants can choose their language preference. If the registrant chooses one, he or she will receive a state voter guide before Election Day in that language. If the registrant does not choose one, he or she will receive a guide in English.

- **Did the registrant sign the form?**
  Registrants must sign the VRC to finalize their registration. However, if the registrant cannot or does not have a signature, any mark will count. A person may also sign their name with a signature stamp that is registered with county elections officials. If the registrant uses a mark instead of a signature, you must write the registrant’s name next to the mark and then sign your name as well.

- **Did the registrant detach the receipt?**
  The bottom third of the VRC is a receipt for the registrant.

- **Did I fill out the form for the registrant?**
  If you filled out the VRC on behalf of the applicant then you need to sign on the right side where it says “Did someone help you fill out or deliver this form?” If you only checked the VRC to make sure it was complete, or just answered questions from the registrant, then you do not need to sign the form.

- **Did I get the VRC in the mail on time?**
  The easiest way to ensure that VRCs are always returned on time is to place them in the mail on a daily basis. Voter registration cards are self-addressed with prepaid postage and can be placed with your outgoing mail.

  The voter registration deadline is 15 days before an election. When the registration deadline nears, VRCs should be mailed daily in an envelope with a cover letter or note in the envelope that identifies your agency and explains that the registration included is timely.
Frequently Asked Questions

You should be prepared to answer the following FAQs about voting:

“Why should I vote?”
The struggle for a fair vote for every citizen of this country has lasted for centuries. Throughout our nation’s history, dedicated men and women died for your right to vote. Today, voting determines decisions that govern your community and your benefits and services. If you don’t vote, other people will make decisions that affect your life for you.

“What if I don’t have a driver’s license, a state-issued ID, or Social Security number?”
You can register to vote even if you do not have a California ID or Social Security number as long you meet the other eligibility requirements. Just leave those fields blank.

“Will I need an ID when I vote?”
If you are voting for the first time after registering by mail or online, and did not provide your driver license number, California ID number, or the last four digits of your social security number on the registration card, you may be asked to show a form of identification when you go to the polls. A number of documents and bills work as an ID. If you don’t have a government-issued ID, check with the county elections office before Election Day to determine what to bring.

“Do I need to re-register if I have moved or changed my name?”
Yes. If you have moved since you last registered, your election materials (sample ballot, etc.) will go to the wrong address and you may encounter problems at the polling location on Election Day. If you have changed your name, you should re-register with your new name in order to avoid problems on Election Day.

“What if I don’t know if I was previously registered to vote?”
Register anyway! There is no penalty or consequence for re-registering.

“Can I be registered to vote in two counties at the same time?”
Yes. There is no penalty for being registered in two counties at the same time. You do not need to end your registration in one county before registering in a second.

“What if I need a voter registration card in a language that is not available in this office?”
You can register to vote online in ten different languages at registertovote.ca.gov. If you would like a paper card, contact your county elections office.

“Do I have to choose a political party?”
No. This is optional. If you do not wish to register with a party, you should choose “No Party Preference.”

- more -
“Will my polling location be accessible to people with disabilities?”
All polling locations are required by law to be accessible to people with disabilities. Additionally, modern voting machines can assist people with vision disabilities. A guide to voting with a disability is available from Disability Rights California at http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/541201.pdf.

“I have a criminal conviction. Can I vote?”
Oftentimes, you can. If you were formerly in state prison, but are now out and off parole, you may vote. If you are in county jail for a misdemeanorn conviction, or on probation, you may vote. If you are off probation, you may vote. If you wish to know more about the voting rights of people with criminal convictions, visit the Secretary of State’s website here: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/sharing-ideas/voting-rights-californians.htm.

“Will registering to vote put me in the jury pool?”
Yes. But if you are on file with the DMV for any reason, you already are in the jury pool.

“Do I need an address to register to vote?”
No. Question 6 on the voter registration card allows you to describe where you live if you do not have a formal address.

“Will I get information about what is going to be on the ballot?”
Yes. You will be mailed a voter guide by your county elections office prior to Election Day. It will give you information about all of the candidates and ballot initiatives you will be voting on.

“Do I have to vote for everything?”
No. You can vote for as much or as little as you’d like on the ballot.

“Is there a penalty for not voting?”
No. It is your right to not take part in the democratic process.
Responsibilities for NVRA Coordinators

A n important part of your agency’s ability to fulfill their voter registration requirements is designating an employee responsible for the agency’s compliance with the NVRA and SB 35. This employee is known as the “NVRA Coordinator.”

