

CENTER FOR VULNERABLE VOTERS

GROUP HOME VULNERABLE VOTERS INTERVIEWS

A SMALL ILLINOIS CITY | NOVEMBER, 2022

With over eight million Americans living in care, assisted living, and other types of group homes, it is imperative that we make every effort to ensure the ballots of our most vulnerable voters are handled properly according to national and state election laws.

Citizens living in nursing, assisted living, and group home environments often rely on assistance from staff members and caregivers to cast their votes. While many adhere to the letter of the law and follow well-documented procedures, others may not be familiar with proper procedures related to absentee ballot requests, ballot completion, and ballot collection and delivery.

Linda is an Occupational Therapist by trade. In her profession, she frequently provides care services to residents of assisted living and group homes. As a result of working in group and assisted living homes as part of her profession, she sees first hand the reality of complex issues home administrators face like understanding and communicating proper election procedures to staff members and caregivers.



In November of 2022, Linda visited two different group homes in a small Illinois City along the Mississippi. Her objective was to learn more about actual election practices in group homes and later to assist facilities with knowledge and processes to properly adhere to state laws. These group homes are free-standing adult Developmentally Delayed group homes both licensed and certified with the State of Illinois and subject to 10 ILCS 5/19 — 12/2, defining procedures for those residing in certified facilities.

The following report offers a summary of her in-person interviews.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did you vote in the Nov 2022 election? In-person or vote-by-mail?
2. Did you request a vote-by-mail ballot?
3. Did anyone help you make this request? If yes, describe the situation.
4. Did you sign up for permanent vote-by-mail? If yes, describe.
5. Did anyone help you make this request? If yes, describe.
6. Did you fill out your ballot in private?
7. Did you give your ballot to someone to deliver, or did you mail it back?
8. Did anyone help you fill out your ballot? If yes, describe.
9. Did anyone tell you who to vote for? If yes, describe.
10. Did anyone offer you money or goods in exchange for voting? If yes, describe.



The Process

After obtaining explicit permission from administrators to visit both homes and interview residents who voted in 2022, Linda developed a basic questionnaire to serve as a guideline for each resident interview.

Almost immediately, Linda and her team had to make adjustments in the questionnaire process as the questions were too difficult for almost all residents. An additional challenge was most residents' short attention span, and in some cases, inability to indicate their own name. The residents' names have been changed to protect privacy.

GROUP HOME NUMBER 1

After obtaining permission to perform the interviews, Linda and an associate visited the first home. A staff member followed the team and observed the interviews with most residents. In some cases, the staff member had to identify interviewees as they were not able to identify with their own names. It is important to note that interviews were only completed for residents who voted in the then-recent 2022 election.

The staff member, indicated in a discussion with the team that she helped each resident vote by doing "extensive research" on the candidates and then explaining each candidate's positions to each resident. The staff member also stated she showed the residents pictures of each candidate, and the residents recognize the candidates from television.

Group Home Number 1 is licensed for 16 beds. There are 15 registered voters per the voter database.

RESIDENT INTERVIEWS

Bill

Bill stated that he did vote and that a staff member assisted him with filling out his ballot. Bill stated he was voting for the President but was unable to answer any further questions or focus his attention long enough to hold a conversation. Bill's vote-by-mail ballot was requested on September 7, 2022, and was returned on October 6, 2022.

Tim

Tim stated he did not know who he was voting for. He was not able to answer any further questions or focus his attention long enough to hold a conversation. According to records, Tim voted in the 2022 general primary. His vote-by-mail ballot was requested on June 7, 2022, and returned on June 13, 2022.

Rod

Rod is deaf. He does read lips but was unable to answer the interviewer's questions. The staff member used sign language and asked him if he voted. Rod did not answer. Linda then asked Rod who helped him vote, and the staff member stated in sign and verbally, "I helped you vote, remember?" Rod did not sign back. Rod had a non-functioning phone and was pretending to talk to a family member. He was not able to answer any further questions or focus his attention long enough to hold a conversation. Rod's vote-by-mail ballot request was dated September 7, 2022, and his ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.

Joyce

The staff member reminded Joyce that she helped her vote. Joyce then stated she voted and that the

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staff member helped her. Joyce said she thinks someone put the ballot in the mail for her. She was unable to answer any further questions. Her vote-by-mail ballot request was dated September 7, 2022, and was returned on October 6, 2022.

Melissa

The staff member reminded Melissa that she voted and that she helped Melissa. Melissa then stated the staff member did help her vote and indicated no one told her how to vote. Melissa is in a wheelchair and has limited use of her upper extremities. Melissa's vote-by-mail ballot request was dated September 7, 2022, and her ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.

Joe

Joe was able to answer questions and hold a conversation. Joe asked who won the election. The staff member thought Joe did not vote. Joe stated he did fill out a ballot. Joe's vote-by-mail ballot request was on September 7, 2022, and his ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.

Bob

Bob has cerebral palsy and utilizes a wheelchair. His upper extremity use is limited. The staff member was present and reminded Bob that he voted and that she helped him. Bob was unable to verbalize to answer any questions. Bob's vote-by-

mail ballot request was on September 7, 2022, and his ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.

