U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

6 Tips for Making Voting Accessible

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission has collaborated with local election officials to develop a series of helpful tips for election management. This series provides ideas and suggests best practices to help you run efficient and effective elections.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Help America Vote Act (HAVA) require that all Americans have the same opportunity to participate in the voting process, privately and independently. These tips and examples can help you make voting accessible to everyone in your jurisdiction.

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1 Know the challenge

A disability is a condition (such as an illness or an injury) that damages or limits a person's physical or mental abilities.

Many disabilities are visible, but many others are not.

- From 1998 to 2008, the number of elderly voters doubled.

- 37.6 million adults have trouble hearing. 20.6 million have trouble seeing. 17.2 million have trouble walking. 75.4 million have trouble with at least one basic action.

On a given day in 2012, 273,200 people were enrolled in adult day services centers, 1,383,700 lived in nursing homes, and 713,300 lived in residential care communities.

QUICK CLICK

U.S. Department of Justice on disability rights:
http://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.htm

REMEMBER

Voters with disabilities use smart phones. Develop a communication plan that incorporates online and mobile outreach.

2 Improve outreach

Make sure outreach activities reach all voters, including those with disabilities.

Form a committee of full-time and part-time staff and poll workers. Identify the various types of disabilities. Develop solutions for voters with different types of disabilities. Review every step in the voting process. Critique your current practices.

- Partner with local organizations that serve people with disabilities. Get their help distributing material and collecting feedback.

- Establish a task force of election officials throughout your State. Develop a statewide outreach program to voters with disabilities. Share the program with the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

- Register voters and provide election day services at assisted-living and long-term care facilities.

- Post YouTube videos, including in American Sign Language, on how to cast a ballot and use voting equipment. Use Facebook and Twitter to promote your site. Link to online voter registration, the sample ballot, and accessible polling locations.

- On your Web site, tell voters how to request election material in alternative formats, and ask voters with disabilities to notify your office about their election day needs.

- Use plain language in all outreach materials.

Tip 2 continued

Quick Clicks

Accessibility outreach best practices:

www.plainlanguage.gov

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2014PPP/Kitsap_Co,_WA_-_Kitsap_Co_Accessible_Voting.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2014PPP/Cuyahoga_Co_OH_-_Community_Partnership.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2013PPP/Indian%20River%20Co.%20Ride%20and%20Register.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2015PPP/San_Berdino_Co_CA_MEGateway.pdf

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VM24m2n6gw8

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2013PPP/Los%20Angeles%20Co.%20Mobile%20Outreach.pdf

http://www.stlelections.com/?page_id=1515

http://civicdesigning.org/fieldguides/

3 Have an accessibility strategy

Make accessibility a key component of your office's strategy for managing the voting process.

- The voting process begins with the design of the ballot. Use common, easy-to-understand words. Avoid technical or specialized language. State law may govern the type and size of fonts and mandated voter instructions.

- Strategically locate early voting and vote center locations to be easily accessible to public transportation. If possible, use the same locations on election day.

- Ask area organizations that serve people with disabilities to identify accessible buildings or conduct accessibility surveys of possible polling locations.

- Give poll workers a diagram of the interior and exterior setup requirements for each polling place. Include placement of signage required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Post interior and exterior accessible voting diagrams on your office's site.

- Post YouTube videos on how to vote on accessible voting equipment. Require poll workers to view the videos so they can assist voters on election day.

- Post information at the entrance to each polling place that informs voters with disabilities about their right to vote independently and in private. Encourage voters with disabilities to ask for assistance if needed.

- Train greeters at the entrance to each polling place to provide assistance to voters with disabilities.

- Include specialized training on accessibility needs as a part of the Supervisor training program.

- Make sure chairs are available at each polling place for voters who are unable to stand for long periods of time.

REMEMBER

In many States, election laws allow a voter with a disability to request a family member or friend to assist them while voting. Many States also stipulate that two poll workers, of opposite party affiliation, may provide assistance, upon request.

- Use visual aids. They are easier to understand than posters filled with written instructions.

- Invest in technology to track lines at voting locations. Use smart phone applications to inform voters with disabilities of peak voting time periods.

REMEMBER

Voters with hearing and visual disabilities often use a smart phone to read the ballot via a sign language or screen reader application.

