

**Texans** with  
**Disabilities**  **Vote**

Voters with Disabilities:  
Poll Worker Training

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# Agenda

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- ▶ Overview of disability
- ▶ Disability Etiquette
- ▶ Issues and How to Handle Them
- ▶ Questions

# Important Disability Facts

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- ▶ 1 in 5 people have a disability.
- ▶ Definition: physical, mental, or sensory condition that limits major activities of daily living – walking, talking, seeing, hearing, concentrating, etc.
- ▶ Some disabilities are hidden (i.e., autism, mental illness, PTSD, chronic fatigue, cancer)
- ▶ People with disabilities represent 15% of the voting population.

# Important Facts About Voters with Disabilities

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- ▶ Voters with disabilities have rights under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to be treated in a non-discriminatory way and to receive reasonable accommodations in voting.

Examples:

- ▶ To vote independently and privately.
- ▶ To have their polling place be physically accessible and free of barriers.
- ▶ To have access to an accessible voting booth.
- ▶ To receive assistance/support from a person of their choice or a poll worker.
- ▶ To be accompanied by a service animal.
- ▶ To be treated with respect and courteously.

**By law, you may not ask a voter what the nature of their disability is!**

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# General Guidelines When Working with a Voter with a Disability

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- ▶ Be respectful.
- ▶ Just ask.
- ▶ Communicate with the person.
- ▶ Respect the person's privacy.
- ▶ Don't feel pressured.

## **Other helpful tips:**

Always ask if the person would like any assistance, accept the idea that they may decline.

Do not touch/move a person's mobility device.

Look and speak to the person not their companion/interpreter.

Do not pity or tell them they are inspirational.

Treat them the same as any other voter!

# Person First Language

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Person First Language is the preferred method of talking about or speaking to a person with a disability.

- ▶ A person who uses a wheelchair.
- ▶ A person with an intellectual disability.
- ▶ A person who is blind/visually impaired
- ▶ A person who is deaf/hard of hearing

**People with disabilities have various abilities and capabilities. Avoid making generalizations or assumptions about their level of functioning.**



# Voter Assistance for Voters with Disabilities

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- ▶ A voter with a disability may **choose** to have a person of their choice or a poll worker to support or interpret for them.
- ▶ The **voter** must make a noticeable request that they need assistance due to a disability.
- ▶ Assistance may be obtained to enter the voting booth, use the equipment, read the ballot, mark the ballot, and exit the polling booth.

**Always ask if additional assistance is needed, even if the voter has a support person or interpreter.**

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# Issues and How to Handle Them: Scenarios

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- ▶ A man who is blind and using a white cane; accompanied by a friend who will assist him in identifying the ballot items.
- ▶ A woman with hearing aids who cannot understand what you are saying.
- ▶ A man who is unsteady on his feet, has speech that is difficult to understand.





## Scenarios Continued.

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- ▶ A woman with no visible disability who claims that her dog is a service animal for people with disabilities.
- ▶ A woman who says that the perfume worn by other people in line is making her faint.
- ▶ A person with a service dog which is barking constantly and jumping on friendly people in line to vote.



# Things to Remember!

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- ▶ Focus on reasonable, doable solutions delivered in a responsive, courteous manner.
- ▶ Rely on the voter as the “expert.” If an issue you are unfamiliar with arises, ask them what you can do to best assist them.
- ▶ Make every effort to ensure your voting area is set up in an accessible manner and remains free of barriers during voting hours.
- ▶ It is not up to you to determine a persons registration qualifications or competence to vote.
- ▶ Make every effort to not embarrass a voter with a disability.



# Questions

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For more information or other questions contact:

Disability Rights Texas  
Voter Rights Hotline  
1-888-796-VOTE (8683)  
VOTE@DRTx.org

[www.disabilityrightstx.org](http://www.disabilityrightstx.org)

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