Luckily, being an NVRA Coordinator does not require adding more hours to the clock. Your responsibilities can be easily managed through regular communication with your county elections office, putting systems in place at your workplace, and training employees on how to follow those systems.

Your responsibilities as an NVRA Coordinator are to:

• Inform your county elections office of all offices and sites in your agency.
  ▶ The county elections office is not required to identify agencies with voter registration responsibilities under the NVRA; this responsibility falls on you. Reach out to your county elections office and inform them of all of the offices and sites within your agency.
  ▶ The county elections office needs to know all the offices and sites within your agency so that it can track the number of completed voter registrations that come from each. The California Secretary of State collects all of that data and puts it into one monthly report, which can be found here: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/nvra/reports/sb35-nvra-monthly-reports.htm.
• Order voter registration cards from your county elections office only. Your county elections office should have its own NVRA coordinator that can inform you about the best way to order cards, whether by phone, email, or an online form.
• Have on hand both required forms—voter preference forms, which ask an applicant if he or she would like to register to vote and contain mandatory disclaimer language, and voter registration cards—in all languages determined by a formula in the Voting Rights Act. When in doubt about your language requirements, contact your county elections office. You can also check the chart on page xx.
• Keep in mind that the languages required for voter registration may be different from the languages required by Medi-Cal and other state programs.
• Determine a system for how voter registration cards received by applicants will be mailed to the county elections officials. The law requires that voter registration cards be mailed to the county elections office within 10 days of completion, but within 5 days of completion if close to an election.

Best Practices Tip

Establish a relationship with the NVRA coordinator at your county elections office. Open lines of communication will make NVRA compliance much easier.

Best Practices Tip

The California Secretary of State recommends mailing completed registration cards daily, in order to avoid confusion and compliance concerns.
For NVRA Coordinators

Best Practices Tip
Many people don’t know that they must re-register when they move or change their name in order to avoid problems on Election Day. Train your staff so they are prepared to inform clients of this little known fact.

Responsibilities for NVRA Coordinator, cont.

- **Annually train** on the NVRA and SB 35 every employee who provides voter registration opportunities to clients. Training materials are available from the Secretary of State here: [http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/nvra/training/](http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/nvra/training/).

- **Make sure to train new employees** as they come onboard. New employees may use a self-guided training.

- **Provide the opportunity for clients to register to vote online** if you provide the opportunity to apply for benefits or services online, recertify benefits or services online, or submit change of address online.

Ordering VRCs and Submitting Completed Cards

Order VRCs from County Elections Office Only

Voter registration cards ordered from your county elections office carry a **unique serial number** on the bottom right side. Your county elections office uses this number to track which voter registration cards have been sent to which agency or office. When a completed voter registration card is mailed back to the county elections official, no matter who mails the card or where it is mailed from, the county elections office can use the serial number to know which agency or office to give “credit” to for the registration.

Do not order voter registration cards from the California Secretary of State. The federal voter registration card, available online, should also not be used. You will not be credited for any voter registrations that use those cards.

Best Practices Tip

Each county elections office has a different process for ordering voter registration cards. Some have online order forms; others require you to send an email directly to a designated staffer in their office. Ask your county elections office to determine their procedure.

Best Practices Tip

Draft an internal NVRA policy so staff always know your office’s practices, and have a document to refer to when they have questions.
**Getting “Credit” for Your Office’s Registrations**

Many county agencies order voter registrations cards at a central location and then distribute them to a network of satellite sites. This results in all registrations from all sites being credited to only the central location. You must coordinate with your county elections office to make sure they can track the voter registration cards going to each site. There are two simple ways to do this. You can order cards to a central location, distribute them to your sites as needed, and then inform the elections office which cards have gone to which sites. Or you can have each site order cards directly from the elections office, and let the elections office keep track itself.

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**Best Practices Tip**

*Remember, languages mandated by the Voting Rights Act may be different from the languages mandated by Medi-Cal and other state programs.*

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**Know your language requirements**

The federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) uses a formula to determine the languages in which you are required to have voter registration materials. Ask your county elections office about your language requirements or check the chart on the next page.

Voter registrations cards will be available in all required languages from your county elections official. This is not the case for voter preference forms; those must be printed out in all required languages, and are available on the Secretary of State’s website: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/nvra/training/voter-preference-forms.htm.

