



NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Help Station Guide

Revised January 2026

What is the Help Station?

The help station is the place for a discussion with voters about irregularities. A voter is to be directed to the help station when there is a registration issue or other reason the voter is unable to receive a regular ballot. Provisional voting or precinct transfers are typically handled at the help station.

If election officials have determined that a voter is not eligible to vote a regular ballot, they must use a **Help Referral Form** to refer the voter to the help station. Information on the form enables the help station officials to determine the identity of the voter, the nature of the issue, and whether the voter should be offered a provisional ballot.

Submitted **Help Referral Forms** should be kept in a binder or folder and returned to the board of elections offices along with other election materials. Do not place this form into a voter's provisional ballot envelope.

What is Provisional Voting?

If a person does not appear on the official list of eligible registered voters in the voting place, the voter will be offered a provisional ballot. Voters who lack HAVA ID, unable to show Photo ID, or who are flagged as being part of the Registration Repair Project will also be offered a provisional ballot. Provisional means conditional – the ability to have the vote counted depends on a determination of a voter's eligibility after further review.

A provisional ballot looks like any other ballot; however, the ballot does not get inserted into the tabulator. Instead, a provisional application and the ballot are completed by the voter. The application will contain information about the voter and the provisional voting reason. This application is placed in a clear sleeve on (or otherwise attached to) the outside of a provisional voting envelope. The voter completes and seals the ballot on the inside of the envelope where it remains private.

It is critical that the election official assisting with this provisional process ensures that **the application and any associated documents (e.g., a Photo ID Exception Form) are placed in the clear sleeve or attached to the outside of the envelope and are not sealed inside the envelope.** The ballot will be the only item sealed within the envelope to maintain privacy and security of the ballot.

Provisional Voting Reasons

- 1 Photo ID Exception
- 2 A. No Photo ID (has a Photo ID but does not have it with them), OR
B. Voter Does Not Have Acceptable HAVA ID (has eligible photo ID)
- 3 No Record of Registration
- 4 Unreported Move
- 5 Incorrect Precinct
- 6 Unrecognized Address
- 7 Previously Removed
- 8 Registration Repair
- 9 Other Provisional Issues

Reminders for Provisional Voting

If a voter needs to vote provisionally, the following pages will outline the process to follow both for the manual process for counties who use paper pollbooks on Election Day and the SOSA/OVRD process when using your electronic pollbook. If you are using a third-party pollbook these steps may be different.

When assisting a voter with provisional voting, North Carolina's Administrative Code requires every polling site to have a separate voting booth in your Help Station area. This provides another method for ensuring that the provisional ballot goes into the envelope and not into the tabulator.

Final note – make sure that all documents are signed by the voter and, when required, by the Help Station official.

Provisional Voting Procedures (Manual)

- 1 Accept Help Referral Form from voter and ask voter for Photo ID (Unless form indicates no Photo ID).
- 2 Complete provisional poll book.
- 3 Complete administrative section of **Provisional Voting Application**.
- 4 Affix PIN labels to poll book log, provisional application, and provisional instructions.
- 5 Ask voter to complete and sign **Provisional Voter Application**.
- 6 *If voter is unable to provide photo ID and has a qualifying exception, ask voter to complete Photo ID Exception Form.*
- 7 Accept and review all forms with voter. Sign or initial where needed.
- 8 Obtain appropriate ballot and write the word “Provisional” and the precinct number of the voter’s eligible precinct on the ballot. Present voter with ballot, provisional application and envelope, and provisional instructions.
- 9 Provide voter with verbal instructions on voting ballot in private, placing voted ballot in envelope, and returning voted ballot sealed in the provisional envelope.
- 10 If applicable, provide voter with instructions on time for providing the county board of elections with acceptable Photo ID and/or HAVA ID.

Provisional Voting Procedures (SOSA/OVRD)

- 1 Accept Help Referral Form from voter and ask voter for Photo ID (Unless form indicates voter has no Photo ID).
- 2 Search voter and select Add Existing to choose an existing voter. If voter cannot be located, select Add New.
- 3 Complete the provisional data entry information screens.
- 4 If applicable, note if voter provided acceptable HAVA ID and the type of ID.
- 5 Print the **Provisional Voter Application** (*if voter is unable to provide photo ID and has a qualifying exception the Photo ID Exception Form will also print*)
- 6 Ask voter to review and sign all forms.
- 7 Accept form(s) from voter and sign or initial where needed.
- 8 Obtain appropriate ballot and write the word “Provisional” and the precinct number of the voter’s eligible precinct on the ballot.
- 9 Present voter with ballot, provisional application and envelope, and provisional instructions.
- 10 Provide voter with verbal instructions on voting ballot in private, placing voted ballot in envelope and returning it sealed in the provisional envelope.
- 11 If applicable, provide voter with instructions on time for providing the county board of elections with acceptable Photo ID and/or HAVA ID.

