

ACCESSIBILITY

Summary

Accessible polling places that ensure privacy and independence for all voters casting a ballot not only benefit elderly voters and voters with disabilities but act as a key to developing and maintaining public trust in the accessibility and transparency of the elections process for all participants. Municipalities must use polling places that are fully accessible, which includes having at least one accessible voting equipment component. Municipal clerks are required to make reasonable efforts to comply with requests for voting accommodations made by individuals with disabilities.

Polling Place Accessibility

In order to comply with this requirement, municipal clerks are required to submit a completed *Polling Place Accessibility Survey* indicating accessibility conformance. A copy of this survey is available on the agency website where it may be submitted electronically.

1. A **separate** Accessibility Survey must be completed for **every** polling place within a municipality.
2. This survey must be submitted every time there is a polling location change or addition.
3. If it is determined that a polling place is inaccessible, the municipal clerk and the governing body must determine how to make the polling place accessible, or find a new location.
4. Polling place accessibility should be reviewed periodically.

The State Elections Board also offers a number of suggestions that will make the voting process easier and ensure privacy for elderly people and people with disabilities. These include:

1. Making sure the polling area has adequate lighting.
2. Providing magnifying devices and signature guides.

3. Having at least one pad of paper and a pen to communicate with individuals who are hard of hearing.
4. Making seating available for elderly and disabled voters waiting in line.
5. Having signs and arrows directing voters where to check-in, register, vote a ballot, and cast a ballot.

Accessible Voting Equipment

All polling places must be equipped with at least one accessible voting component to permit all voters to vote privately and independently. This accessible component, a device approved by the State Elections Board to provide independence and privacy to voters with disabilities, must be available for all elections. Refer to the Voting Equipment section on page 71 of this manual for more information or visit the agency website.

Procedures

1. Municipal clerks must ensure that accessible components are available to all electors to cast their ballots including:
 - a. Ensuring accessible components are located in an accessible voting booth with sufficient privacy.
 - b. Ensuring the accessible components are turned on and working.
2. Municipal clerks should ensure that election inspectors are familiar with accessible equipment and able to perform basic tasks including:
 - a. Explain to an elector how to use the equipment to cast his or her ballot.
 - b. Turn on and restart the accessible equipment (if applicable).
 - c. Change the paper roll if necessary (if applicable).

Training Election Inspectors - Accessibility

Election inspectors should be instructed on how to ensure the greatest level of accessibility on Election Day.

1. Municipal clerks should review polling place set-up requirements with election inspectors.
2. Municipal clerks should ensure that election inspectors are knowledgeable about how to use all voting equipment including accessible equipment.
3. Inspectors should be encouraged to view the State Elections Board video: *Access to Voting: Access to Democracy* on how to provide an accessible voting experience. The video is available on the agency website.
4. Municipal clerks are encouraged to reach out to the disability community to recruit election inspectors. If you need help in locating people with disabilities who may be interested in serving as an election inspector, contact the State Elections Board.
5. Municipal clerks should review the *Common Sense and Common Courtesy Checklist* with inspectors prior to Election Day. A copy of this checklist is available on the page following this section.
6. Disability Rights Wisconsin, an advocacy group for individuals with disabilities, has prepared an *Election Day Accessibility Checklist* for election inspectors. This checklist is available on the agency website.

Accessibility Contacts & Additional Resources

If you do not know exactly how to solve an issue and would like advice on affordable solutions, you may contact the Coalition of Independent Living Centers or the State Elections Board for advice. More information on accessibility can be obtained from The Access Board's American's with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guideline (ADAAG) manual, which is available at

<http://www.access-board.gov/index.htm>.

State Elections Board
P.O. Box 2973
Madison, WI 53701-2973
(608) 266-8005
seb@wisconsin.gov
<http://elections.wi.gov>

Coalition of Independent Living Centers
(608) 819-1300 (voice./TTY)

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW)
(608) 267-0214 or (888) 758-6049 (TTY)

ADA Checklist for Polling Places
<http://www.ada.gov/votingck.htm>

List of Related Forms and Publications

All forms and publications are available on the agency website or can be ordered from the State Elections Board.

Forms

Polling Place Accessibility Survey

Other Publications

Access to Voting: Access to Democracy (video)

Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guideline (ADAAG)

(<http://www.access-board.gov/index.htm>)

Common Sense and Common Courtesy Checklist

Election Day Accessibility Checklist



COMMON SENSE AND COMMON COURTESY

Many election inspectors have had little interaction with people with disabilities; here are a few courtesies and guidelines:

- ❖ State and federal law permits voters with disabilities to be accompanied and to receive assistance by another person in the voting booth.
- ❖ Remember that all voters deserve courteous attention in exercising their right as citizens to vote.
- ❖ Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability or an elderly person to get things done.
- ❖ Give unhurried attention to a person who has difficulty speaking.
- ❖ Speak directly to the person who has a disability rather than just to a companion who may be accompanying him or her.
- ❖ Speak calmly, slowly, and directly to a person who is hard of hearing. Your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements help in understanding. Don't shout or speak in the person's ear. If full understanding is doubtful, try writing a note to the person.
- ❖ Pre-printed signs or a notepad should be available to assist communication with deaf or hard-of-hearing electors.
- ❖ Before pushing someone in a wheelchair, ask if you may do so and how you should proceed.
- ❖ Greet a person who is visually impaired by letting the person know who and where you are.
- ❖ Provide a guiding device such as a ruler or a signature guide for signing forms.
- ❖ When offering walking assistance, allow the person to take your arm and tell him or her if you are approaching steps or inclines or are turning right or left.
- ❖ Animals that assist people with disabilities must be admitted into all buildings. Such animals are highly trained and need no special care other than that provided by the owner.

