

TWENTY WAYS TO MAKE VOTING MATTER!

SOCIAL WORK STUDENT VOICES ON VOTER ENGAGEMENT IN THE FIELD- FALL 2016

The following are 20 examples students from an urban school of social work provided for a policy assignment about their agencies' practices related to voter engagement.

- 1) I have the pleasure of working with young adults, all who are over age for typical High School student and under credited in an alternative High School setting. Luckily the Department of Education staff we work with allowed my coworkers and I to go into classes, interrupt class to 1. Ask student if they were registered to vote. 2. Have them fill out the voter registration forms if they were not but wanted to register. 3. Made daily announcements with a countdown of how many days were left to register to vote. And, 4. We also set up a table with forms and a laptop for registration. During day to day conversations with students, especially after debates, we would speak to them about the importance of voting and what voting means to them. Happy to say that the majority of our students are registered to vote and are planning on voting on November 8th.
- 2) The day of the election my kids' school organized a bake sale to raise money. We set up a table outside the school which was a polling place. We sold waters, juices, sodas, apples, bananas, cereal bars and other snacks for a dollar. It was very pleasing to see the great amount of people that showed up and voted. We ended up collecting a significant amount of money that the school will use towards the PTA Arts Program. The best part of organizing this bake sale was that the kids volunteered to tend the table and walk along the long line of voters selling them the items. I believe that for children to witness and feel the electoral process with their own eyes, being there, watching the great amount of people that stood in line for a long time to vote is a great way of voter education. Listening to the adults' conversation, asking us questions and basically living it first hand is a great experience and will live with them forever and hopefully will educate them and incentivize them to vote when their time comes.
- 3) My agency serves the developmentally disabled. Almost all of the clients at his agency were registered to vote, despite the fact they are a population with intellectual disabilities. In that setting, if their clients were not registered, the care coordinators would go over the eligibility process and help the clients register if they were eligible and encourage them to become informed by providing client friendly information. If it is not clear that the client can register, we give them the phone number of Civil Liberties Union specific member they can call for hands-on assistance. Finally, this agency's assessment of its success with clients includes counting voter registration and advocacy group membership as indicators of quality of life for the disabled population it serves.
- 4) For voter education my agency has postings for Clients reminding them to register to vote and sending emails out to the staff sharing the same information about registering to vote.

- 5) My agency hosted 3 Voter Registration events, each event being 2 hours long. A voter drive day was publicized where clients and community members were educated on voting rights and important election dates to inform attendees and provided registration forms for attendees to take home. Attendees were also able to fill out registration forms at the event and leave them with the volunteers who provided complimentary mailing. These forms were also available in Chinese. Lastly, they provided literature on voting frequently asked questions.
- 6) My agency sends out multiple mass Emails about voter registration and deadlines to register.
- 7) I am a caseworker for a public assistance agency, and one of my duty is to monitor its many sites. At many of their sites, I see a basket with voter registration forms in it. When the workers interview the clients, they will offer the voter registration form and help them complete them.
- 8) My large agency has been encouraging their staff to go vote. They have it on the agency's intranet and even sent out an email last week reminding us that we can take time out of our work day to vote. They are allowing us a two-hour period at the beginning or end of our work day dedicated to voting, this is of course with our supervisor's permission.
- 9) As I work with adolescents, aged 12-21, we are encouraging the older youth to vote. It's a topic of discussion as the election is on TV and in their classrooms. The few youth we have of voting age filled out voter registration forms. The ones who are able to vote seem excited and I hope we are able to educate them on the importance and honor of the freedom to vote safely.
- 10) My agency has generated emails and posted flyers encouraging staff and clients to vote. Flyers were posted in the conference area so that clients can get inspired while waiting to attend a conference or visit with their children. Employees are urged to discuss voting with their clients and provide them with the literature that explains the process and gives them the address to different sites.
- 11) At my agency, there were voter registrations available both in English and Spanish available for our clients. Before the elections, I encouraged my eligible clients to vote as well as their parents and family members. I feel that our agency emphasized the importance of voting. I hope to further educate my clients the benefits of voting.
- 12) During voter season my agency has informed clients about registering to vote, the importance of voting and reminding them that it is their right. In addition we found out the polling places where many of our clients live. On election day we arranged for staff members to walk groups of clients over to where they were to vote.

- 13) My agency has offered individual client sessions as well as workshops to assist clients in understanding the electoral process. We have held open discussion groups and panels with community leaders helping our residents understand the importance of voting. One of the biggest events we had was a community forum entitled "Why Should I vote, When I Don't Like the Candidates." Residents voiced their opinions on the election, its process and shared their individual knowledge of politics. Speakers and counselors listened as residents voiced their concerns regarding the topic. Afterwards, information packets were handed out with voter registration forms and addresses for local government offices and voting locations. We do our best to keep our residents informed of their legal rights and to feel empowered in the electoral process.
- 14) My agency has posters all over the shelter in order to tell clients to vote and where to register to vote. During this time period, we had many of community meetings about the importance of voting. We also educated the clients on the candidates and how long their terms are for. We also explained all the different positions they could vote for. I informed them of the importance of voting for all electoral due to that impacting their daily lives. We discuss the different policies that could affect them and asked them to review the candidates' positions to see that their votes could have an impact on various policies.
- 15) There is a voter registration desk at the University's main campus staffed by volunteers who provide education and assistance with registration. There's also the ability for students to register online through its student portal site.
- 16) At the Ethnic Support Center in my neighborhood we set up a table on different days in September to encourage voter registration. This was part of a national effort among Ethnic groups to register voters.
- 17) At the beginning of October 2016, I went grocery shopping to my local supermarket and I observed that there were tables set up by the entrance with high school students promoting voting. These students approached the people that were about to enter the supermarket and simply asked them if they would like to register to vote, they also provided a brief explanation why voting is important. They had a bunch of pens and the enrollment paperwork ready for whoever decided to register then. I was fascinated by the whole idea of making it easy to the public to do the voter registration.
- 18) My agency has just sent out an email stating that we have two hours paid to vote. I personally encourage and discuss with my clients their right to vote and whether or not they are going to participate. The opportunity to do so is frequent as on each social program application there is a voter registration form. In the past 8 years, I have had two clients who regularly vote and I checked my clients' State voter registration status. One was not registered to vote and she was very upset about it. While she cannot vote in this election, she is interested in becoming a registered voter and has stated that she would like information when elections come to vote more regularly. I discussed with her and others, talking to fellow adult home residents about the importance of having their voices heard. Clients stated they would start to do that with her friends.

- 19) My agency] has been encouraging their staff to go vote. They have it on the agency's internet. As I work with adolescents aged 12-21, we are encouraging the older youth to vote. It's a topic of discussion as the election is on TV and in their classrooms. The few youth we have of voting age filled out voter registration forms. The ones who are able to vote seem excited and I hope we are able to educate them on the importance and honor of the freedom to vote.
- 20) My agency added (If client is a US citizen) "Are you registered to vote?" And if yes, the worker is encouraged to ask them if they would like the worker to check to see that it is current and to locate their current polling place. If they say no, the worker is encouraged to ask them if they would like the worker to help them register and explain the importance of voting to have their voice heard by the political leaders. They also have the registration form available to hand to the client to complete on their own if they wish.