No Photo ID Options

A voter who does not show an acceptable photo ID has three options.
It is up to the voter to choose which option is right for them.

1

Show Another ID

If the voter has another ID with them that is acceptable, they can show that. If they have acceptable ID but it is not with them, they can get it and return to vote.

2

Photo ID Exception Form

The voter may vote a provisional ballot and fill out a Photo ID Exception Form, explaining why they are unable to show acceptable photo ID.

The voter completes the provisional application and the reason selected is ID NOT PROVIDED – EXCEPTION FORM. The voter then completes the Photo ID Exception Form at the voting site. Then, they can vote a provisional ballot that will be counted by the county board unless the county board members unanimously find the form to be false. Inform the voter that if there is any issue with the form, the county board will notify the voter and give them an opportunity to address the issue.

3

Take ID to County Board Office

The voter may vote a provisional ballot and later bring their Photo ID to the county board office no later than noon (12pm) on the third business day after Election Day.

The voter completes the provisional application and the reason selected is ID NOT PROVIDED – NO EXCEPTION FORM/RETURN WITH ID.

*Provide the voter the Provisional Voter Instruction Sheet and Common ID Flyer. Make clear that the voter must go in person to the county board office with their photo ID for their ballot to count.



Photo ID Exception

Early Voting or Election Day

If a voter cannot show photo ID when voting in person, they can still vote by completing an ID Exception Form. Exceptions to photo ID are the following:

- **ID Not Provided-Exception – Reasonable Impediment.** *A reasonable impediment means that something is preventing the voter from showing ID. The voter must provide their reason by selecting from the following choices on the form.*
 - Cannot get an ID because of:
 - Lack of transportation
 - Disability or illness
 - Lack of birth certificate or other documents needed to obtain ID
 - Work or school schedule
 - Family responsibilities
 - Lost, stolen, or misplaced photo ID
 - Photo ID applied for but not yet received
 - Other reasonable impediment (if selected, the voter must write the reason on the form).
 - State or federal law prohibits voter from listing reason
- **ID Not Provided Exception - Religious Objection to Being Photographed**
- **ID Not Provided Exception – Natural Disaster** *(victim of a natural disaster declared by the President or NC Governor and occurring within 100 days of Election Day)*



Voter does not have a Photo ID with them-No Exception Form

Early Voting

If a voter does not have an acceptable photo ID with them and does not complete a Photo ID Exception Form, they can vote a provisional ballot under the reason in SOSA: ID NOT PROVIDED – NO EXCEPTION FORM/RETURN WITH ID.

The provisional envelope will be marked with No ID Provided.

Election Day

If a voter does not have an acceptable photo ID with them and does not complete a Photo ID Exception Form, they can vote a provisional ballot under the reason in OVRD: ID NOT PROVIDED – NO EXCEPTION FORM/RETURN WITH ID.

The provisional envelope will be marked with No ID Provided.



Voter does not have acceptable HAVA ID

If a first-time voter whose voter record shows *ID Required* does not show one of the acceptable forms of HAVA ID, the voter must be offered the opportunity to cast a provisional ballot. If the voter has an acceptable Photo ID that does not meet HAVA ID requirements, the voter will still vote a provisional ballot for the HAVA ID reason.

Reminder: This is a requirement to verify a first-time voter's identity under the Help American Vote Act (HAVA) and N.C.G.S. 163-166.12. This is NOT the same as Photo ID, but sometimes this may be the same ID as a Photo ID. For example, an unexpired driver's license with a current address would serve both requirements.

The provisional envelope will be marked with HAVA ID NOT PROVIDED. In SOSA/OVRD, HAVA ID NOT PROVIDED will be selected.

The voter should be given the Notice to No ID Voters.

If the voter has voted a provisional ballot due to a HAVA ID issue, The voter may mail, fax, email, or deliver in person a HAVA ID by noon (12pm) the third business day after Election Day.



When a Voter Must Show a HAVA ID in Addition to Photo ID

If the voter has *ID Required* on their voter record, they will need to provide a HAVA ID in addition to a Photo ID.

This is a requirement to verify a first-time voter's identity under the Help American Vote Act (HAVA) and N.C.G.S. 163-166.12. This is NOT the same as the Photo ID.

