Quick Start Guide

# Ballot Reconciliation: Mailed Ballots

About the Quick Start Guides: The EAC's Quick Start Guides are intended to familiarize local election officials with various topics they will likely encounter in election administration. The guides are a starting point to identify areas of concern and give officials a broad idea of factors they should consider in approaching a given topic.

What is ballot reconciliation?

Ballot reconciliation is the method in which election officials keep track of each ballot that has been printed or issued to a voter. Tracking the number of ballots printed, used, and unused during an election cycle ensures that election officials have accounted for every ballot created. When results are certified, election officials can be confident that the results include every valid ballot cast. This guide's suggestions focus mainly on reconciling mailed ballots.
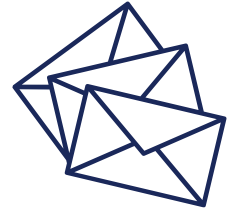
Application Forms

In most states, mail voting usually begins with an application form completed by the voter.

- Each application form should be date stamped upon receipt
- Voter's eligibility should be verified and documented
- Mailed ballots should be reconciled with the number of applications received on a daily basis, prior to mailing

Ballot Mailing

Election officials must track both the numbers of labels or envelopes printed and voter records updated as having been sent ballots each day, and the numbers must match. Each day staff print labels or envelopes, a master listing of voter names should be printed and balanced to the number of:

- Labels or envelopes printed
- Printed ballot inventory and/or ballot stock
- Ballots inserted
- Ballots delivered to the post office
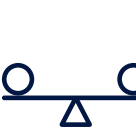- UOCAVA or remote ballot delivery

> If outgoing mail ballot preparations are to be done off-site at a mailing house, elections office staff supervision or prior facility inspection is recommended.

Ballot Return

Ballot reconciliation will vary, depending on the method of return. Daily, elections office staff count and log the number of:

- Ballots returned via the post office
- Ballots received over the counter
- Ballots received from drop box locations, if applicable
- Ballots forwarded to other counties
- Ballots returned undeliverable

Election officials should maintain logs for processing the ballots through each step. All statistical information must be maintained for each batch of ballots processed, including:

- Number of ballots received
- Number of ballots verified
- Number of ballots reissued
- Number of ballots counted
- Name, team number, or persons involved
- Date and time processed
- Number of challenged ballots
- Number of write-ins and duplicated ballots
- Number of envelopes that do not contain a ballot
- Number of envelopes containing more than one ballot

Ballot Storage

All ballots and empty ballot envelopes should be boxed and sealed in tamper-evident containers. All other records — ballot return logs, duplicate logs, scanner logs, etc. — should be stored according to federal and state retention rules. All challenged and mailed ballots that are not eligible to be counted should be stored separately.