

Vermont Protection & Advocacy, Inc.
Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access

Pre-Election Program Evaluation

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I. INTRODUCTION

In order to improve our work promoting education and equal access for individuals with disabilities to successfully participate in the electoral process, Vermont Protection & Advocacy, Inc. (VP&A) conducted its first ever Pre-Election Program Evaluation. What follows is the background, methodology, results and recommendations obtained from this valuable work. While the number of participants is less than expected, even that finding has important lessons for VP&A to consider as we continue to move forward in our work promoting civic participation of Vermonters with disabilities. We believe this evaluation is an example of an effort to create a data driven, best practice model for continued improvement by VP&A and potentially other Protection & Advocacy systems around the country.

VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation yielded valuable information about the voting experiences of individuals with disabilities we have previously served, prior and potential barriers to voting, and recommendations about how to improve the voting outreach and assistance we provide to individuals with disabilities around the state. In particular, clients who participated in this evaluation made specific recommendations for improving services, including that VP&A should:

1. Continue making voting outreach a priority, particularly via direct contact with individuals with disabilities in a variety of community based and residential settings;
2. Provide comprehensive information and education about the voter registration process, alternative voting methods, and information about candidates running for office;
3. Provide more consistent and effective follow up with clients regarding voter registration confirmation, absentee ballot request forms, and polling place locations;
4. Ensure that individuals with disabilities have adequate transportation resources available in order to exercise their right to vote in person at their official polling places if they so choose.

VP&A intends to use the information and recommendations obtained through the Pre-Election Program Evaluation to inform our future voting outreach work, to implement changes in our client service protocols, and to improve opportunities for individuals with disabilities to have equal access to voting throughout the state of Vermont.

In addition to a special thank you to the individuals who participated in our first ever Pre-Election Program Evaluation, VP&A wishes to acknowledge our gratitude for the excellent consultation services provided to our organization throughout this project by Dr. Michael Giangreco and Dr. Jesse Suter of the University of Vermont's Center for Disability and Community Inclusion (CDCI), part of the network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. We also wish to thank Dr. Susan Ryan, Executive Director of the CDCI, for her support of this invaluable partnership.

II. BACKGROUND

Vermont Protection & Advocacy, Inc. is a private, independent, not-for-profit agency mandated by federal law to protect and advance the rights of individuals with disabilities. VP&A is Vermont's designated protection and advocacy system and is a member of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN). VP&A receives federal grant funding through the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) to operate a Protection & Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) program for individuals with disabilities throughout the State of Vermont (42 U.S.C. § 15301 – 15545).

In addition to establishing minimum election administration standards, establishing the Election Assistance Commission and providing funds to States to improve their voting systems, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 specifically designates the Department of Health and Human Services to make payments to eligible states and units of local governments for the purposes of:

- (1) making polling places, including the path of travel, entrances, exits, and voting areas of each polling facility, accessible to individuals with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters; and
- (2) providing individuals with disabilities and the other individuals described in paragraph (1) with information about the accessibility of polling places, including outreach programs to inform the individuals about the availability of accessible polling places and training election officials, poll workers, and election volunteers on how best to promote the access and participation of individuals with disabilities in elections for Federal office (Public Law 107-252, Section 261, October 29, 2002).

Similarly, Section 291 of the Help America Vote Act designates the Department of Health and Human Services to provide funding to the protection and advocacy system of each state “to ensure the full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities, including registering to vote, casting a vote and accessing polling places.”

VP&A's Protection & Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) program priorities include:

- **Voter Registration:** VP&A provides voting education and registration opportunities during outreach visits to individuals with disabilities in hospitals, residential and therapeutic care homes, correctional facilities, community mental health centers, drop-in peer centers, statewide self-advocacy, peer support and community mental health conferences, regional fairs, and through our general intake process.
- **Voting Rights Presentations:** VP&A provides educational presentations to self-advocacy and service provider groups about issues relating to voting rights for people with disabilities. In addition to voting rights presentations, VP&A published and distributed over 3,000 copies of our 2008 Voter's Guide for Individuals with Disabilities. This non-partisan publication contains information in an accessible format about voting rights, voter registration, where to vote, how to vote, candidates running for office, and

the structure of our government. VP&A's Voter's Guide can be accessed at:
http://www.vtpa.org/PDF/Candidacy%20booklet_final%20for%20web.pdf

- **Statewide Access to Voting Committee:** VP&A participates with other disability rights advocates on the Secretary of State's Access to Voting Committee where issues such as accessible voting technologies, voting officials training, and voter outreach are discussed.
- **Polling Place Accessibility and Voting Official Training:** VP&A determines the accessibility of polling places around the state using the U.S. Department of Justice ADA Checklist for Polling Places. We communicate our findings to local polling officials and to the Secretary of State's Office. VP&A staff make suggestions for improvements and provide additional disability awareness training to polling officials as appropriate.
- **Availability for Information on Election Day:** VP&A provides a toll-free hotline with attorneys available on Election Day to answer any questions voters with disabilities have and to help resolve any difficulties in the voting process that may arise for individuals with disabilities. We also encourage individuals with disabilities to contact VP&A at our toll-free number year round with any questions or concerns regarding voting rights and equal access to voting.
- **Working with Green Mountain Self-Advocates:** VP&A supports the Green Mountain Self-Advocates, a statewide self-advocacy network operated by individuals with developmental disabilities, in their continued efforts to encourage civic participation among their membership by providing technical assistance and training activities.
- **Raising Awareness of Voting Rights for People with Disabilities:** VP&A provides education to the community at large about the rights of individuals with disabilities to vote without obstructions or prejudice. In 2008, VP&A partnered with the Austine School for the Deaf and AARP to organize and co-sponsor a Gubernatorial Debate moderated by the Austine School's Director, a member of the deaf community. The debate was widely attended, with the three major party candidates participating and over 300 people present. This was the second accessible debate co-sponsored by VP&A and the Austine School, the first one having occurred in 2006 with the Candidates for U.S. Senate participating and over 200 people in attendance.

III. OBJECTIVES

A. PAVA Program Evaluation

Since the inception of VP&A's PAVA program in 2004 our staff have provided voting outreach and education to thousands of individuals with disabilities residing in residential care homes, inpatient facilities, correctional facilities, and living independently in communities throughout Vermont. As a result of our outreach and public awareness efforts, VP&A has opened individual case service requests for over 450 people with disabilities. A case service request is defined as the provision of specific voting rights assistance by a VP&A advocate or attorney at the request

of an individual with a disability. The majority of VP&A's PAVA case service requests consist of registering individuals with disabilities to vote and assisting with requests for absentee ballots.

Although our former PAVA clients (those individuals for whom we have completed a specific PAVA service request) often express appreciation for our voting rights assistance during follow up activities, VP&A has had no means of formally evaluating the success of our voting outreach efforts aimed at ensuring full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities. It is for this reason VP&A sought out consultation from experts at the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion to develop and implement the PAVA Pre-Election Program Evaluation.

B. Identification of the Voting Experiences of Individuals with Disabilities

In order to improve upon the PAVA services currently provided by VP&A and to enhance civic participation for individuals with disabilities, VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation was designed to help identify and educate our staff about internal and external barriers faced by our former PAVA clients. We hoped to learn about the actual voting experiences of individuals with disabilities by answering the following questions:

- Are VP&A's PAVA clients registered voters?
- Are there ways the voting registration process can be made easier for our clients?
- Have our clients voted in the past and if so, did they experience any difficulties doing so?
- What are the reasons our clients have previously chosen not to vote?
- Do our clients plan to vote in the upcoming election?
- What type of barriers to the voting process are our clients concerned about?

Our goal was to use the specific information gathered about our clients' prior voting experiences in ways that will decrease the potential for any identified barriers to be experienced by individuals with disabilities in the future.

C. Voter Education and Assistance Prior to the General Election

A final objective of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation involved the provision of additional voting education and the offer of additional voting assistance to our former PAVA clients, over and above what may have previously been provided during our PAVA case service work with them in the past. Our goal was to provide specific information about the upcoming election, provide the opportunity to answer any questions about voting rights participants may have had, and to provide individualized assistance as needed to ensure that each person we contacted was able to fully exercise their right to vote.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participant Selection and Recruitment

VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation participant selection pool consisted of non-incarcerated individuals with disabilities for whom VP&A had provided specific PAVA case services (i.e. assistance with voter registration and absentee ballot requests) between July 15, 2006 and September 15, 2008.¹ By virtue of having been provided specific PAVA assistance by VP&A advocates or attorneys, these individuals had previously identified themselves as having at least one disability. The participant selection pool was further limited to those former clients who had a home telephone number listed in VP&A's client database as telephone contact was the procedure the evaluation would mainly rely upon. These requirements resulted in a participant selection pool that included 103 former VP&A PAVA clients.

One VP&A advocate, assigned as the principal evaluator, made 165 attempts to contact the identified 103 former VP&A PAVA clients in the participant selection pool over the course of three weeks between October 14, 2008 and November 4, 2008. Those efforts resulted in obtaining participation in the evaluation from 20 former clients. Of the remaining 83 potential participants, 23 declined to participate in the evaluation, 15 phone numbers were no longer in service, 12 former clients were no longer living at the residence on record, and 33 individuals were not successfully contacted following multiple attempts (either there was no answer or messages left were not returned).