A first-time voter must show HAVA ID if one of the following apply:

- Registered to vote by mail and does not have a verified North Carolina drivers license number or last four digits of a social security number, or did not provide acceptable identification at the time of their registration, and has not previously voted in an election for federal office in North Carolina
- Registered to vote by any method (in-person, DMV, etc.) and does not have a verified North Carolina drivers license number or last four digits of a social security number, and has not previously voted in an election for federal office in North Carolina

The first-time voter will be asked to show one of the following forms of ID or documents when they present to vote:

- a current and valid photo ID
- A physical or electronic copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that contains their address



No record of registration

Same-day registration and voting at early voting sites

A person who is qualified to vote can register in person and then vote at an early voting site during the early voting period. The voter must (1) complete a voter registration application, (2) show an acceptable Photo ID, and (3) provide proof of residence.

The voter must be encouraged to provide their phone number and/or email address on the registration form so they can be contacted if needed. Make sure the voter provides an address that can receive mail and includes their apartment or unit number, if applicable.

Proof of residence documents can be any of the following documents that show the voter's current name and current residence address:

- a North Carolina driver's license or ID from a government agency;
- a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document;
- a current document issued from the institution (school or local government) that issued the Photo ID being shown by the voter

After registering, a same-day registrant votes a regular ballot. If the person decides not to vote immediately, the voter registration must still be accepted. The person can return later to an early voting site in that county and cast a ballot, but they **cannot** wait to cast their ballot on Election Day. If returning later to vote, they will need to present Photo ID again.

The early voting election official must give all same-day registrants a **Notice to Same-Day Registrant** document, and



Unreported Moves

MOVED 30 OR MORE DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION TO AN ADDRESS IN COUNTY

Early Voting

During the early voting period, if the voter moved 30 or more days before the date of the election, the voter's address in the county should be updated and the voter given the ballot style they are eligible to vote based on the updated address.

Election Day

- If voter shows up to vote at their **NEW PRECINCT**, permit the voter to be transferred in and offered a regular ballot if you are able to reach their old (previous) precinct to ensure they have not already voted. If you are unable to reach their former precinct allow voter to cast a provisional ballot.
- If voter shows up to vote at their **OLD PRECINCT**, transfer voter to new precinct or assist voter in casting a provisional ballot.
- If voter shows up to vote at a **TRANSFER (CENTRAL) PRECINCT**, receive transferred voter from old precinct and permit voter to cast a regular ballot.
- If voter with an Unreported Move shows up to vote at a voting site other than one of the sites listed above, the voter may cast a provisional ballot.



Unreported Moves

MOVED LESS THAN 30 DAYS TO ADDRESS WITHIN COUNTY

Early Voting

During the early voting period, if the voter moved less than 30 days from the date of the election, the voter's address should not be updated. The voter should be issued both a ballot based on their previous address in the county and a voter registration form to update their address in the county for future elections.

Election Day

On Election Day, the voter's proper precinct is based on their previous address. If the voter shows up to vote at the polling place for the precinct based on their previous address, they should be issued a regular ballot. The voter should be given a voter registration update form to update their address in the county for future elections. If the voter shows up to vote at any other polling site, they should be referred to their proper voting site or to the Help Station to vote a provisional ballot.



Unreported Moves

MOVED TO ADDRESS IN ANOTHER COUNTY

Moved More than 30 Days

Regardless of whether the voter is showing up to vote during the early voting period or on Election Day, the voter is no longer qualified to vote in the county if they moved to another county more than 30 days before the election. If the voter insists on voting, the voter should be referred to the Help Station and offered a provisional ballot.

Moved Less than 30 Days

The voter's proper precinct is still based on their previous address. The voter is still eligible to vote a regular ballot at the voting site based on their previous address. Inform the voter that they should register to vote in their new county for purposes of future elections.



Incorrect Precinct

This is used when a voter is requesting to vote at a polling place on Election Day that is not the polling place for the voter's precinct. The voter's precinct assigned to them is based on their address 30 or more days prior to Election Day.

You should only use this reason if the voter presents at a voting site other than their proper precinct. Do not use this reason if the more appropriate reason is *Unreported Move*.



Incorrect Party

This is used only in a partisan primary when a voter insists on voting a ballot for a party other than the voter's affiliated party.

Do not use this reason for any election other than a partisan primary.



Previously Removed

This is used when it is determined that a voter was previously registered in the county, but the registration was cancelled. A voter's registration may be cancelled due to any number of reasons (moved within state, moved to another state, felony conviction, removed due to list maintenance, sustained challenge, deceased, etc.).

During early voting this reason would not be used. A voter who has been removed should be offered Same Day Registration during the early voting period.



Unrecognized Address

This is used when an election official is unable to locate the address stated by the voter in the county's street lookup files.

**Do not use these reasons unless instructed to do so
by the county board of elections**



Registration Repair

If a voter has INACTIVE DL/SSN Update Record (SOSA/OVRD) or DL/SSN Provisional Only (printed on pollbook) the voter will need to vote a provisional ballot.

