



## MONTANA STATE HOSPITAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### VOTING RIGHTS OF PATIENTS

**Effective Date:** April 26, 2007

**Policy #:** PR-05

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- I. PURPOSE:** To ensure that patients have an opportunity to exercise their right to vote unless restricted by law.
- II. POLICY:** Montana State Hospital patients retain the right to vote in local, state, and national elections unless restrictions on this right are placed by the courts or election officials. Hospital staff will provide information to patients on voter registration and assistance in obtaining absentee ballots. For patients registered to vote in Deer Lodge County, MSH staff may provide transportation to a polling location.
- III. DEFINITIONS:** None
- IV. RESPONSIBILITIES:**
  - A. Social Workers are responsible for coordinating and assisting patients to vote.
- V. PROCEDURE:**
  - A. Information about elections and procedures for requesting an absentee ballot will be provided to patients by social work staff. Social workers will provide assistance to any patients wishing to register to vote or obtain an absentee ballot.
  - B. Patients remaining in the hospital for 30 days or longer are eligible to register to vote in Deer Lodge County if they choose.
  - C. Election officials in each county (usually the county clerk) are responsible for determining whether an individual is eligible to vote. Hospital staff may inform officials whether a patient has a guardian, but shall not provide information regarding competency unless requested by a court.
  - D. Assistance in exercising voting rights is also available to patients through the Board of Visitors Office and the Montana Advocacy Program.
- VI. REFERENCES:** 53-21-141 M.C.A.
- VII. COLLABORATED WITH:** Social Work Discipline Chief