B. Participant Characteristics

Age and Gender

At the time of participation in VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation, the age range of the 20 participants was from 21 to 76 years old with a mean of 46 years old. A total of nine males and eleven females participated in the evaluation.

Living Arrangement

At the time specific PAVA case services were previously provided to the twenty participants, four reported living independently in their own homes, three were receiving inpatient treatment in psychiatric hospitals, and thirteen were living in residential/therapeutic community care homes. At the time of their actual participation in the Pre-Election Program Evaluation, four individuals reported living independently, one resided in a parent's home, one reported being homeless, one resided in a nursing home, and thirteen resided in residential/therapeutic community care homes.

¹ Prisoners with disabilities in the custody of the Department of Corrections were purposely excluded from the sample for several reasons. Given our considerable experience working with this population, we are aware that inmates face specific barriers regarding their right to vote, including having limited access to information about candidates and having no choice of voting methods (all prisoners meeting Vermont residency requirements are allowed to exercise their right to vote by absentee ballot). A separate survey regarding the voting experiences of prisoners with disabilities for whom we had previously provided PAVA services was completed by VP&A and the results will be provided to staff of the Department of Corrections for their consideration.

Employment Status

At the time of the evaluation, eight participants reported being employed, three full-time and five part-time. Seven individuals reported receiving SSI benefits, four received SSDI benefits, and another three received both SSI and SSDI.

Access to Transportation

At the time of the evaluation, fifteen participants reported not having a driver's license while five stated they did. Of the five participants who had a license, three lived in independent housing, one in a parent's home, and another reported being homeless at the time of the Pre-Election Program Evaluation. All thirteen participants who lived in residential/therapeutic care homes did not have a driver's license, however all but one of those residents reported living with someone who did own a car. Thirteen participants reported having access to public transportation while seven did not.

Overall, each of the twenty participants reported having some means of transportation, whether it was access to their own vehicle, living with someone who owned a vehicle, or access to the public transportation system.

Disabilities and Accommodations

The primary disabilities of participants identified at the time PAVA case services were provided are as follows: one individual was diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder; one individual had a traumatic brain injury; one individual was hard of hearing/hearing impaired; four individuals were identified as having learning disabilities; three individuals experienced neurological impairments; and ten individuals were diagnosed with a mental illness.

Four individuals were identified as having secondary disabilities as follows: two physical/orthopedic disabilities; one intellectual disability; and one visual impairment.

Of the twenty participants, four indicated that they had or would likely require accommodations in the voting process. Three participants reported requiring physical access accommodations. One of those participants also reported requiring a note-taker as an accommodation while one other participant reported requiring a reader as an accommodation.

Guardianship Status

Five individuals reported having a legal guardian both at the time of the receipt of PAVA case services and at the time of their participation in the Pre-Election Program Evaluation.

PAVA Case Services Previously Provided

The specific PAVA case services previously provided by VP&A staff to the participants were as follows: twelve individuals had been provided assistance with voter registration; five individuals were provided assistance with both voter registration and a request for an absentee ballot; and three participants who identified themselves as previously being registered to vote were provided assistance with a request for an absentee ballot.

C. Procedures

With the assistance of research consultants at the CDCI, a questionnaire was developed for administration by telephone in the three weeks prior to the most recent General Election. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about participant characteristics and their experiences with VP&A voting outreach, voter registration, and voting experiences as well as suggestions for improvement to be used by VP&A in the future.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the principal evaluator gathered demographic and PAVA case service request details from VP&A's secure database regarding potential participants.

The principal evaluator attempted telephone contact with each former client who met the Pre-Election Program Evaluation participant selection criteria. When contact with a potential participant was made the evaluator identified herself as an advocate with Vermont Protection & Advocacy and informed the individual of the purpose of the call. Potential participants were then given the opportunity to hear more details about the questionnaire. The individuals who agreed to hear more were informed of the intended use of the survey information, the confidentiality of any identifying information gathered, the voluntary nature of participation in the evaluation, and additional information in order to make an informed choice about participation in the evaluation. At any time during the call, if an individual chose not to participate they were thanked for their time and encouraged to contact VP&A in the future if they had any questions or concerns about their right to vote. The individuals who provided consent to participate in the evaluation were given the choice of participating at that time or arranging another more convenient time for the evaluator to call back. The principal evaluator administered the questionnaire on the date and time suggested by the participant.²

Each individual who agreed to participate was asked if they had a legal guardian, and if so, whether they wanted the evaluator to talk with the guardian about their participation in the survey and/or their right to vote. No participant in the survey with a legal guardian opted for such communication to be made.

Although administration of the survey was intended to occur by telephone, three participants participated in person rather than by phone. One participant who was hard of hearing accepted the evaluator's offer to meet the individual in person in order to accommodate the participant's disability. While on-site at the residential care home where the participant resided, the principal evaluator provided the same opportunity to two other potential participants who resided at the same care home. All three participants provided informed consent and were administered the survey in the same manner as they would have been if it had been done by telephone.

² A copy of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation Client Contact Info Template may be found in Appendix A; a copy of VP&A's Pre-Election Intro and Consent Page may be found in Appendix B; and a copy of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation Questionnaire may be found in Appendix C.

D. Data Analysis

VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation response data was coded to preserve the confidentiality of participants, entered into an Excel spreadsheet and reviewed by the principal evaluator. A more comprehensive descriptive analysis of the coded data was conducted by consultants at the CDCI using SPSS software with results provided directly to the principal evaluator.

V. RESULTS

A. PAVA Program Evaluation

“Before this call today, were you aware of VP&A's voter outreach work?”

Sixteen participants (80%) reported that they were aware of VP&A's voter outreach work prior to the evaluator's call, three participants (15%) said no, they were not aware of VP&A's voter outreach work, and one participant (5%) was not sure.

“How did you learn about our voter outreach work?”

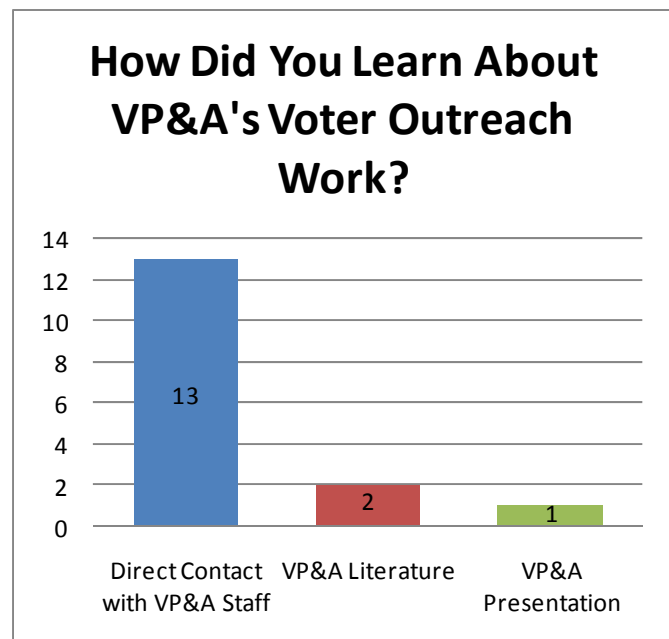
Thirteen of the sixteen participants (81%) who reported that they were previously aware of VP&A's voter outreach work stated they learned about our voter outreach work through direct contact with VP&A staff. Of those thirteen, nine stated that contact occurred at their residential care homes, two while hospitalized on an inpatient psychiatric unit, one while previously incarcerated, and one at a community mental health center.

Two participants (13%) recalled viewing VP&A voting literature that had been previously distributed i.e. a poster, flier, or brochure – one at a residential care home and the other at a conference.

One participant (6%) recalled learning about our voter outreach work during a voter rights presentation provided by VP&A staff.

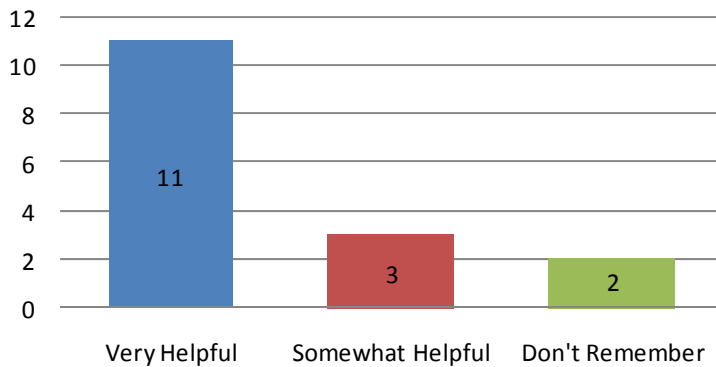
“Has anyone from VP&A ever offered you information about your right to vote?”

Sixteen participants (80%) stated that someone from VP&A had offered them information about their right to vote, including two of the participants who reported not having previously been



aware of VP&A’s voter outreach work. On the other hand, two participants who identified being aware of VP&A’s voter outreach work stated they either were not or did not know if they were provided voters’ rights information by someone from VP&A. Both of these participants were residents of a community care home with one identifying that they had direct contact with VP&A staff and one identifying that they had learned of our voting outreach through the literature we had distributed at the care home.

How Helpful Was VP&A's Voter Rights Information?



“How helpful would you say that information was?”

Eleven of the sixteen participants (69%) who recalled being offered information by VP&A about their right to vote identified that information as “very helpful”, three participants (19%) stated VP&A voting information was “somewhat helpful” and two participants (12%) indicated that they did not remember how helpful the information they received was.