**Submit your completed registrations on time**

You are required by law to mail a completed voter registration card within ten days of receiving it. A completed voter registration card is easy to mail. Voter registration cards in California are postage-paid and require no envelope. Simply tear off the bottom third as the registrant’s receipt, fold the card in half, seal it, and drop it in the mail.

In order to vote in an election, a voter must register to vote 15 days before Election Day. When an election is getting close and it is just five days or less until the voter registration deadline, you are responsible for mailing the completed voter registration cards within five days—rather than the normal ten days—of receiving them. Since it can get confusing to have to constantly determine if a voter registration card should be mailed within five days or ten days, the Secretary of State recommends that offices drop completed voter registration cards in the mail daily.

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**Minority Language Requirements Under the Voting Rights Act**

Agencies with voter registration responsibilities under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) may be required to have voter registration materials available in minority languages. All NVRA agencies should take the following steps to ensure they are in compliance with the law.

**Step 1: Determine the language requirements for your county.**

The federal Voting Rights Act sets a formula used by the Census Bureau to determine which counties must provide voting materials in which languages. Ask your county elections office what your required languages are, or consult the table on the next page. Note that the language requirements...
mandated by the VRA may be different than those mandated by Medi-Cal and other state programs.

Step 2: Ensure you have both voter preference forms and voter registration cards available in the languages required for your county.

Agencies must always stock voter preference forms and voter registration cards in the required languages, even if they do not normally receive applications from language minorities.
- Voter preference forms should be printed from the Secretary of State’s website, which has the forms in ten languages.

Step 3: Provide translated voter registration materials whenever an applicant requests services in a non-English language required for your county.

NVRA agencies should provide a translated voter preference form and voter registration card whenever an applicant or beneficiary requests services in a required language. If an applicant requests assistance in a language that is not required by your county, remember that voter preference forms are available on the Secretary of State’s website in ten languages at www.RegisterToVote.ca.gov.

**Best Practices Tip**

NVRA compliance will be much easier if you have a strong relationship with the NVRA coordinator at your county elections office.

**Language Requirements by County**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>LANGUAGES REQUIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda</td>
<td>Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colusa</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial</td>
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<td>Kern</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>Chinese, Filipino, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian,* and Other Asian*</td>
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<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
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<td>San Bernardino</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Tulare</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pursuant to the requirement to provide materials in “Asian Indian” and “Other Asian,” Los Angeles County provides voting materials and assistance in Hindi, Cambodian/Khmer, and Thai.
Sample Email to be Sent Close to an Election

FROM: County Elections Office
TO: NVRA Coordinators at NVRA Agencies

- OR -

FROM: NVRA Coordinators at NVRA Agencies
TO: All Staff at NVRA Agencies

To all caseworkers and staff who provide voter registration opportunities to members of the public:

In order to vote in an election, a voter must register to vote 15 days before Election Day. By law, a voter registration is considered timely if it reaches our office before that deadline.

Under normal circumstances, federal law requires you to mail a completed voter registration card to the county elections office within 10 days of receiving it. However, close to an election the law is different: within 5 days of a voter registration deadline (i.e. within 20 days of an election), you must mail a completed voter registration card within 5 days. You can help the county elections office avoid confusion close to a voter registration deadline by submitting each completed card with a date stamp and note stating that the registration is timely.

BEST PRACTICE TIP: In order to avoid having to constantly determine if a voter registration card should be mailed within 5 days or 10 days, simply drop completed voter registration cards in the mail daily. This eliminates all compliance concerns in this area.
For Elections Officials

Roles & Responsibilities Created for All Relevant Parties by SB 35: A Guide for Elections Officials

SB 35 (Padilla) was signed by Governor Jerry Brown in 2012 and took effect on January 1, 2013. The bill codifies in state law many requirements of Section 7 of the National Voting Rights Act (NVRA) and makes required a number of best practices that will modernize and improve the implementation of the NVRA in California.

The purpose of this section is to outline all roles and responsibilities created by SB 35 and the NVRA, for NVRA agencies, county election officials, and the Secretary of State.

The NVRA requires the Secretary of State to designate as “NVRA agencies” all (1) “public assistance” offices, (2) “state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities,” (3) armed forces recruiting offices, and (3) other offices as chosen by the Secretary of State. (42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5.) Voter registration agencies are often referred to as “NVRA agencies.”

NVRA agencies must:

- Identify an employee who is responsible for the agency’s compliance with the NVRA and SB 35, commonly known as an “NVRA coordinator.” If an NVRA agency has a central office with a number of satellite sites, the Secretary of State recommends that the agency designate an NVRA coordinator at each site.