Under federal law (52 U.S.C. 21803) and North Carolina law (G.S. 163-82.4), when a person registers to vote, they must provide their driver's license number or, if they don't have one, the last four digits of their social security number. This information is used to verify the person's identity.

As a result of a state court order the voter is required to vote a provisional ballot so that we can receive this information to complete their registration before counting their ballot.

When completing the provisional process, **provide the voter the Notice to DL/SSN Provisional Voters handout** and:

- Record on the provisional application the voter's NCDL/DMV ID number or, if they do not have one, record the last four digits of their social security number.*
- If they do not have either number, have them indicate that on the provisional application and request that they show a HAVA ID. You must record the type of HAVA ID provided, which can be:
 - a current and valid photo ID
 - A physical or electronic copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that contains their address

**Even if the voter provides NCDL or SSN, please also ask them to show and record (if provided) an eligible HAVA ID in case their NCDL or SSN number does not validate. If they do not provide one, encourage the voter to complete the contact information so the county board can reach them for additional information if needed.*



Voter Already Voted

This is used if the voter record indicates that the voter who is there to vote has already cast their ballot in the election.



Jurisdiction Dispute

This is used if a voter shows up to vote and has no eligible ballot style or the voter requests to vote for an election contest that is not in their assigned voting district based on their legal voting residence.



Voted During Extended Hours

This is used if the hours for voting are extended by the State Board of Elections or a court order.

Provisional Voter Instructions

1

Provisional Voting Reason

Provide the voter with the **Provisional Voter Instructions**. If voting provisionally due to a Photo ID exception provide voter with the Photo ID Exception Form.

2

PIN

Show the voter their **Provisional Identification Number** on the instructions. A voter can use the PIN to check the status of their provisional application. This information will be available **10 days** after Election Day (or **7 days** for municipal elections in Sept./Oct.).

3

NO ID

If the voter voted provisionally due to ID NOT PROVIDED – NO EXCEPTION FORM/RETURN WITH ID (because the voter plans to bring their Photo ID to the county board office and/or is unable to provide an acceptable HAVA ID), inform the voter that they must provide the county board of elections with the ID no later than noon (12pm) on the third business day after Election Day.

*Remind voter that Photo ID must be provided in person but HAVA ID can be mailed/faxed/mailed.

*Be sure to provide “Notice to No ID Voters” (HAVA) or “Common ID Flyer” (Photo ID) or Notice to DL/SSN Provisional Voters (Registration Repair)

4

County Canvass Day

Inform the voter of the date the county canvass day will be held:
10 days after Election Day (or **7 days** for municipal elections in Sept./Oct.).

Appendix A – Status Differences

HAVA ID, Registration Repair & Unvalidated DL SSN

| | HAVA ID REQUIRED | REGISTRATION REPAIR | UNVALIDATED DL/SSN |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| SOSA or OVRD indicator | ID REQUIRED | INACTIVE VOTER (DL/SSN Update Record) | REQUEST DL/SSN |
| On Printed Pollbook label | ID REQUIRED | DL/SSN PROVISIONAL ONLY | REQUEST DL/SSN |
| What this means | The voter is a first-time voter who did not provide verifiable identification with their voter registration. The requirement for first-time voters to show this ID is a requirement of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and state law (G.S. § 163-166.12). | The voter is registered to vote in the county, but the county board of elections is required to obtain the voter’s DL/SSN number to complete their registration. If the voter does not have a DL/SSN, then they must check a box saying so. | The voter is registered to vote in the county and previously provided a DL/SSN number, but it did not validate. |
| Process to follow | The voter is required to show a form of HAVA ID. If they show a HAVA ID, then they vote a regular ballot. If they are unable to show a HAVA ID, then they must vote provisionally. | Voters who are part of the Registration Repair Project will be flagged with this status and <u>must vote a provisional ballot</u> . SOSA/OVRD will provide a popup that directs you through the process. Mark the Help Referral Form and send them to the Help Station to vote provisionally. | The voter is given a handout and asked to provide their DL/SSN on a change form so another attempt can be made to validate. They are eligible voters and will vote a regular ballot even if they do not provide this information, unless they must vote a provisional ballot for a different reason such as a voter not being able to present a photo ID or if there are other questions about their eligibility. |
| Remember | This is different than photo ID although a current and valid photo ID can also be used to satisfy this HAVA ID requirement if it is not expired. | A voter with this designation is required to vote provisionally using the reason DL/SSN PROVISIONAL. | If the voter declines to complete the change form now, they will still proceed with voting a regular ballot if there are no other reasons that would require them to vote provisionally. An unvalidated DL/SSN4 alone will not prevent their votes from being counted. |
| Handout for voter | Notice to No ID Voters | Notice to Provisional Voters SSN-DL Required | Notice to Voters with Unvalidated DL/SSN |