B. Identification of the Voting Experiences of Individuals with Disabilities

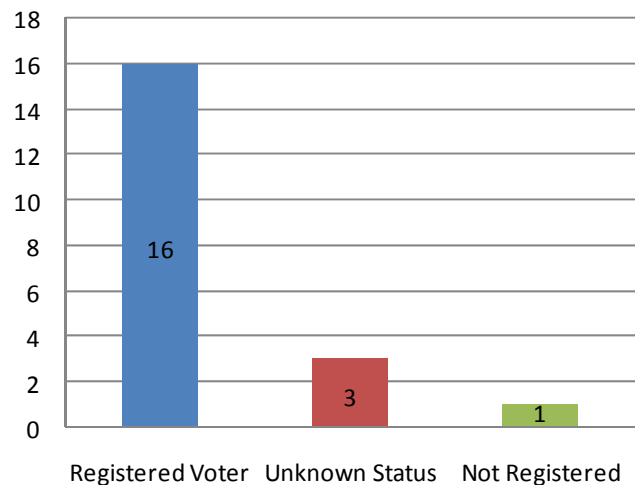
“Are you currently a registered voter?”

Sixteen participants (80%) reported that they were registered to vote, three participants (15%) did not know their voter registration status, and one participant (5%) was not registered (due to a change in residency).

“Has anyone from VP&A assisted you with voter registration?”

Fifteen of the twenty participants (75%) reported that they had previously received voter registration assistance from VP&A. Four participants (20%) stated they had not received voter registration assistance from VP&A. Of those four, two participants were already registered at the time of contact with our staff, one participant stated they registered on their

Voter Registration Status at Time of Evaluation

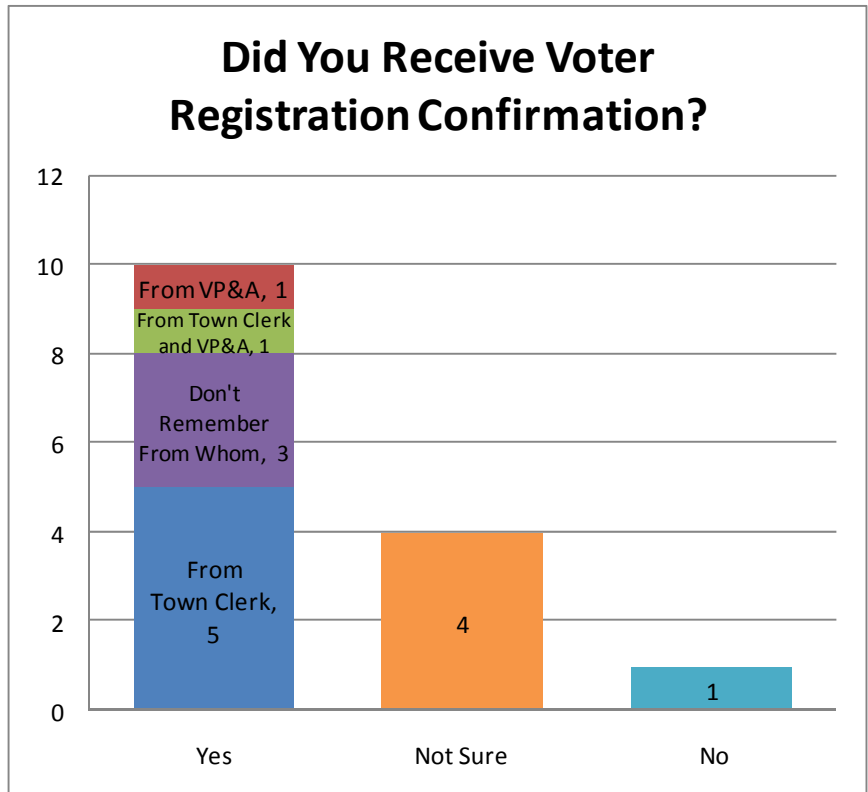


own, and one participant did not recall the reason for not receiving VP&A voter registration assistance. One other participant (5%) stated they were unsure whether they received VP&A voter registration assistance.

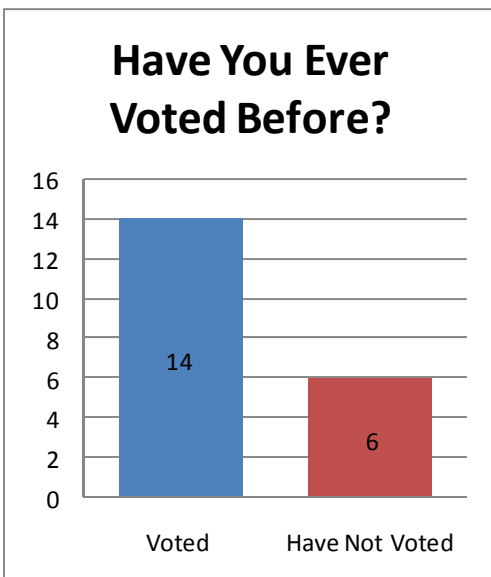
“After VP&A assisted you, did you receive anything in the mail, by phone, or in person informing you that your voter registration application was approved by the town or city you registered in?”

Ten of the fifteen participants (67%) who had received voter registration assistance from VP&A stated they did receive specific confirmation of their status as registered voters: five from their Town Clerk’s Office; three did not remember from whom registration confirmation was received; one received confirmation from VP&A; and one from both VP&A and their Town Clerk’s Office.

Four of the fifteen participants (27%) who had received voter registration assistance from VP&A were not sure whether they received confirmation of their addition to the voter checklist.



One of the fifteen participants (6%) who had received voter registration assistance from VP&A indicated they did not receive voter registration confirmation at all.

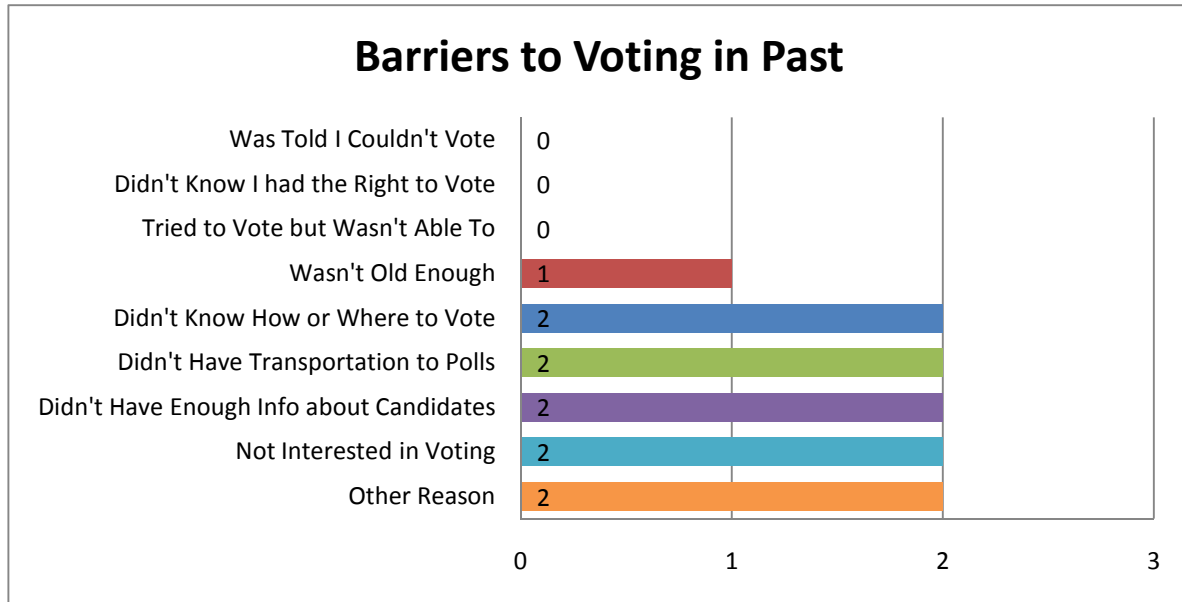


“Have you ever voted before?”

Fourteen participants (70%) reported that they had voted at some time prior to VP&A’s Pre-Election Program Evaluation while six participants (30%) stated they had not.

Participants who indicated that they had never voted before were provided a list of reasons why some people do not vote and asked if any of those reasons applied to them. This inquiry revealed the following

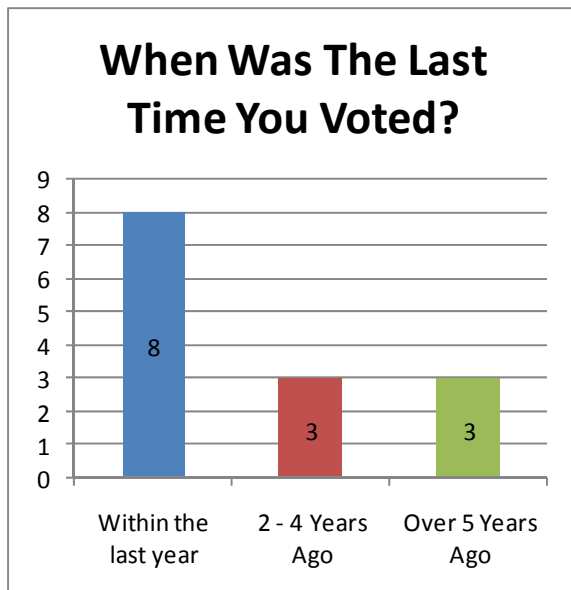
information about potential barriers to the voting process that our clients may have experienced:



Barriers to Voting

Of the six participants who had not previously voted, one individual reported not being offered the opportunity to vote and not knowing how to vote. Due to age the participant was not eligible to vote at the time of prior elections and had no prior voting experience.