- Inform their county elections official of all offices and sites within the county that accept applications for benefits or services, renewals of benefits or services, and changes of address.
  - County elections officials are not required by law to identify all voter registration agencies in their counties; this responsibility falls on the voter registration agencies themselves. County elections officials may be proactive in this regard if they wish to bring their county into full NVRA compliance more quickly.

- Order voter registration cards from their county elections office.

- Have voter preference forms and voter registration cards on hand in all languages determined by a formula in Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act.

- Mail all completed voter registration cards to their county elections officials within 10 days of receiving them. If within five days of a voter registration deadline, voter registration agencies must mail all completed voter registration cards within five days. To avoid confusion, the Secretary of State recommends that voter registration cards be mailed daily.

- Train annually every employee who provides voter registration opportunities to clients on NVRA and SB 35 requirements.

- continued on next page -
For Elections Officials

- Provide the opportunity for clients to register to vote online if providing the opportunity to apply for benefits or services online, recertify benefits or services online, or submit change of address online.

  County elections offices must:
  - Designate an NVRA coordinator responsible for coordinating with the Secretary of State and with NVRA agencies in the county to administer voter registration responsibilities under the NVRA.
  - Provide voter registration cards to voter registration agencies upon request.
  - Maintain a record of the number of voter registration cards provided to and received from each NVRA agency in the county.
  - Report the number of voter registration cards received from each NVRA agency to the Secretary of State within 10 days of the start of each month.
  - Submit a second report grouping all registrations into one of five categories to the Secretary of State, which the Secretary of State forwards to the federal Elections Assistance Council.
    - The five categories are: public assistance agencies, state-funded agencies serving people with disabilities, armed forces recruitment offices, other agencies designated by the State under the NVRA, unable to distinguish categories.
  - Assist NVRA agencies with training, upon request.
  - Protect the confidentiality of the NVRA agency through which a voter registered to vote and ensure its identity is not disclosed to the public.

- Accept as timely any completed registration that is received by an NVRA agency on or before the 15-day voter registration deadline.

Secretary of State must:
- Ensure that California follows the NVRA.
  - The Secretary of State is California’s statewide NVRA coordinator and is ultimately responsible for California’s compliance with the NVRA.
  - Prepare training materials that describe the responsibilities of county elections officials and voter registration agencies, and communicate to relevant parties best practices for complying with SB 35 and the NVRA. [Available at: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/nvra/.]
- Contact NVRA agencies that are not complying with the requirements of SB 35.
- Post monthly reports online detailing the number of registrations produced by each office/site in each NVRA agency in California. [Available at: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/nvra/reports/sb35-nvra-monthly-reports.htm.] The Secretary of State is also required to report data to the federal Election Assistance Council.
Best Practices for Tracking NVRA Registrations

This section identifies best practices for establishing and operating a system that can track voter registration received from NVRA agencies.

Best Practices for Operating an SB 35 Tracking System

- To reduce workload for county elections staff, county elections offices can create online forms that enable NVRA agencies to easily and quickly order voter registration cards in all required languages. Orange County has a highly effective online form, displayed below on page 25.
- To reduce workload for county elections staff and to streamline the NVRA tracking process, county elections offices should utilize their voter databases to track blank voter registration cards distributed, to track completed voter registration cards received, and to generate reports compatible with the Secretary of State’s reporting requirements. San Bernardino County has a highly effective internal tracking system, which is explained in detail on page 26.
- County elections offices should maintain lists of all NVRA coordinators (i.e. the voter registration point people at NVRA agencies) in their counties, along with their contact information. Periodically contact the NVRA agencies in your county to keep the list of coordinators current.

- While the law requires NVRA agencies to make themselves known to county elections officials, in practice this often does not happen. Many county elections offices research NVRA agencies in their counties (see additional resources in this toolkit) and do proactive outreach.
- County elections offices should host annual workshops on NVRA compliance. A single workshop can be held for all NVRA coordinators in the county, or one can be held for public assistance agencies and another can be held for offices serving people with disabilities.
- Many NVRA agencies have a central office with a network of satellite sites. County elections offices must track which voter registration cards go to each satellite site. This can be done in one of several ways:
  - By having an NVRA coordinator at each site request voter registration cards for their site,
  - By having an NVRA coordinator at a central office order cards for all sites, distribute them to individual offices/sites as needed, and then inform the county elections office of which cards were sent to which sites,
  - By having an NVRA coordinator at a central office order cards for all sites, distribute them to individual offices/sites as needed, and then have the individual offices/sites inform the county elections office of which cards they have received (as in San Bernardino County, illustrated below, page xx-xx).
- NVRA agencies have slightly different responsibilities when close to an election. County elections offices should send a notice to the NVRA agencies in their counties informing them of election deadlines for regular and special elections as they approach.
Example: Orange County Voter Registration Card Order Form