Kay

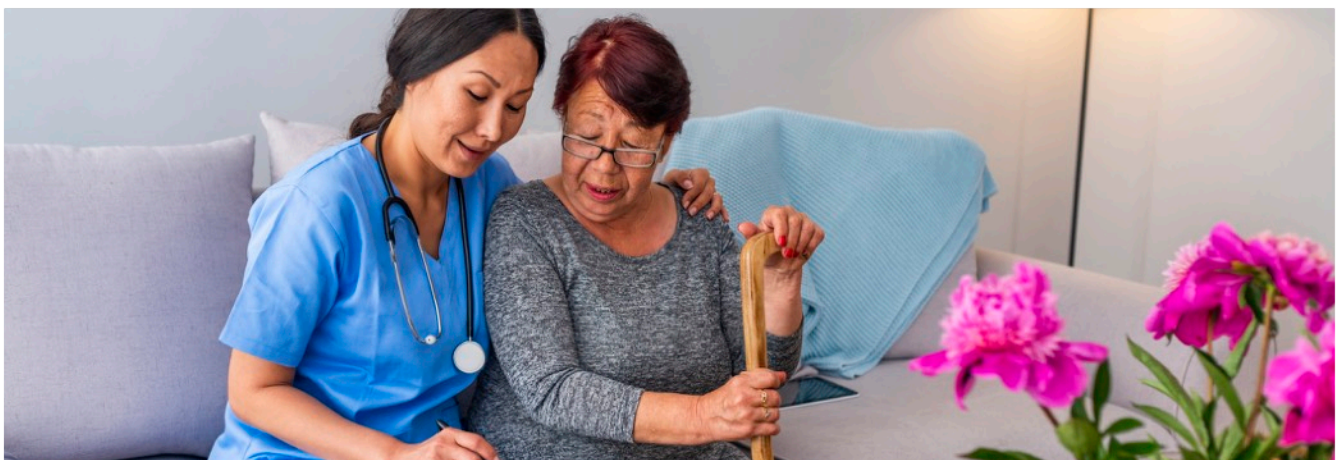
The staff member was present and asked Kay if she voted and reminded Kay that she did, in fact, vote. The interviewer (Linda) asked Kay if she voted. Kay responded, "Pizza and soda." Kay was unable to answer any questions or focus attention long enough to hold a conversation. Kay's vote-by-mail ballot request was dated September 7, 2022, and her ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.

John

The staff member was present and reminded John that he voted. John stated he voted Republican. John was unable to answer any other questions. John wanted to show us the CD collection he was carrying around. John's vote-by-mail ballot request was dated September 9, 2022, and his ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.

Mary

The staff member was present and told Mary to tell us her name as we are "good strangers". Mary grunted. Mary did not respond to any questions and was unable to hold a conversation. Mary's vote-by-mail ballot request was dated September 8, 2022, and her ballot was returned on October 6, 2022.



GROUP HOME NUMBER 2

Linda and her associate then went to the second group home to complete resident interviews. The staff were not present for interviews but did help the team locate the appropriate residents, as some residents were unable to indicate their names.

Group Home Number 2 is also licensed/certified for 16 beds. According to the voter database, there are 14 registered voters.

RESIDENT INTERVIEWS

Beth

Beth stated she voted, and a staff member helped her. She was unable to state what office she was voting for. Beth wanted to show the team her new fan and her TV. She was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Her vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and her ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Ann

The interviewer (Linda) asked Ann if she voted in the election, and her response was, "Vote Democrat." Ann was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Her vote-by-mail request was dated October 13, 2022, and her ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Shawn

Shawn stated he had help to fill out his ballot and that he voted for Bush. Shawn stated that no one told him how to vote. He was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. His vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Nick

Nick stated he thinks he voted and someone he didn't know helped him vote. Nick stated he had a hard time figuring out which person to vote for President. He was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. His vote-by-

mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Lyle

Lyle stated he voted, and the ballot was hard to fill out. Lyle stated he voted for President. He was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. His vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Dan

Dan stated he voted in the election. The interviewer (Linda) asked Dan another question, and Dan spelled out his first and last name. He was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. His vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Glen

Glen stated he did vote and that he forgot who helped him. Glen stated he voted for Joe Biden. He was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Glen's vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Rick

Rick stated he voted in the election, and he voted for Kennedy. He stated that he filled out his ballot in this room (the community area) and that he signed the back. Rick was asked another question; however, he walked away. His vote-by-mail ballot

request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Tom

The interviewer (Linda) asked Tom all the questions and all his answers were “Yes,” with the exception of when asked if he was offered any food or money for voting, and Tom said, “Yes, will be.” Tom’s vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Andy

Andy stated he did vote and that a staff member helped him. Andy stated that no one told him whom to vote for or offered him money or food in exchange for a vote. He was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Andy’s vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and his ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Mya

Mya stated she voted and that a staff member helped her. She said she voted for President. Mya said no one told her how to vote. She was unable

to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Her vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and her ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

Amy

Amy stated she voted and that a staff member helped her. Amy stated that no one told her how to vote or offered her anything in exchange for her vote. She was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Her vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and her ballot did not have a return date record.

Katy

Katy stated that a staff member filled out her ballot. Katy also said, “They were told whom to vote for.” Katy stated she was not offered food or money in exchange for voting. She was unable to answer any further questions or attend to a conversation. Her vote-by-mail ballot request was dated October 13, 2022, and her ballot was returned on November 8, 2022.

THE CENTER FOR VULNERABLE VOTERS IS HERE TO HELP

The Center for Vulnerable Voters backed this research project for one simple reason: to better understand the challenges faced by vulnerable voters and the caregivers assisting them. With that knowledge, we can better complete our mission of education, helping administrators, staff and caregivers better assist group home residents.

Unless proper procedures are followed, our most vulnerable voters face the risk of their votes not being counted, or in the worst case, thrown out due to procedural irregularities.

Please visit the CenterForVulnerableVoters.org to learn more.