Two participants reported not having had adequate transportation to the polls as past barriers to voting. One of those individuals also reported having inaccurate information about where and how to register to vote, inadequate information about the candidates, and not feeling their vote would matter as past barriers to voting. Another participant without transportation reported scheduling as a problem given the location of their place of employment compared to the location of their polling place.



Two participants stated that they were not interested in voting in past elections and another (in addition to the above noted) stated not having adequate information about the candidates running for office was a barrier to voting in the past.

“When was the last time you voted”

Eight of the fourteen participants (57%) who had voted previously reported voting in the year prior to the evaluation, three participants (21.5%) voted at some time two to four years prior to the evaluation, and three (21.5%) had not voted for over five years.

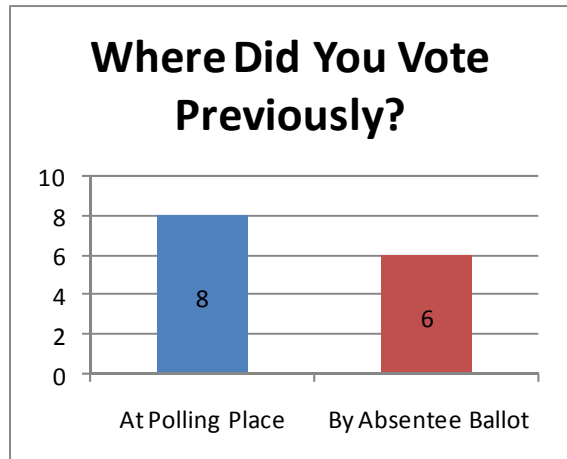
“What are the reasons you have not voted more recently?”

Two of the participants who had not voted for over five years stated they had moved and hadn't re-registered, and one of the two also reported confusion about the need to re-register and where to do that if required to do so.

The third participant who reported not voting in the last five years did not state a reason for not voting (unknown).

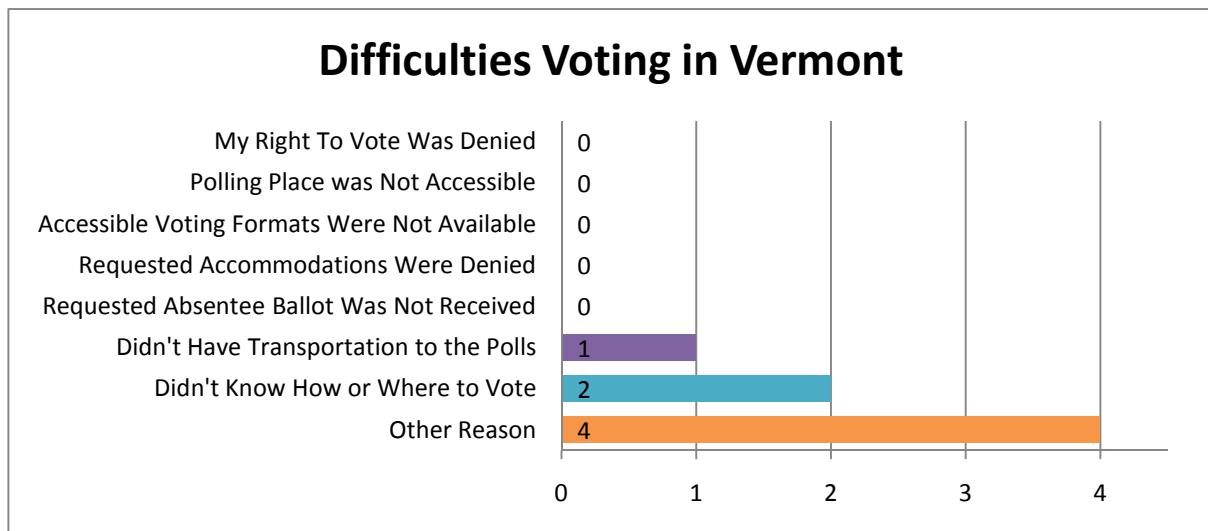
“Did you vote at the polling place, by absentee ballot, or by some other means?”

Eight of the fourteen participants who had voted previously indicated that they had voted in person at the polling place (57%) while six voted by absentee ballot (43%). None of the participants reported voting by any other means.



“Have you ever experienced any difficulties voting in Vermont?”

Four participants (20%) reported no, they had not ever experienced any difficulties because they had never voted in Vermont, nine additional participants (45%) answered no, they had never experienced difficulties voting in Vermont, and seven participants (35%) said that they had experienced difficulties with the voting process in Vermont. The seven participants who indicated that they had experienced difficulties with the voting process in Vermont were provided a list of difficulties some people may experience voting and asked if any of those reasons applied to them. This inquiry revealed the following additional information about barriers to the voting process that our clients may have experienced:



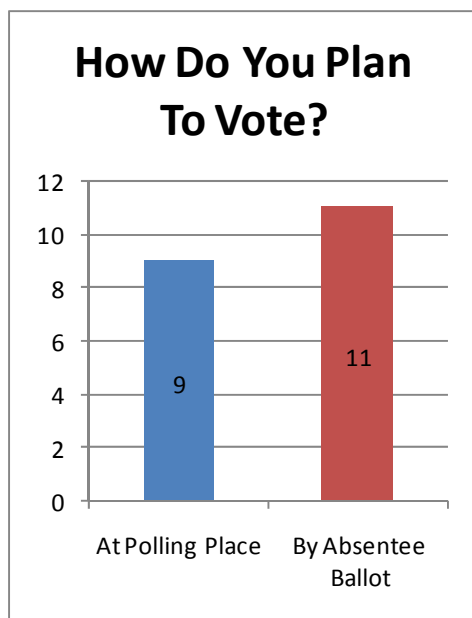
Of the seven participants who experienced difficulties, one reported not knowing how to vote but obtaining assistance from someone else, one participant reported not knowing where to vote, and one participant reported being unable to get transportation to the polls.

The participants who answered “other” with regard to difficulties experienced voting in the past reported the following:

- *assistance was needed to read the ballot due to literacy issues*
- *assistance was needed to complete the ballot due to mobility issues*
- *going to the polls is difficult due to anxiety when around groups of people*
- *feeling that that the voting process is intimidating for those who haven't voted before*

“Do you plan to vote in the upcoming State and Presidential Election which occurs on November 4th, 2008?”

All twenty participants (100%) answered yes, that they planned to vote in the upcoming election.

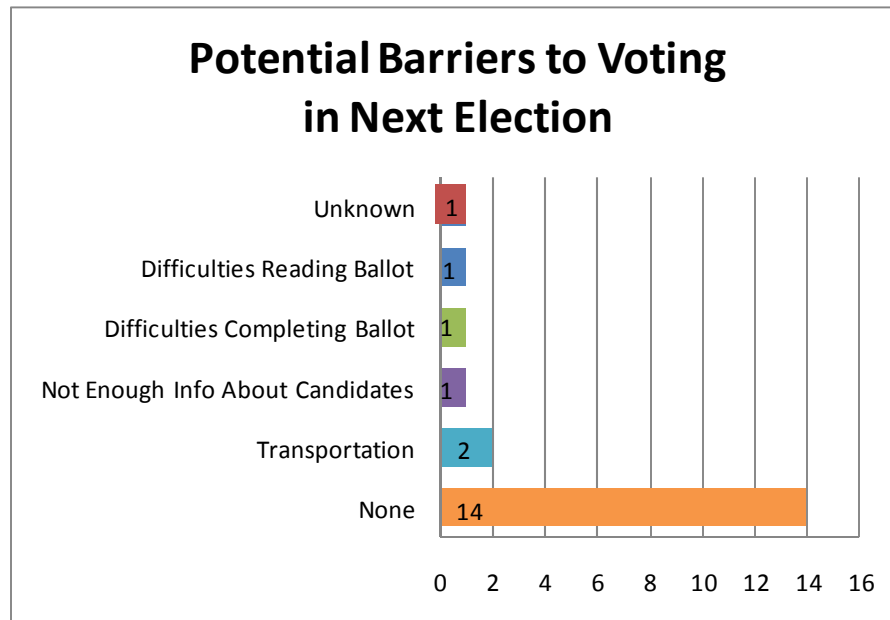


“Do you plan to vote in person at the polling station or by absentee ballot?”

Nine participants reported that they planned to vote in person at the polling place (45%) while the other eleven stated they planned to vote by absentee ballot (55%). Two participants stated they had already voted in the General Election by absentee ballot at the time of contact with the principal evaluator. In addition to the two who had already voted, two others indicated that they had already sent in a request for absentee ballot form to their Town Clerk’s office. Seven participants who reported planning to vote by absentee ballot stated they had not yet requested an absentee ballot and were provided assistance by the principal evaluator to do so.

