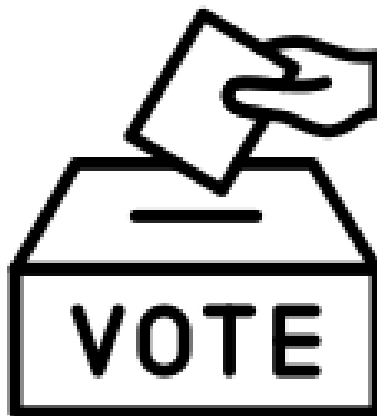


# Your Life, Your Rights

## Chapter 8:

# Voting Rights

Easy Read Guidebook



Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

6 Harrington Rd, Cranston, RI 02920

Main Phone: 401.462.3421 Español: 401.462.3014 Website: [www.bhddh.ri.gov](http://www.bhddh.ri.gov)

*This easy read guidebook has been designed using images from Flaticon.com*

# How to Use This Guidebook



This Guidebook is about your voting rights.



Voting rights come from laws that make it possible for you to vote in elections.



Elections are special dates that are set to vote for people and/or ideas.



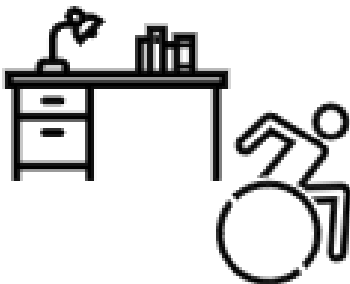
This Guidebook will explain what your rights are and how you can protect them.



Some of this information may make you sad or upset.



Stop reading this guidebook and ask for support if you start to feel upset.



You do not have to read this guidebook all at once.



It is okay to take breaks as you read this guidebook.

# Part 1: Voting Rights



Everyone has the right to vote.



To vote in the United States of America (USA), you must meet certain rules:



1. Be an American citizen.



2. Be at least age 18



3. Be a resident in your State.



4. Be registered to vote in your state.



There are times you may not be allowed to vote.



You can't vote if you have a felony or are serving time for other crimes.



You can't vote for president if you live in a U.S. territory.



There are other less common reasons you may or may not be able to vote that you can learn more about at [USA.gov](https://www.usa.gov).



These rights come from many laws.



You will learn about these rights in the next section.

# Your voting rights are:



**1. Vote for the person you want to vote for.**



You do not have to tell anyone who you are going to vote for.



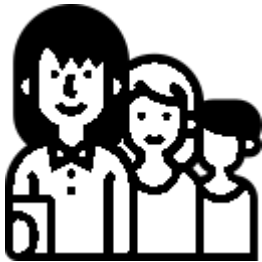
You also do not have to vote in a way other people tell you to vote.



It is a crime for someone to force or scare you to vote a certain way.



You can vote in person on voting day anytime from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.



If you are still waiting in line when the voting place closes, you still have the right to vote.



You must go to the right voting place to vote for the person you want to vote for.



You can find your voting place on the [Rhode Island Department of State website](#).



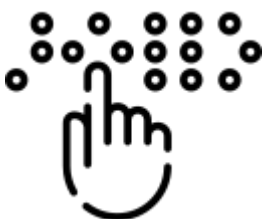
## 2. Vote by mail instead of in person.



You can vote by mail if you can't, or don't want to, vote in person.



You can also vote by mail if you live in Rhode Island but are on a trip out of state.



You have the right to get your voting form in Braille, large print, or other accessible way if you need it.



You must apply online to vote by mail.



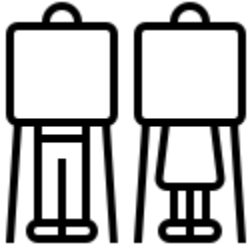
You also need to apply for an accessible voting form if you need it.



You will need your driver's license or State ID to apply.



You can learn more and apply on the [Rhode Island Department of State website.](#)



### 3. Vote in person before Election Day.



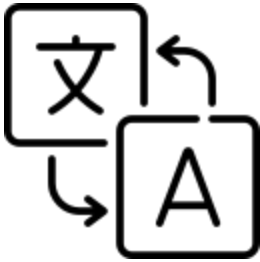
This is early voting, and you can do it up to 20 days before voting day.



To vote early, you must go to your [Local Board of Canvassers](#).



When you get there, you will fill out an application, show your State ID, and cast your vote.



#### 4. Get voting info in another language.



It is against the law to be treated bad when you go vote because of your race, color, or language.



This right is covered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



Under this law, there must be places that have voting info in languages other than English.



In Rhode Island there are 4 cities that must give voting info in English and Spanish.



The cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.



If you speak another non-English language, you can bring someone to help you vote.



The person can't be your employer, someone sent by your employer, or a union leader.



## 5. Bring someone with you to help you vote.



You have the right to choose who you bring with you to vote.



To protect you, this person can't be your boss or other leader from your job.



You also have the right to bring a service animal with you.