The Orange County Registrar of Voters hosts an order form for voter registration cards on its website. The form allows for users to order voter registration cards in all required languages in Orange County without submitting multiple requests. The form can be used by any member of the public, but requires NVRA agencies to identify themselves to make NVRA tracking easier for the Registrar.
Example: San Bernardino County NVRA Tracking & Data Management System

San Bernardino County Elections Office operates its database of voters using the **DIMS system**. With minimal effort, San Bernardino County uses DIMS to track the NVRA agencies to which voter registration cards have been sent, how many have been returned, and when each NVRA agency in the county is running low and in need of replenishment.

The San Bernardino County Elections Office gets from DIMS a **monthly report of NVRA registrations in the county** and, because of careful planning by the Office’s internal IT department, this report is generated in exactly the same format as the monthly report the Elections Office must submit to the Secretary of State. The submission of that report is simply a matter of copying and pasting by the Election Office’s internal NVRA coordinator. The San Bernardino County Elections Office estimates that tracking NVRA registrations across the county takes 90 minutes per month.

The screenshots below illustrate how San Bernardino County’s NVRA tracking system works. Contact information for the San Bernardino County Elections Office is at the bottom of this document; they are happy to field questions and requests for assistance.

**Voter Registration Card Inventory**

This screenshot shows the San Bernardino County Elections Office’s inventory of blank voter registration cards. Line 25 contains the following information:

- the Office has distributed 120,000 voter registration cards (see column 3)
- carrying serial numbers 36S360001 through 36S480000 (see columns 4 and 5),
- in boxes of 1,000 voter registration cards each (see column 6),
- on November 7, 2013 (see column 7).

(The San Bernardino County Elections Office notes that some dates displayed here are in the process of being corrected.)

Column 8 is an automatically updating number. The 120,000 cards were distributed to a central warehouse of San Bernardino’s Transitional Assistance Department (TAD), which oversees a variety of social services programs. Whenever an individual office or site in TAD receives a box of cards from the central warehouse, it sends the San Bernardino County Elections Office a form (see Voter Registration Card Received Form, below) indicating the serial numbers of the cards now in its possession. The San Bernardino County Elections Office notes in its NVRA tracking system that the cards are now possessed by an individual office or site, and an equivalent number of cards is automatically deducted from column 8 on this screen.

Thus, column 8 of line 25 indicates that the TAD warehouse still has 97,000 cards, and has distributed 23,000 to individual offices and sites around the county.
List of “Account Holders” (i.e. NVRA Offices)

Elsewhere in DIMS, the San Bernardino County Elections Office can access a list of all NVRA offices or sites in the county, along with contact information and the name of each NVRA coordinator.

Individual “Account Holder” Profile

(Tab 1: Account Holder Details)

Each line in the Account Holder Profile can be clicked on to open up an in-depth profile of each “account holder,” i.e. NVRA office or site. Each account profile has three tabs at the top. The first tab stores contact information.
Individual “Account Holder” Profiles (Tab 2: Attributes/Flags/History)

The second tab identifies the type of agency. The drop-down options are: public assistance, disability, armed forces, or other. These options track with the monthly report that must be submitted to SOS, enabling the monthly report to be automatically generated.

Individual “Account Holder” Profiles (Tab 3: Affidavit Ranges)

When the San Bernardino County Elections Office receives notice (see screenshot, left) that an individual NVRA office or site has received a box of voter registration cards from a central location, the NVRA coordinator at the San Bernardino County Elections Office clicks on the third tab of the “account holder” profile and enters the range of serial numbers the individual NVRA office or site has received. If the numbers entered are a duplicate of numbers entered for another office, the system will produce an error message.

The screenshot to the left indicates that the Mass Ave. location of the San Bernardino Transitional Assistance Department received 2,000 cards on 12/03/2013 and 5,000 cards on 11/08/2013.