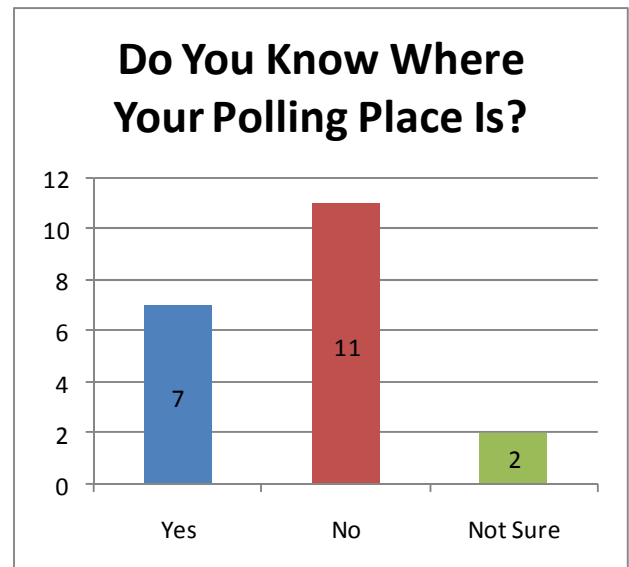
“Do you think you’ll have any problems or face any barriers voting in the next election?”

Fourteen participants (70%) said they did not expect any problems voting in the next election, five participants (25%) answered yes to this question, and one participant (5%) was not sure. Two of the five who responded that they might face barriers to voting in the next election had concerns about transportation. One participant was concerned about potential difficulties reading the ballot because of poor vision and another participant was concerned about difficulties filling out the ballot because of neurological impairments. One other participant stated that not knowing about the candidates could be problematic.



“The location of polling places (where you go to vote) depends on the specific town/city you are registered in. Do you know where in your town/city your polling place is?”

Eleven participants (55%) said no, they did not know the location of their specific polling place, seven participants (35%) said yes, they knew where their polling place is, and two participants (10%) were not sure whether or not they knew the location of their polling place.



“Do you have any questions or concerns about your right to vote?”

All twenty participants (100%) said they did not have any questions or concerns about their right to vote although one participant stated that voting should be made easier for individuals with disabilities.

C. Voting Assistance Provided to Participants

Voter Registration

As noted earlier, one of the twenty participants reported not being a registered voter as a result of a change in primary addresses at the time of participation in VP&A’s Pre-Election Program Evaluation. The participant accepted the principal evaluator’s offer to assist with voter registration at their new address and it was confirmed that the participant was added to the voter checklist prior to the November 4th election.

Additionally, three participants had indicated they were unaware of their voter registration status. Each of the three participants accepted the principal evaluator's offer to determine their voter registration status. Through VP&A's case documentation system and contact with the appropriate Town Clerk's offices, the principal evaluator was able to inform each of the three participants that they were in fact registered to vote. Following this confirmation and the additional voter registration assistance provided to one participant as noted above, all twenty participants (100%) were able to identify themselves as registered voters.

Absentee Ballot Requests

Seven of the participants who stated their intent to vote by absentee ballot in this year's General Election had not yet requested absentee ballots from their Town Clerk's office at the time of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation. All seven accepted the principal evaluator's offer of assistance to make that request in order to receive an absentee ballot for the General Election.

Polling Place Locations

Thirteen participants reported that they either they did not know or were not sure of the location of their polling place. Each of these participants was offered the opportunity for the principal evaluator to provide that information to them. Ten participants accepted that offer and were provided specific polling place location information by the principal evaluator.

Transportation

In an attempt to overcome some of the barriers identified by participants, the principal evaluator confirmed with residential care home staff the availability of transportation to the polls for two participants who had identified that as a concern. Transportation resources, upon request, were also provided to a home provider of a former client who was not able at the time of the evaluator's call to participate in the evaluation but stated a concern about not being able to get to the polls on Election Day. Later the same day the evaluator confirmed with the home care provider that the former client was able to secure a ride to the polls through contact with one of the resources provided.

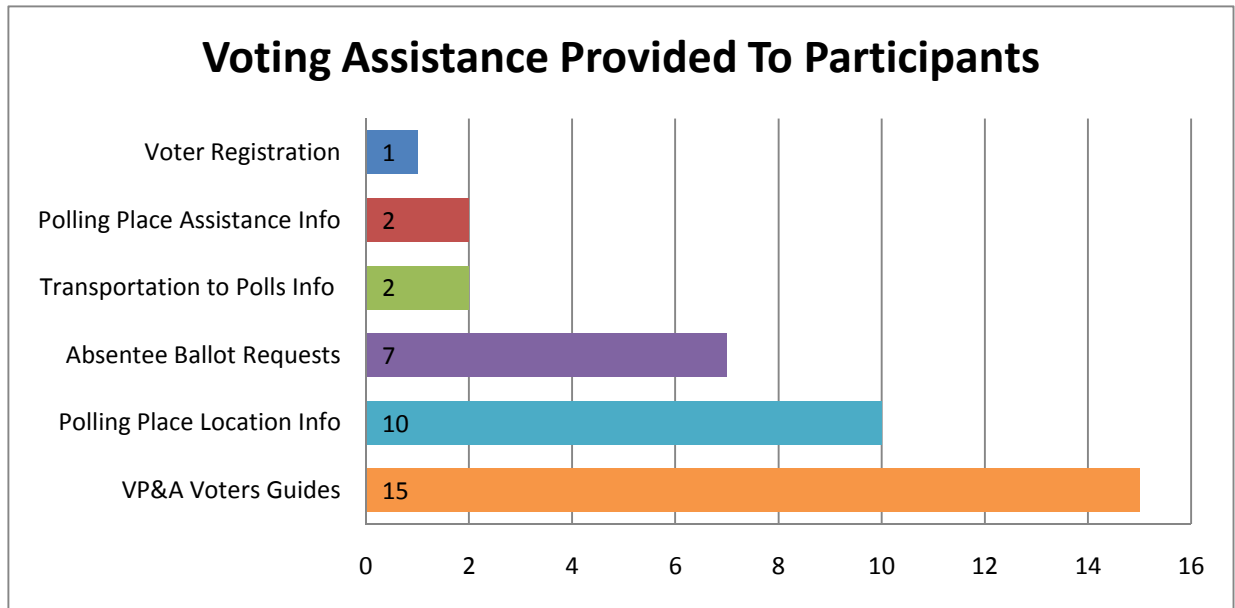
Information about Assistance Available at Polling Places

One participant was concerned about potential difficulties reading the ballot because of poor vision and another participant was concerned about difficulties filling out the ballot because of neurological impairments. The principal evaluator provided information to both of these participants about the recently implemented "Vote by Phone" system as well as the right to have assistance from another person of the voter's choosing to assist with the reading of and filling out ballots.

Voting Information and Education

Three participants identified not knowing how or where to vote as either a barrier to voting in the past or a potential barrier to voting in the future. Similarly, three participants identified not having enough information about the candidates running for office as a barrier to voting in the past or a potential barrier to voting in the future. In an effort to help address these barriers, the principal evaluator offered to send each participant a written, recorded, and/or electronic copy of VP&A's 2008 Voter's Guide for People with Disabilities. As described earlier, this non-partisan

publication contains information about voting rights, voter registration, where to vote, how to vote, candidates running for office, and the structure of our government. Fifteen participants accepted the offer of this information and were sent copies of VP&A's Voter's Guide (thirteen written copies and two written and recorded copies) prior to the November 4th General Election.



VI. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Limitations

Although the results of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation are not amenable to generalizations regarding Vermont's larger disability community due to the very limited sample size, the evaluation itself did yield helpful information that may be used to improve upon our voter outreach and advocacy services as we plan for the continuation of this important work.

One limitation of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation involves the potential effect of response bias. Because the survey was administered by a staff person of an agency who had previously provided participants with voting assistance and because participants may have a need for our agency's services again in the future, there is the possibility that some answers were skewed in a more positive direction based on participants' attempts to answer in the way they thought the evaluator may have wanted them to answer. The principal evaluator did attempt to mitigate such effects in her initial dialogue with potential participants however the possibility of such bias may not fully cease to exist.

There also were obvious limitations regarding use of a telephone survey as the method for data collection in VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation. First, approximately fifty former clients were eliminated from the potential subject pool simply as a result of having no home phone number recorded in our client database. This may be due to incomplete client contact

information gathered by staff during our PAVA case service request intake procedures, or perhaps due to the lack of housing and financial resources that many of our clients experience. Additionally, attempted telephone contact was not successful with sixty potential participants, twenty-seven of whom had either moved or had their phone service disconnected since our original PAVA work with them and thirty-three who were not available by phone at the time the evaluation calls were made. Finally, as noted in the procedures section, telephone contact was difficult for at least one participant given the individual's specific disability.

- **It is recommended that when designing any future program evaluation involving individuals with disabilities, VP&A should consider alternative survey administration methods in order for each potential participant to be given equal opportunity for involvement.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A improve upon our case service request intake procedures through the uniform gathering of accurate client contact information including alternative means of contact as necessary.**

B. VP&A Voter Outreach

Even when factoring in potential response bias, it is encouraging that most of the participants in VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation were aware of our voter outreach efforts. Most participants learned about our outreach through direct contact with VP&A staff, and most recalled having been offered information about their right to vote. Of those participants who remembered being offered information about their right to vote, a majority identified this information as "very helpful", a few stated that it was "somewhat helpful" and no one identified this information as "not helpful."

In addition to the data generated it should be noted that participants, particularly in residential care homes, often commented to the principal evaluator about how grateful they were for our outreach efforts, for making specific visits to their homes, and for providing these valuable services.