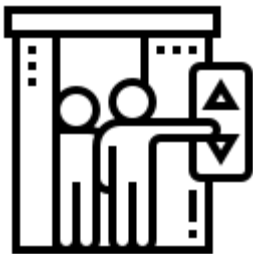
**6. Be able to get in and out of voting places.**



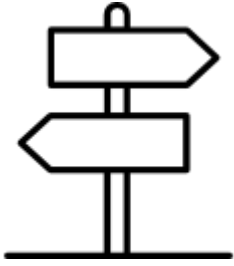
This right is protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



Voting places must have close parking or space for you to be dropped off close to the building if you need it.



Voting places must have ways for you to get in and out of them, like elevators and ramps.



Voting places must have signs that tell you where to go in the building to vote.



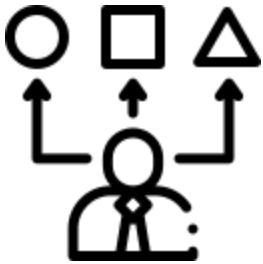
The paths to move through the building must be clear.



You can always learn more about your voting place by contacting the [State of Rhode Island Board of Elections](#).



You can also contact the State of Rhode Island Board of Elections if there is a problem with the voting place.



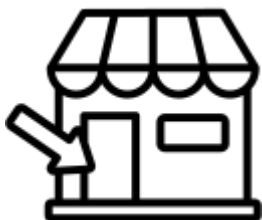
## 7. Have voting options that meet your needs.



**Accessible voting** is when you have voting options that meet your needs.



Voting by mail and voting early are part of accessible voting.



So is having access to voting places and voting info.



Voting places must have ways for you to vote if you are blind or visually impaired.



Voting places must let you sit down if you need to when you fill out your voting form.



You are allowed to bring someone to help you vote or ask voting staff to help you.



You are also allowed to vote if you are unsheltered.



## 8. Not be bullied or pressured to vote.



It is against the law for someone to scare or threaten you around voting.



No one can stop you from voting or force you to vote.



If any of this does happen to you, you can report it to the [State of Rhode Island Board of Elections](#).



## 9. Vote if you are not found on the list.



If you register to vote but are not found on list, then you have the right to a provisional ballot.



A provisional ballot is a voting card you fill out to cast your vote.



This voting card gets put aside until the end of the voting day.



Then, voting staff will check the records to make sure you are registered to vote.



If you are, then your voting card will get counted with the other voting cards.



If you are not, then your voting card will not get counted.



This right is covered by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002.

# Part 2: Advocating For Fair Treatment



It is important to know what your voting rights are.



Knowing your rights is the first step to advocate for yourself.



**Advocating** for yourself means to stick up for yourself.



Advocating for yourself brings you closer to living the life you choose.

# Part 3: Protecting Your Rights



You are the best person to protect your voting rights



The [State of Rhode Island Board of Elections](#) can help you if you have voting concerns.



If you think any of your rights are being broken, you can get legal help from places like [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#).

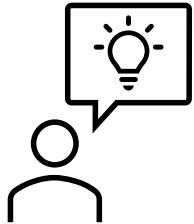


Remember, you have the right to fair treatment and to live your best life.

# Part 4: Resources



In this section you will find a list of websites that were used to make this guidebook.



You can explore these websites to learn more about your rights.



There is always more to learn about your rights.



Knowing your rights helps you protect them better.

# List of websites to learn more:

## 1. ACLU Rhode Island

- **Webpage:** [Know Your Rights: Voting in RI](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage is like a cheat sheet to voting rights. It shares voting dates, who can vote, how to vote, and who to call for help voting.

## 2. Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP.gov)

- **Webpage:** [How to Determine Your Voting Residency](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage explains what your voting residence means and why it matters. It also shares steps on how to find out what your voting residency is.

## 3. MIT Election Data and Science Lab

- **Webpage:** [Provisional Ballots](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage explains what a provision ballot is.

## 4. Rhode Island Department of State

- **Webpage:** [Accessibility and Voting Assistance](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage shares info on voting accessibility. It shares info on laws and types of accommodations you have the right to.

## 5. United States Election Assistance Commission

- **Website:** [Help America Vote Act](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage explains the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). It shares details about how HAVA started, what states must do, and what your rights are.

## 6. USA.gov

- **Webpage:** [Who Can and Cannot Vote](#)
- **Summary:** Visit this webpage to learn more about who can and can't vote.

## 7. USA.gov

- **Webpage:** [Voting Rights Laws and Constitutional Amendments](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage explains your voting rights. It shares info on voting rights laws.

## 8. USA.gov

- **Webpage:** [Voter fraud, voter suppression, and other election crimes](#)
- **Summary:** This page reviews voting crimes.

## 9. U.S. Vote Foundation

- **Webpage:** [What are the Various States' Residency Requirements?](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage explains the state residency requirement. It also shares info on voting if you are out of the country.

## 10. Vote.gov

- **Webpage:** [Voting with a Disability](#)
- **Summary:** This webpage shares info on voting accommodations.