

Polling Place Accessibility — Ensuring Effective Interaction

- Doors, entrances and exits used to enter or to leave the polling place must have a minimum width of 32 inches.
- Any curb next to the main entrance to the polling place must have curb-cuts.
- The polling place may not have any barriers, such as gravel, automatically closing gates, closed doors without lever-type handles, or any other barrier that impedes the path of persons with physical disabilities as they travel to the voting station.
- Accessible parking spaces must have room for the vehicle and an additional space that serves as an access aisle — at least 8 feet for an accessible van.

Accessibility Solutions

- Keep poll entrance doors unlocked and/or open during voting hours.
- Keep a few chairs handy for those needing a place to sit.
- Make sure there is adequate space for those in wheelchairs to maneuver in/out and while voting.
- Let all poll workers and voters know the proper procedure for handling curbside voting in advance of Election Day.
- Mark accessible passages and entrances with easy to read, large print signs.

Effective Interaction with Voters with Disabilities

- Voters with mental disabilities should be assumed to be competent to vote. Individuals accompanying these voters should be permitted to assist them.
- Voters who are visually impaired should be given the opportunity to vote independently. Ask if they need assistance. If they need assistance getting to the voting machine, gently guide them by the elbow to the voting station.
- It is okay to offer assistance, but be respectful if the offer is declined. If the offer is accepted, listen and/or ask for instructions on how best to assist the individual.

Disability Etiquette — Questions Answered

- If you cannot understand a person with a speech disability, don't be afraid to ask them to repeat — even three or four times.
- When meeting someone who cannot shake your hand, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to acknowledge their presence.
- If an interpreter is present, speak to the person, not the interpreter.
- Avoid euphemisms (e.g., physically challenged, differently abled).
- Do not hang or lean on someone's wheelchair.
- To facilitate conversation, utilize a chair when speaking to someone in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes.
- When communication with someone who has a hearing impairment, do not exaggerate lip movement.
- Never pretend to understand someone if you have difficulty in doing so. Ask questions that require short answers.
- Do not distract a person's guide dog or work animal from its job without the owner's permission.

For help, call Disability Rights Texas' Voting Hotline at 1-888-796-VOTE (8683).