Six participants provided specific feedback in response to the following question:

"Do you have any ideas about how VP&A can make our voters' rights information and outreach to individuals with disabilities more helpful?"

- ***Continue to visit residential/therapeutic care homes***
- ***Continue to come speak at agencies***
- ***Distribute our information and fliers to more places***
- ***Advertise [VP&A voting services] in the newspaper***
- ***Provide more explanation [about the voter registration process]***
- ***Send absentee ballot request reminders in the mail***

Based on the results of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation and suggestions for improvement identified by participants:

- **It is recommended that VP&A continue to make voting outreach via direct contact with individuals with disabilities a priority through PAVA specific visits to a wide variety of venues, including residential/therapeutic care homes and community mental health agencies.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A continue to work towards ensuring that the information we provide during voting outreach is in an easy to understand and accessible format.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A continue to publicize, by distribution of our voting rights literature and through advertisements and public service announcements utilizing various media outlets, our ongoing availability to assist individuals with disabilities to become registered voters, to exercise their rights to vote, and to fully and equally participate in the electoral process.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A provide additional follow up with clients who we have provided voting assistance, such as absentee ballot request reminders in the mail.**

C. Voter Registration

An identified success of VP&A's PAVA services is the high number of participants who are registered to vote. Only one of the twenty participants was not actually registered to vote at the time of our Pre-Election Program Evaluation. Upon further inquiry we learned that the specific reason this individual was not registered was a result of a change in residency rather than specific problems with voter registration. As part of the additional services offered during the evaluation, this individual did become a registered voter with VP&A's assistance prior to the November 4th General Election.

With regard to participants being able to identify their voter registration status, VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation results demonstrate that more can be done to ensure that the individuals we assist with voter registration do receive specific confirmation that they have been added to the voter checklist. Although under Vermont election law new voter registration applicants are supposed to receive written confirmation from their Town Clerk's office that they have been added to the Vermont Voter Checklist, VP&A should make it a practice in the future to also send confirmation, either in writing or in some other accessible format, of verified registration status to the clients we assist to become registered voters. This can easily be added to our case closing procedures.

Five participants provided specific feedback in response to the following question:

“What do you think would make registering to vote easier?”

- *provide information about where to register to vote*
- *educate people about how easy it is to register to vote*
- *continue bringing voter registration paperwork to residential care homes*
- *continue bringing voter registration paperwork to local community mental centers*
- *provide confirmation of voter registration by mail or by phone*

Recommendations specific to improving our work relative to voter registration are similar to those surrounding our outreach efforts. Based on the results of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation and suggestions for improvement identified by participants:

- **It is recommended that VP&A provide additional education to our clients about how and where to become a registered voter and that we continue to distribute information about VP&A's availability to assist individuals with disabilities to become registered voters.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A increase voter registration opportunities through direct contact with residents in residential/therapeutic care homes and other community based outreach.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A send confirmation, either in writing or in another accessible format, of verified voter registration status to each client we assist to become a registered voter.**

D. Voting Experiences

Most participants in VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation stated they were interested in voting and all stated they planned to vote in the next election. A majority of participants stated they had voted in the past although data was not collected to identify how many of these individuals had voted at some time prior to the provision of PAVA case services by VP&A. None of the participants cited prior or potential barriers to voting that involved not knowing they had the right to vote, being told they could not vote, being denied accommodations in the voting process, or concerns involving the inaccessibility of polling places.

Barriers to voting that were identified by participants who had not previously voted prior to VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation included: age, transportation, a lack of interest in voting, inadequate information about the candidates running for office, and feeling as if one's vote does not matter.

Barriers to voting that were experienced in the past by participants who had previously voted included: not knowing how to vote, not knowing where to vote, lacking transportation to the polls, reading difficulties, mobility difficulties, anxiety, and feeling intimidated about the voting process.

Barriers to voting that participants identified as potential concerns in the upcoming election included: transportation to the polls, difficulties reading the ballot, difficulties completing the ballot, and inadequate information about the candidates running for office.

The VP&A Pre-Election Program Evaluation identified that a majority of participants were either not sure of or not aware of the location of their polling place. Ten participants accepted the principal evaluator's offer to provide specific polling place location information to them at the time of their participation in the evaluation.

With regard to voting options, slightly more participants who had voted previously did so in person at the polling place, while slightly more stated they planned to vote by absentee ballot in the next election. At least one participant commented to the principal evaluator that they were not aware they had to make a new request for an absentee ballot for each election. As previously noted, one participant suggested that it would be helpful to receive reminder cards in the mail about making absentee ballots requests for upcoming elections.

Based on the results of VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation, data collected regarding the prior voting experiences of participants, and past and potential barriers to voting identified by participants:

- **It is recommended that VP&A make it a practice to better inform individuals about their specific polling place location. Not only should this information be widely distributed during outreach and other educational activities, individualized information about polling place locations should be provided to our PAVA clients as part of our case closing procedures.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A make available specific polling place transportation resource information to individuals with disabilities at every opportunity. While compiling a list of available transportation resource information it is likely gaps may be identified, and if they are we should work collaboratively with other agencies throughout the state of Vermont to ensure that every individual with a disability has the means available to exercise their right to vote in person at their local polling place if they so choose.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A send absentee ballot request form information to PAVA clients who wish to receive that information each election cycle.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A consider the benefits of advocating for statewide systemic change that would allow individuals with disabilities to be placed on a registry for the automatic receipt of absentee ballots each election cycle without having to specifically request one be sent prior to each specific election.**
- **It is recommended that VP&A continue to make available publications such as our 2008 Voter's Guide for People with Disabilities while also embarking on other innovative educational opportunities for voters with disabilities utilizing a variety of media and modes of distribution.**

- **It is recommended that VP&A highlight the assistance voters with disabilities may choose to have at polling places in order to successfully and confidently exercise their right to vote. We should emphasize individuals' right to have assistance and the available options for assistance during all voting outreach contacts, voter education presentations, and voting publications we provide.**

VI. CONCLUSION

Vermont Protection & Advocacy's first ever PAVA Pre-Election Program Evaluation, although limited by sample size, has provided our organization with new insight into the voting outreach services we have provided and the voting experiences of individuals with disabilities directly from people we have previously served. The PAVA Pre-Election Program Evaluation has allowed us to identify important recommendations that will help us improve upon our client service protocols, voting outreach and education efforts, and ultimately the voting experiences of individuals with disabilities in the future.

In addition to the assistance provided by consultants at the University of Vermont's Center for Disability and Community Inclusion, we are tremendously grateful for the valuable input provided by the individuals who participated in the evaluation process. We believe that at the core of program improvement are the voices of those for whom the program is designed. VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation allowed us to hear those voices in an organized, data driven manner, one which we plan to replicate on a much larger scale through a Post-Election Program Evaluation project currently under development.

For more information about VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation, the voting rights of individuals with disabilities, or to request specific voting information, assistance, or a voters' rights presentation by VP&A staff please contact us toll free at 1-800-834-7890 or by TTY at 1-802-229-2603. Please also visit us on the web at www.vtpa.org.

APPENDIX A

VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation Client Contact Info Template

1. Client First Name _____ 2. Client Last Name _____

3. Client Phone Number (a) _____ (b) _____

4. Client Address (street number/P.O. Box) _____

5. Client ID # _____

6. Client Town _____ 7. Client Zip Code _____

8. Client Age _____

9. Client Gender

- a. Male b. Female c. Unknown/Not Reported

10. Client Facility

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Assisted Living Residence | n. NSCF |
| b. Caledonia Community Work Camp | o. NWSCF |
| c. CVH | p. Nursing Home |
| d. CRCF | q. Other _____ |
| e. Dale Correctional Facility | r. Residential Care Home |
| f. FAHC | s. Retreat Healthcare |
| g. Home for the Terminally Ill | t. RRMC |
| h. ICF/MR | u. SESCOF |
| i. Lee Adjustment Center | v. SSCF |
| j. MVRFCF | x. Therapeutic Care Home |
| k. North County Hospital | y. Unknown/Not Reported |
| l. NERCF | z. West Tennessee Detention Center |
| m. None | aa. Windham Center |

11. Client Living Arrangement

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Community Residential Care | h. Prison/Jail |
| b. Foster Care | i. Psychiatric Hospital Unit |
| c. Group Home | j. Private Institution |
| d. Homeless | k. VA Hospital |
| e. Independent Housing | l. Other _____ |
| f. Nursing Home or ICF/MR | m. Unknown/Not Reported |
| g. Parental/Other Family Home | |

12. Does Client have a Guardian?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown/Not Reported

12(a) If yes, G's First Name _____ 12(b) G's Last Name _____

12(c) If Yes, G's Address (street number/P.O. Box) _____

12(d) Guardian's Town _____ (e) Zip Code _____

12(f) Guardian's Phone Number (i) _____ (ii) _____

13. Client Ethnicity

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Alaskan Native | f. Hispanic/Latino | j. Other |
| c. Arab American | g. Multiracial | k. Pacific Islander |
| d. Asian | h. Native American | l. White |
| e. Black | i. Native Hawaiian | m. Unknown/Not Reported |

14. Client Education

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Some High School | d. Some College | g. Some Graduate School |
| b. High School Graduate | e. College Graduate | h. Graduate Degree |
| c. GED | f. Trade School | i. Unknown/Not Reported |

