

ABSENTEE VOTING

Who can vote by absentee ballot?

Any registered voter can vote by absentee ballot if he or she:

- will be out of town on election day
- is prevented by a physical disability from going to the polls
- is prevented by religious belief from going to the polls

Please note that if you entered the hospital within five days of the election, you may obtain an absentee ballot at any time up to and including the day of the election.

How can I apply for an absentee ballot?

Apply in writing to the town clerk and include:

- your name as registered,
- address where registered,
- precinct (if known),
- address where you wish the absentee ballot sent,
- the political party ballot you want (in a primary), and
- your signature.

There is an application form available at the town clerk's office or the application can be obtained online at www.sec.state.ma.us. Whichever method you choose, the application must be made in writing and signed.

Can anyone else apply for an absentee ballot for me?

Yes. A family member may apply for you. There is an application form available at the town clerk's office that can be completed by a family member. It can also be obtained online at www.sec.state.ma.us.

When should I submit my application for an absentee ballot?

If you wish to vote by absentee ballot for more than one election in a year, you may make one application and request that ballots for all elections during that calendar year are sent to you.

If you vote by mail, make certain the application arrives at the town clerk's office early. Remember, the ballot will be mailed to you. You may mail or hand-deliver the ballot to the town clerk's office. It must arrive before the polls close on Election Day (8:00 p.m.).

If you cast your ballot at the clerk's office before the election, try to come to the office two to three weeks before the election if possible. You can complete the application and vote in one visit. Absentee ballots are generally available three weeks prior to an election.

However you decide to cast your ballot, the application must be received by the town clerk no later than noon on the day prior to the election.

Must I be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, unless you are a “specially qualified voter”. A specially qualified voter is a person

- who is otherwise eligible to register as a voter and
- whose present domicile is outside the United States
- and whose current/last domicile in the United States is/was Massachusetts
- and is (a) absent from the town and in the active service of the armed forces or in the merchant marine of the United States or a spouse or dependent of such person; (b) absent from the commonwealth; or (c) confined in a correctional facility or a jail, except if by reason of felony conviction.

What if I’m not able to mark my absentee ballot?

You may ask any person to help you. The helper must print his or her name and your name on the brown ballot envelope, write the reason you needed help and then sign his or her name as the assisting person.

Are polling places accessible to elderly and disabled voters?

Yes, Federal law required polling places to be accessible by 1986. Additionally, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 required that all polling places be equipped with at least one disability-accessible voting machine. The Voter Assist Terminal is in place at each of the polling locations in Tyngsborough. The terminal is a ballot-marking technology that allows voters with disabilities and other special needs to mark a ballot privately and independently.

I’m permanently disabled. May I vote at home?

Yes. Contact the town clerk to have an absentee ballot application sent to you for all elections in a calendar year. You must sign the application and return it to the town clerk. Ballots will be mailed to you at home as soon as they become available.

My parent is in a nursing home. Is she/he able to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, as long as that individual is not under a court ordered guardianship which specifically prohibits voting.

Any patient in a nursing home must be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot and must fill out an absentee ballot application. The application can be completed by a family member for an individual in a nursing home.