Once a certain number of voter registration cards are entered in an “account holder” profile like this one, the corresponding line in column 8 on the screenshot shown on page xx [first SB example] will automatically decrease by an equal number.
For Elections Officials

Voter Registration Card Received Form

NVRA coordinators in each NVRA office and site in San Bernardino County have been trained to submit the following form to the San Bernardino County Elections Office whenever they receive blank voter registration cards from their central office.

On November 19, 2013, the TAD office in District 02 received two boxes of 1,000 blank voter registration cards from the TAD centralized warehouse. The form below was filled out by the NVRA coordinator in the office, and then emailed to voterregistrations@sbcountyelections.com.

Automatically Generated Monthly Reports

DIMS automatically generates a monthly report for San Bernardino County detailing how many completed voter registrations have been received from each NVRA office or site. See the screenshot from that report at left. This report is generated in the same format that Secretary of State (SOS) requires for its monthly report; as a result, submitting the SOS report is simply a matter of copying, pasting, and emailing.

If a generic voter registration card is received by the San Bernardino County Elections Office (i.e. it has no serial number), but the NVRA coordinator in the San Bernardino County Elections Office knows the NVRA office from which the card came, the NVRA coordinator attaches a sticker with a new serial number and credit is given to the appropriate office.

San Bernardino Example: Conclusion

The San Bernardino County Elections Office reports that tracking NVRA voter registrations, using the system described here, takes less than 90 minutes per month. Depending on the number of blank voter registration cards being distributed in any particular month, data entry into DIMS takes 15 to 60 minutes per month. Generating a monthly report, copying and pasting it into the Secretary of State’s spreadsheet, and emailing it to the Secretary of State takes 15-20 minutes per month.

The San Bernardino County Elections Office would be pleased to field questions about its system. For more information, contact the internal NVRA coordinator, who developed and operates the system described here. Contact: Terry D. Kouba, Chief Deputy Registrar for Operations, (909) 387-2101, tkouba@rov.sbcounty.gov.
NVRA Agencies: How They Are Organized and How to Find Them

SB 35 (Padilla 2012) requires county elections officials to maintain a record of voter registration cards sent to and received from agencies designated as NVRA agencies. This document outlines which agencies, offices, service providers, and nonprofit entities qualify as NVRA agencies.

While it is the legal responsibility of NVRA agencies to make themselves known to their county elections office, the Secretary of State recommends that county elections offices proactively identify and reach out to the voter registration agencies that exist within their county.

Federal Law
The NVRA places voter registration responsibilities on (1) state and local “public assistance” agencies/offices, (2) state and local agencies/offices “providing services to persons with disabilities,” (3) armed services recruitment offices, and (4) other agencies/offices as designated by the Secretary of State. (42 U.S.C. § 1973gg-5.) In California, the fourth category includes district offices of the Franchise Tax Board and the Board of Equalization.

State law
California state law mandates that any entity “under contract” with a government agency with voter registration responsibilities also shares those responsibilities. (Cal. Elec. Code. § 2401(b)(2).) Most frequently, this impacts nonprofits, community groups, and individual practitioners that provide mental health services or alcohol/drug programming under contract with county departments, and nonprofits and community groups that administer Women, Infant and Children (WIC) programs. This also applies to Regional Centers and Independent Living Centers.

Definitions
“Public assistance” agencies are defined as any county offices that accept applications and administer benefits for the following programs:
- CalFresh
- CalWORKS
- Medi-Cal
- Women, Infant and Children (WIC)
- In-Home Supportive Services
- Covered California, California’s health benefit exchange

Agencies “providing services to persons with disabilities” are defined as:
- Offices of the State Department of Rehabilitation
- Independent Living Centers
- Regional Centers
- Dept. of Social Services, Office of Deaf Access
- State and County Mental Health Providers

These agencies may have different names depending on what county they are located in. For example, public assistance services are provided at the county...
level by departments variously named Human Services, Social Services, Transitional Assistance, and other titles. Mental health services are often provided through Behavioral Health departments. In-Home Supportive Services can be housed at a department called Aging and Independence Services or Adult Protective Services, or at a generalized social services department. WIC programs are often run by hospitals, nonprofits and community groups, colleges, and community health centers, all of which have the same NVRA responsibilities of an office run directly by county government.

**Local agencies can be found online.** Most of these agencies have a centralized office whose website has a locator tool to find service providers in the 58 counties in California. For example, a search of the Department for Developmental Services will yield a “Lookup Regional Centers by County” [http://www.dds.ca.gov/RC/RCLookup.cfm].

Do you want any kind of conclusion? (It kind of feels like it drifts off...
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