15. Client **Primary** Disability

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Absence of Extremities | m. Epilepsy | y. Other Intellectual |
| b. ADD/ADHD | n. Genitourinary Conditions | z. Other Physical/Orthopedic |
| c. Autism | o. Hard of Hearing/Hearing Impaired | aa. Other _____ |
| d. Auto-Immune (non AIDS) | p. Heart & Other Circulatory | bb. Physical/Orthopedic |
| e. Blindness | q. HIV/AIDS | cc. Respiratory Disorders |
| f. Cancer | r. Learning Disabilities | dd. Skin Conditions |
| g. Cerebral Palsy | s. Mental Illness | ee. Speech Impairments |
| h. Deaf – Blind | t. Mental Retardation | ff. Spina Bifida |
| i. Deafness | u. Muscular Dystrophy | gg. Substance Abuse |
| j. Diabetes | v. Muscular/Skeletal | hh. Tourette Syndrome |
| k. Digestive Disorders | w. Neurological Disorders | jj. Traumatic Brain Injury |
| l. Down Syndrome | x. Other Emotional/Behavioral | kk. Visual Impairment |

16. Client **Secondary** Disability [ll. None/Not Reported]

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Absence of Extremities | m. Epilepsy | y. Other Intellectual |
| b. ADD/ADHD | n. Genitourinary Conditions | z. Other Physical/Orthopedic |
| c. Autism | o. Hard of Hearing/Hearing Impaired | aa. Other _____ |

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| d. Auto-Immune (non AIDS) | p. Heart & Other Circulatory | bb. Physical/Orthopedic |
| e. Blindness | q. HIV/AIDS | cc. Respiratory Disorders |
| f. Cancer | r. Learning Disabilities | dd. Skin Conditions |
| g. Cerebral Palsy | s. Mental Illness | ee. Speech Impairments |
| h. Deaf – Blind | t. Mental Retardation | ff. Spina Bifida |
| i. Deafness | u. Muscular Dystrophy | gg. Substance Abuse |
| j. Diabetes | v. Muscular/Skeletal | hh. Tourette Syndrome |
| k. Digestive Disorders | w. Neurological Disorders | jj. Traumatic Brain Injury |
| l. Down Syndrome | x. Other Emotional/Behavioral | kk. Visual Impairment |

17. Client **Other** Disability [ll. None/Not Reported]

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Absence of Extremities | m. Epilepsy | y. Other Intellectual |
| b. ADD/ADHD | n. Genitourinary Conditions | z. Other Physical/Orthopedic |
| c. Autism | o. Hard of Hearing/Hearing Impaired | aa. Other _____ |
| d. Auto-Immune (non AIDS) | p. Heart & Other Circulatory | bb. Physical/Orthopedic |
| e. Blindness | q. HIV/AIDS | cc. Respiratory Disorders |
| f. Cancer | r. Learning Disabilities | dd. Skin Conditions |
| g. Cerebral Palsy | s. Mental Illness | ee. Speech Impairments |
| h. Deaf – Blind | t. Mental Retardation | ff. Spina Bifida |
| i. Deafness | u. Muscular Dystrophy | gg. Substance Abuse |
| j. Diabetes | v. Muscular/Skeletal | hh. Tourette Syndrome |
| k. Digestive Disorders | w. Neurological Disorders | jj. Traumatic Brain Injury |
| l. Down Syndrome | x. Other Emotional/Behavioral | kk. Visual Impairment |

18. Client Identified Accommodation Needed

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. ASL | f. Large Print | k. Reader |
| b. Audiotape | g. Low Literacy | l. Specific Language Interpreter |
| c. Beeper Sensitivity | h. None/Not Reported | m. Time |
| d. Braille | i. Note Taker | n. TTY |
| e. Environmental Sensitivity | j. Physical Access | o. Unknown |

19. Client Identified **Secondary** Accommodation Needed

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. ASL | f. Large Print | k. Reader |
| b. Audiotape | g. Low Literacy | l. Specific Language Interpreter |
| c. Beeper Sensitivity | h. None/Not Reported | m. Time |
| d. Braille | i. Note Taker | n. TTY |
| e. Environmental Sensitivity | j. Physical Access | o. Unknown |

20. Client Identified **Other** Accommodation Needed

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. ASL | f. Large Print | k. Reader |
| b. Audiotape | g. Low Literacy | l. Specific Language Interpreter |
| c. Beeper Sensitivity | h. None/Not Reported | m. Time |

- d. Braille
- e. Environmental Sensitivity
- i. Note Taker
- j. Physical Access
- n. TTY
- o. Unknown

21. VP&A HAVA Advocate Name

- a. AJ
- b. Andrea
- c. Charlie
- d. Ed
- e. Gail
- f. Ginny
- g. Jocelyn
- h. Linda
- i. Liz
- j. Marsha
- k. Merry
- l. Nick
- m. Tina

22. VP&A HAVA Service Provided (Most Recent)

- a. Abuse/Neglect Investigation
- b. Administrative Remedies
- c. Information & Referral (I&R) _____
- d. Legal Remedies
- e. Negotiation/Mediation
- f. Short-Term Assistance – Voter Registration
- g. Short-Term Assistance – Voter Registration & Request for Absentee Ballot
- h. Short-Term Assistance – Request for Absentee Ballot
- i. Short-Term Assistance – Polling Place Accessibility Issues
- j. Short-Term Assistance – Other Accessibility Issues
- k. Short-Term Assistance – Other _____

23. Case Opening Date _____ 24. Case Closing Date _____

25. Outcome

- a. Determined Not to Have Merit
- b. Not Resolved in Client’s Favor
- c. Resolved in Client’s Favor
- d. Withdrawn/Terminated by Client

26. Did VP&A Register Client to Vote?

- a. Yes
 - [If Yes] i. Did VP&A Confirm Addition to Checklist?
 - aa. Yes, by contact with Town/City Clerk’s Office
 - bb. Yes, by contact with Client
 - cc. Yes, by contact with Town/City Clerk’s Office AND Client
 - dd. Yes, by other means _____
 - ee. No
 - ff. Unknown/Not Reported
- b. No, client was previously registered by VP&A
- c. No, client was previously registered (not by VP&A)
- d. No, other reason _____
- d. Unknown/Not Reported

27. Did Client Vote in the 2006 General Election?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No – Not Registered
- d. Unknown/Not Reported

APPENDIX B

VP&A's Pre-Election Intro and Consent Page

1. Client First Name _____ 2. Client Last Name _____

3. Client Phone Number (a) _____ (b) _____

4. Client ID # _____ [1st msg left on _____ 2nd Msg left on _____]

5. Hello, my name is _____ and I'm an Advocate with Vermont Protection & Advocacy. We are calling everyone we have provided voters rights information to within the past two years to collect information that we hope will improve opportunities for individuals with disabilities exercise their right to vote. We would also like to provide people around the state with information about the upcoming November 4th election and to answer any questions you may have about your right to vote. We have created a telephone survey that will take about xx minutes. [If leaving a message, provide name and number for return call.] May I tell you more about it?

6. a. No

[If No] Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact VP&A in the future if you have any questions or concerns about voting rights. [End]

b. Yes

[If Yes] Great. We will use the information we gather to improve our voting outreach work at Vermont Protection & Advocacy. I'll be using our initials, VP&A, to refer to our agency throughout this survey.

If you choose to participate in our survey, the information we gather may be used in a future VP&A publication, however your name and any other identifying information about you will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of VP&A. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and your choice to participate or not to participate will not affect any future request for services from our agency. There are no anticipated risks for participating and there are no wrong answers. If you do not know the answer to a question or if you are not comfortable answering a question, just let me know and we'll move on to the next question.

Do you agree to participate in VP&A's voter outreach survey?

7. a. No

[If No] Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact VP&A in the future if you have any questions or concerns about voting rights. [End]

b. Yes

[If Yes] Great, thank you. Is now a good time or would you like me to call back at another time?

(i) By Phone Now: Date _____

(ii) By Phone at a Later Date [Arrange Call Back Date _____ Time _____]

APPENDIX C

VP&A's Pre-Election Program Evaluation Questionnaire

[Client Name _____ ID # _____ Survey Date _____]

First, I'd like to start off by asking some general questions about you.

8. Do you have a legal or court-appointed guardian?

a. No

b. Yes

[If Yes] Would you like me to talk with your guardian about your participation in VP&A's voting survey?

i. No

ii. Yes

[If Yes] Great, what is your

aa. Guardian's First Name _____ bb. Last Name _____

cc. Phone Number _____ dd. Phone Number _____

ee. Mailing Address (street/P.O. Box) _____

ff. Town _____ gg. Zip Code _____

9. What is your current living arrangement?

a. Independent Housing

b. Parent's Home

c. Other Family Member's Home

d. Guardian's Home

e. Psychiatric Hospital

f. Other Hospital

i. Prison/Jail

j. Homeless

k. Assisted Living Home

l. Nursing Home

m. Therapeutic/Residential Care Home

n. Other _____

10. Do you have a job (are you currently employed)?

a. No

b. Yes

[If Yes] Do you work:

i. Full Time (35 hours or more/week) or

ii. Part Time (less than 35 hours/week)

[If Yes] aa. What do you do for work? _____

c. Unknown

11. Do you receive Social Security benefits, such as SSI (Supplemental Security Income) or SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)?

a. No

b. Yes

[If Yes] Which one: i. SSI ii. SSDI iii. Other _____

c. Unknown

12. Do you have a valid driver's license?

a. No

b. Yes

c. Unknown

13. Do you, or does someone you live with, own a car?

a. No

b. Yes

c. Yes, but it doesn't work/isn't registered/other

d. Unknown

14. Do you have access to public transportation?

a. No

b. Yes

c. Unknown

Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience with VP&A's voter outreach efforts.

