HIGH SCHOOL DEPUTY REGISTRAR FAQS

1) Are high school principals required to distribute voter registration applications to eligible students?

Yes. As noted in our letter, Section 13.046 of the Texas Election Code requires high school principals, or their designees, to distribute voter registration applications to eligible students at least twice per year.

2) When should I do this?

The voter registration deadline for the November 3, 2026 Uniform Election Date in Texas is Monday, October 5, 2026. Because of the importance of the upcoming elections and the urgency of the registration deadline, we encourage you to institute a program to distribute voter registration applications to anyone who turned 18 or who is at least 17 years and 10 months old when the semester starts.

3) Why does the rule say to do this project at the end of each semester, but the letter asks us to do it at the beginning?

The law requires you to distribute voter registration applications at least twice a year. Our office established the rule that it must be done at the end of the semester (i.e., within the last 30 days) in order to maximize the number of students who are offered the opportunity to register to vote, as seniors tend to turn 18 during their senior year. However, there is nothing in the law preventing you from exceeding the minimum requirements. As noted above, because of the importance of the upcoming elections and the urgency of the registration deadline, we encourage you to institute a program to register anyone who turned 18 or who is at least 17 years and 10 months old when the semester starts. You can also institute a program to deliver a voter registration application to each student on or near their 18th birthday. Again, there is no legal limit on the number of times you may distribute voter registration applications to individuals at your school.

4) Do I have to do this myself?

No. You can designate one person in writing to act on your behalf in registering eligible voters at your school. There is no particular form that the writing needs to take. You are required to provide the designated person with a form or a card that identifies the designated representative as the high school deputy registrar. You might wish to accomplish this by sending an e-mail or an intraoffice memorandum to the person indicating that you are designating them to act on your behalf to be the deputy registrar for your school; the person can then use that e-mail or memorandum as the “form” or “card” the person needs to be identified as the high school deputy registrar.

You may remove this person at any time from this position, with or without cause. If the person is not performing his or her duties, you must relieve the person of the role of high school deputy registrar. If you remove the person, you must put the removal in writing and clearly state the grounds for removal, and provide the person you are removing with the written notice. This can also be done via e-mail or intraoffice memorandum, for example. The removed person must return their voter registration materials to you, or otherwise account for the materials. You shall then resume the role of high school deputy registrar until you designate a new person to act on your behalf.

If the designated individual is transferred or terminated from employment, the designated individual must also return the voter registration materials to you.

5) Who else can register students?

While high school principals or their designees must distribute voter registration applications to eligible students at least twice per year, other members of the school community who are citizens, over the age of 18 and meet other criteria are also eligible to distribute applications. These eligible "Volunteer Deputy Registrars" must be deputized through the county voter registrar's office before they can collect completed applications. Teachers, members of the PTA, grassroots groups, and student organizations, and others may become deputized provided they meet the other criteria under the law to be appointed as a Volunteer Deputy Registrar.

Only high school principals (or their designees) and those deputized as a Volunteer Deputy Registrars can collect completed voter registration applications. It is a crime for others to do so.

You can learn more about the Volunteer Deputy Registrar rules and procedures at https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/laws/volunteer-deputy-registrars.shtml.

6) Do I have to order the blank voter registration applications from the Secretary of State's office?

No, but you are strongly encouraged to do so. If you order applications from the Secretary of State's office, the applications that we send you have a code on them indicating that they come from the high school deputy registrar program. It is important for tracking purposes that you use the coded applications if you can. However, your key role is to make sure that students and other persons at the school have the opportunity to register to vote. Thus, providing blank applications from your county election office or referring applicants to our office's website to print applications (after the applicant fills in the electronic fields), and you collecting and delivering the applications to the county voter registrar/elections administrator (or the applicant delivering it directly to the county voter registrar/elections administrator), will also work for the purpose of registering people in your school. If you can write on the completed applications "H.S. 18" before turning them into the voter registrar, this will also aid with the tracking. You must provide the "Notice to High School Students or Employees Registering to Vote" to any voters to whom you provide either the specially coded applications, the county applications, or the reference to our office's online form, however.

You can use the order form sent with this email or you can order the coded voter registration applications online at this site: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/hsvoterregistrationorderform

7) Who is eligible to register to vote/from whom should I accept applications?

Any student who is at least 17 years and 10 months old may register to vote. Anyone at your school over the age of 18 may also register to vote or use the application to update their voter registration information, including their name or address.

8) Can I help a student or an employee fill out an application?

Yes, a student or employee may ask you for help in filling out an application. If an applicant cannot sign the application due to physical disability or illiteracy, another person may witness the applicant's mark. The witness needs to include an address, printed name, and signature on the application. If an applicant is physically unable to make a mark, the witness must state this fact on the application.

9) Should I review the applications to make sure they're complete?

Yes, you must review the applications for completeness. You may do this in or out of the applicant's presence. If the application is missing required information and/or the required signature, you must return it to the applicant for completion and resubmission.

10) What do I do with the completed applications?

The completed applications need to be delivered to your county voter registrar/elections administrator promptly, and as soon as possible when you receive them. This can be done in person or by mail. They must arrive at the county voter registrar's office no later than 5:00 p.m. of the fifth day after they are submitted to you or your designee, unless the application was submitted after the 34th day and on or before the 30th day before the date of an election. In this case, they must be delivered no later than 5 p.m. of the next regular business day after the registration deadline.

For example, for purposes of the November 3, 2026 General Election, any applications submitted to you between September 30, 2026 and October 5, 2026 (the voter registration deadline for the November 3, 2026 election) must be delivered to your county voter registrar no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 6, 2026.

You may deliver the completed applications to the voter registrar in person or by mail. The completed applications can be sent individually or in a package of several applications. For instance, one principal we spoke with collects them in a bin on his desk. The ones received each day are packaged and mailed that same day or the next day to the local voter registrar. Students and teachers can also drop them in the mail themselves, but that is not the preferred delivery method. Those mailed directly by the applicant come to our office in Austin where we open and sort them and then send them to the county. This extra step in getting the application to the county may delay the voter in becoming registered.

11) What if my school serves more than one county?

You are required to serve as a deputy voter registrar for each county in which territory served by the school is located, without regard to where the school is physically located. You must deliver completed applications to the voter registrar of the county in which the applicant resides.

12) What happens if I am transferred or terminated from employment?

You must deliver the voter registration materials to the new principal or newly designated representative.

13) What if I have a question?

We are here to help. We want to partner with you in performing this important service for your school community. You can call us at (800) 252-VOTE, email us at elections@sos.texas.gov, or simply go to www.votetexas.gov for answers.