



## Talking to your Field Instructor about Voter Engagement

### Talking Points and Resources for Students

- As social workers, it is crucial for us to consider how **voting – access to, awareness of, and mobilization for – incorporates themes of social and racial justice and advocacy**. Many of our clients and communities remain among the least represented electorally/politically and will most likely face a wide range of unnecessary barriers as they try to exercise their right to vote, particularly during the pandemic.
- Sometimes agency administrators and social workers are concerned that engaging clients about their access to voting **may be seen as partisan**. Non-profit organizations are not allowed to engage in lobbying activities because it could affect their funding. Regardless of your own political affiliation, it is important to **emphasize that your interest in voter engagement is not about convincing anyone about WHOM to vote for**. This is **NOT** about being partisan, it is about **assisting clients to effectively engage in the voting process**.
- Our new UNC School of Social Work voter empowerment initiative, **Carolina Social Workers Action for Voting (C-SWAV)**, has put together a [webpage of essential resources](#) to be an informed voter and to share with other potential voters. We highly recommend familiarizing yourself with the site and information within.
- Another great website that may assist you in preparing for this conversation with your field instructor: <https://votingissocialwork.org>. You may also want to share this website and the C-SWAV website with your field instructor during supervision.

- An article that you may want to read and share with your field instructor is:

Munn, A., Lewis, B., Okuda, K., Fisher, A., & Sandler, R. (2019). Voting is social work: **What field educators need to know**. *Field Educator*, 9.2 (Fall). [https://votingissocialwork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2468/2020/01/Field-Educator\\_fall\\_2019.pdf](https://votingissocialwork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2468/2020/01/Field-Educator_fall_2019.pdf)

- Some social workers may be concerned that talking with their clients about voting may impact their relationship with the client. This briefing, published by NASW provides strategies for effective client engagement:

Aguilar, C. **The role of clinical social workers on voter engagement**. (2020) <https://votingissocialwork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2468/2020/08/NASW-The-role-of-clinical-social-workers-on-voter-engagement-efforts-2020-Aguilar-C.-1.pdf>

- After you talk with your field instructor about WHY you want to include voter engagement in your learning activities for this year, **give them some ideas about HOW** you would like to do this. Ask them **what the next steps are** and **how they can support you**. Here are some ideas:

- ✓ Add a **question about voter registration** to the client intake form
  - ✓ **Provide other social workers in the agency with information** to give to their clients about voter registration and absentee ballots
  - ✓ Help social workers in your agency know about **NC Voter Engagement Training**; this is available through [You can Vote](#) and [Democracy NC](#).
  - ✓ If you are working in person, **host a registration drive** in the lobby of your building. If you are working remotely, brainstorm with your field instructor strategies that you could use to talk with clients about voting.
  - ✓ Talk with the agency about including **voting resources on the agency website**.
  - ✓ **Email staff and clients** about upcoming voter registration and absentee ballot deadlines.
  - ✓ **Assist clients in applying** for absentee ballots.
  - ✓ **Help clients and staff find information** on candidates
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- If you still are unsure about talking with your field instructor about how to include voter engagement activities in your learning agreement, reach out to your assigned field faculty member. Soon, you will be having meetings with your field instructor and field faculty member about your learning agreement and this will be a great time to bring this up.
  
  - Questions? Contact the Assistant Dean of Field Education at [brigham@email.unc.edu](mailto:brigham@email.unc.edu). You may also feel free to direct specific questions about voting to the C-SWAV Research Assistant, Averyl Edwards, at [edwardaj@live.unc.edu](mailto:edwardaj@live.unc.edu).