15. Before this call today, were you aware of VP&A's voter outreach work?

a. No

b. Yes

[If Yes] How did you learn about our voter outreach work?

i. VP&A poster/flier/brochure [where?]

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| aa. Residential/Therapeutic care home | hh. Homeless Shelter |
| bb. Assisted Living Residence | ii. Community Mental Health Agency |
| cc. Nursing Home | jj. Other Social Service Agency (specify) _____ |
| dd. Hospital – Psychiatric Unit | _____ |
| ee. Hospital – General | kk. County Fair |
| ff. Hospital – VA | ll. Other (specify) _____ |
| gg. Prison/Jail | mm. Unknown |

ii. VP&A Voter Rights Presentation [where?]

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| aa. Residential/Therapeutic care home | hh. Homeless Shelter |
| bb. Assisted Living Residence | ii. Community Mental Health Agency |
| cc. Nursing Home | jj. Other Social Service Agency (specify) _____ |
| dd. Hospital – Psychiatric Unit | _____ |
| ee. Hospital – General | kk. County Fair |
| ff. Hospital – VA | ll. Other (specify) _____ |
| gg. Prison/Jail | mm. Unknown |

iii. VP&A Advocate/Staff (other than formal presentation, i.e outreach visit) [where?]

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| aa. Residential/Therapeutic care home | hh. Homeless Shelter |
| bb. Assisted Living Residence | ii. Community Mental Health Agency |
| cc. Nursing Home | jj. Other Social Service Agency (specify) _____ |
| dd. Hospital – Psychiatric Unit | _____ |
| ee. Hospital – General | kk. County Fair |
| ff. Hospital – VA | ll. Other (specify) _____ |
| gg. Prison/Jail | mm. Unknown |

iv. Friend

v. Family Member/Guardian

vi. Service Provider (specify) _____

vii. Other (specify) _____

c. Unknown _____

16. Has anyone from VP&A ever offered you information about your right to vote?

a. No

b. Yes

[If Yes] From the following choices, how helpful would you say that information was?
(read this list)

- i. Very Helpful
- ii. Somewhat Helpful
- iii. Not Helpful
- iv. I don't remember
- v. I don't know

c. Unknown

17. Do you have ideas about how VP&A can make our voters' rights information and outreach to individuals with disabilities more helpful?

a. No

b. Yes (specify) _____

c. Unknown

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your voting experiences.

18. Are you currently a registered voter?

a. Yes [If Yes, Skip to #19 on Page 6]

b. No [If No] I'm going to read a list of reasons why some people do not register to vote.
Please tell me if any of these apply to you.

- i. You didn't know that you could register to vote
- ii. Someone told you that you could not register to vote
(who?) _____
- iii. You don't know how or where to register to vote
- iv. You tried to register but your application was denied by the town or city clerk
(specify reason if known) _____
- v. You moved and haven't registered at your new address
- vi. You are not interested in voting
- vii. Some other reason (specify) _____

(18. Con't) Would you like assistance from VP&A to become a registered voter?

aa. No [If No, Skip to #19]

bb. Yes [If Yes, make arrangements to meet with client or to send registration form to client or to person of their choice to assist with completion and submission of form BEFORE OCT. 29!]

Meeting Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

(or) Send form to _____

c. Unknown

[If Unknown] Would you like me to find out whether you are currently a registered voter?

i. No [If No, Skip to #19]

ii. Yes [If Yes, ask for voter address (primary residence – street and town/city)]

Street Address _____

Town/City _____

[Contact appropriate Town City/Clerk office]

aa. Is Client Registered to Vote?

i. No

ii. Yes

[follow up with client to inform of registration status and if not registered, make arrangements to meet with client or to send registration form to client or to person of their choice to assist with completion and submission of form BEFORE OCT. 29!]

Meeting Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

(or) Send form to _____

19. Has anyone from VP&A assisted you with voter registration?

a. Unknown [If Unknown, Skip to #20]

b. No

[If No] is that because (read the list)

- i. You were already a registered voter
- ii. You were not interested in registering to vote
- iii. VP&A did not offer you voter registration assistance
- iv. Other reason (specify) _____
- v. Unknown

c. Yes

[If Yes] After VP&A assisted you, did you receive anything in the mail, by phone, or in person informing you that your voter registration application was approved by the town or city you registered in?

i. No

ii. Yes

[If Yes] Who did you receive that information from?

- aa. Town/City Clerk
 - bb. VP&A
 - cc. Both Town/City Clerk and VP&A
 - dd. Unknown
- iii. Unknown

20. What do you think would make registering to vote easier?

a. _____

b. Nothing

c. Unknown

21. Have you ever voted before?

a. No

[If No] I'm going to read you a list of reasons why some people do not vote. Please tell me if any of these apply to you.

- i. No one ever offered you the opportunity to register to vote
- ii. You didn't know that you have a right to vote
- iii. Someone told you that you could not vote (who?) _____
- iv. You don't know how or where to vote
- v. You tried to vote but you weren't able to (specify) _____
- vi. You didn't have transportation to the polling place
- vii. You are not interested in voting

viii. You didn't have enough information about the candidates running for office to make a decision about who to vote for

ix. Some other reason (specify) _____

{Now skip to #23}

b. Yes

[If Yes] When was the last time you voted?

i. Within the last year

ii. Two to four years ago

iii. More than five years ago

[If more than five years ago] What are the reasons you have not voted more recently? V. _____

[If Yes] Did you vote at (read list):

aa. the polling place

bb. by absentee ballot

cc. other (specify) _____

c. Unknown

22. Have you ever experienced any difficulties voting in Vermont?

a. No [If No, Skip to # 23]

b. No, have never voted in Vermont [If No, Skip to # 23]

c. Yes

[If Yes] I'm going to read you a list of difficulties some people may experience with voting. Please tell me if any of these apply to you.

i. You didn't know how or where to vote

ii. You were unable to get transportation to the polling place

iii. Your right to vote was denied (specify) _____

iv. The polling place was not accessible (specify) _____

v. Accessible voting formats were not available (specify) _____

vi. Requested accommodations were not available/denied (specify) _____

vii. You requested an absentee ballot, but didn't receive it

viii. Other (specify) _____

23. Are you planning to vote in the upcoming State and Presidential Election which occurs on November 4th, 2008?

a. No

[If No] What are the reasons you do not plan to vote in the next election?

[Is this something VP&A can assist with?] i. No ii. Yes

[If Yes, how?] aa. _____

b. Yes

[If Yes] Do you plan to vote (read list)

i. In person at polling station (or)

ii. By absentee ballot

[If by absentee ballot] Have you, or someone else assisting you, sent in a request for an absentee ballot form to your town/city clerk?

aa. No

[If No, would you like me to send you a request for absentee ballot form?]

I. No

II. Yes

bb. [If Yes] What is your current mailing address?

AA. (street #/P.O. Box) _____

BB. Town _____ CC. Zip Code _____

iii. Unknown

[If Yes] Do you think you'll have any problems or face any barriers voting in the next election?

aa. No

bb. Yes (specify) _____

cc. Unknown

c. Unknown

24. The location of polling places (where you go to vote) depends on the specific town/city you are registered in. Do you know where in your town/city your polling place is?

- a. Yes
- b. No

[If No] Would you like VP&A to find out that information for you?

- i. No
- ii. Yes [If Yes] What is the address of your primary residence/where do you live?

aa. Street # _____

bb. Town/City _____

[look up polling place and inform]

- c. Unknown

[If Unknown] Would you like VP&A to find out that information for you?

- i. No
- ii. Yes [If Yes] What is the address of your primary residence/where do you live?

aa. Street # _____

bb. Town/City _____

[look up polling place and inform]

25. Do you have any questions or concerns about your right to vote?

- a. No
- b. Yes [If Yes] What are your questions or concerns? _____

[Is this something VP&A can assist with?] ?] i. No ii. Yes

[If Yes, how?] aa. _____

- c. Unknown

26. VP&A has created a Voter's Guide which contains information about the upcoming election, the candidates running for state office, and voting rights. May we send you a copy of our Voter's Guide?

- a. No
- b. Yes

[If Yes] Would you like to receive it (read list)

- i. in written form
- ii. on audiotape
- iii. both written and on audiotape
- iv. in electronic format (email to _____)

[If i, ii, or iii] what is your current mailing address?

aa. (street number/P.O. Box) _____

bb. Town _____ cc. Zip Code _____

VP&A is planning to conduct another survey after the November 4th election to learn more about people's voting experiences and to help us identify how we can improve our services to ensure that everyone has equal access to voting.

27. May we contact you again after the next election to conduct a follow-up survey?

- a. No
- b. Yes [If Yes] Great. Thank you, I look forward to talking with you again then.
- c. Unknown

Thank you very much for your time assisting us with this survey. Please feel free to contact VP&A at any time with questions about your right to vote or with questions or concerns about the voting process. We can be reached toll-free at 1-800-834-7890. Thanks again!