Quick Clicks

Accessibility strategy best practices:

http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/Page/EAC_Effective_Election_Design.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2015PPP/Franklin_Co_OH-ADA_survey.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2012%20PPP/Wisconsin%20State%20Re-Booting%20Accessibility%20Compliance.pdf

http://www.ada.gov/votingck.htm

http://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/voting_solutions_ta/polling_place_solutions.htm

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djWy_xGbo8Q

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2015PPP/Fairfax_County_VA-Braille_Voting_Instructions.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2009%20Papers/Forsyth%20County%20GA-Early%20Voting%20Wait%20Time%20Dashboard.pdf

http://www.votetravis.com/lookup/display.do

4 Recruit and train poll workers with disabilities

The election day poll worker team should reflect the community it serves, including its accessibility needs.

- Understand the disabilities of your poll workers and deploy tools to make their work environment accessible on election day.

- Reach out to high school and college students to build a diverse team of workers on election day.

- Recruit poll workers from local groups that serve people with disabilities. Incorporate You-Tube videos.

- Recruit poll workers with specific language skills from area residential neighborhood meetings.

> **REMEMBER**
>
> Poll workers also have accessibility needs. Get their feedback on how to make the voting process more accessible.

- Consider providing inexpensive assistive listening devices for poll workers who need them.

- Make training manuals easy to follow. Incorporate visual aids and checklists.

- Emphasize accessibility features during hands-on training on all voting equipment and electronic poll books.

- Incorporate scripted voter scenarios in training sessions. Include several accessibility scenarios. Encourage poll workers to practice providing assistance as they would on election day.

- Develop a training module devoted to accessibility. Include setting up the polling place, managing lines, providing assistance to voters, using ballot marking devices, and setting up and using the voting equipment accessibility features.

- Print a reminder card for poll workers about accessibility. Encourage poll workers to use it on election day.

Quick Clicks

How to be a poll worker video: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=tJrSEnNw7J4

Suggested practices to improve the accessible voting experience: http://pacast.com/players/ cmsplayer.asp?video_ filename=8747_State_ ElectionDisability.m4v

http://www.electioncenter.org/ publications/2015PPP/Franklin_Co_ OH_Practice_Makes_Perfect.pdf

https://www.supportthevoter.gov/ files/2013/12/Paraquad_Ten-Tips- to-Improve-Accessible-Voting.pdf

Sample election day picture guide for poll workers: https://www.supportthevoter.gov/ files/2013/12/Election-Day-Picture- Guide-sample.pdf

5 Use technology

Stay informed about innovations that provide better accessibility to voters with disabilities.

- Have your information technology department and Web site developers test to verify that your Web site is accessible.

> **REMEMBER**
>
> Include a phone number and e-mail address under "Contact Information" on your Web site.

- Seek an outside review to ensure your Web site meets accessibility laws and requirements. Common problem areas are screen reader access, semantic organization, skip navigation, keyboard access, contrast, text sizing and scaling, and tab order.

- Ask local organizations that serve people with disabilities to review your Web site's usability and accessibility features.

- Research how handheld mobile devices provide accessibility for voters with disabilities.

Quick Clicks:

Trends in online voter registration:

http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/ research-and-analysis/issue- briefs/2015/05/online-voter- registration

Accessible Web site guidelines:

http://trace.wisc.edu/world/web/

Creating accessible Web sites:

https://www.forsmarshgroup. com/featured/usability/ user%20experience/voting/ evaluation/2015/08/14/Making- Websites-Work-For-All-Usability- and-Accessibility/

6 Look to the future

Keep current on new solutions for making the voting process more accessible for voters.

- Use handheld and mobile technology to invent new ways to connect with and serve the community of voters with disabilities.

- Through collaboration between the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Center for Civic Design, experts have developed a roadmap for improving the usability and accessibility of the next generation of elections.

- The Center for Civic Design has designed a digital ballot for people with low literacy and mild cognitive disabilities.

- Funding through the U.S. Election Assistance Commission Accessibility Grant program has provided more than 45 research and development voting solutions.

Quick clicks

Exciting recent voting innovations:

http://civicdesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Roadmap-V2-15-0715.pdf

http://civicdesigning.org/featured-story/making-voting-accessible-designing-digital-ballot-marking-for-people-with-low-literacy-and-mild-cognitive-disabilities/

http://www.eac.gov/payments_and_grants/accessible_voting_technology_initiative.aspx

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2015PPP/Denver_CO-eSign.pdf

http://www.electioncenter.org/publications/2013PPP/Denver%20Co.%20%20iAPP%20Accessibility.pdf