

TIPS FOR ELECTION WORKERS:

How to Assist Voters with Disabilities

Prepared by the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee for the State of Hawaii Office of Elections and County Elections Divisions

Introduction: We know that most registered voters with disabilities, like other voters, will vote by mail or online from the convenience of their home or office. However, some voters with disabilities will choose to vote at a Voter Service Center. We also know that those working at Voter Service Centers will be trained in procedures and policies by the County Elections Divisions. This flyer is to assist these individuals in helping voters with disabilities who come to vote at Voter Service Centers. It includes practical tips for successfully engaging with individuals with disabilities and practical tips on making Voter Service Centers fully accessible to voters with disabilities. It is not comprehensive, but does address steps that can be taken in advance of voting and how to interact with people with varied disabilities when they come to vote, so the voting experience is safe, simple, efficient, and satisfying. Any worker, who encounters something they do not know how to address, can find a person and number to call on the back of this flyer.

Most Important Point: If you see an individual with a

disability, DON'T ASSUME ANYTHING. Offer assistance, and if the person says "yes" to the offer, ask HOW you may help them. Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to a person who may be accompanying them.

Curbside/Drive-Thru Voting: Allow curbside or drive-thru voting.

Long Lines: When you see a person with a mobility or vision disability using a walker, wheelchair, scooter, or cane, offer to escort them to the front of the line, but do not insist.

Drop Off Location: *Arrange* for the drop-off location to be curb-free or have a ramp.

Entrance to Voter Service Center: Pathway should be free of obstacles, at least 36 inches wide, step free, zero-degree threshold, and have someone available to open the door if the door cannot be automatically opened with a push button.

Signage and Orientation: Have easily readable signs for check-in, voting, questions, and restrooms as well as someone available to tell someone where check-in, voting, and restrooms are and to answer other questions. If asked, escort the person to the desired location.

Number and Label the Areas Associated with Voting in Person: By numbering and labeling the steps associated

with voting in person an individual will know what order to follow.

Orientation to Ballot: If requested, have someone available to share a sample ballot and indicate marking options.

Demonstration of How to Use a Voting Machine with and without Accessible Features: *Have* someone available to show how to use voting machines.

Hard Copies of Ballots: If requested, give a voter a hard copy of the ballot he/she completed. It could be a screenshot on the person's smart phone.

Disability-Specific Suggestions.

Hearing: If a person can't hear and has a smart phone, ask if it may be used to communicate or use a pad of paper and pen to communicate.

Vision: Have someone available to guide the person to a desired spot. Ask how to assist in guiding the person.

Mobility: Have available places to sit and to write. Spaces approaching and around voting machines should accommodate wheelchairs and scooters, provide privacy, and allow a seated person to reach machine controls.

Understanding: Allow a person who wants it to have a person

of his/her choice assist them in using a voting machine.

Handouts and Wall Posters:

Have handouts that explain in plain English the meaning of ballot amendments; have a handout that numbers the steps connected to voting in person. Post a large version of this sequence on a wall. Have pictures, names, and party of candidates in handouts and posted on walls.

Support Animals and Guide Dogs:

Let them accompany their owner throughout the voting experience. Do not interact with them. They are working animals not pets.

Ensuring Independence and Privacy:

The keys to a successful voting experience are independence and privacy. How these will occur will be determined by the individual voter.

Avoid Physical Barriers:

Provide clear pathways that are at least 36 inches wide, and places to turn around easily in a wheelchair or scooter.

- Have spaces for check-in that are standard table height and could allow a person to sit.
- Have sturdy tables with chairs where a person may read or write.
- Have chairs with arms that do not tip over easily.
- Have clipboards and pens available.
- Have good lighting.

- Have non-slip, even flooring.
- Have all print material in audio form and Braille.
- Have floating volunteers who can secure paper when someone needs to write, give directions, or answer questions.

Who to Contact if You Have a Question:

County Elections Divisions

County of Hawaii

(808) 961-8277

County of Maui

(808) 270-7749

County of Kauai

(808) 241-4800

City and County of Honolulu

(808) 768-3800

State of Hawaii, Office of Elections

(808) 453-8683

AS A WORKER AT A VOTER SERVICE CENTER, YOU WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN ASSISTING VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES IF YOU USE YOUR COMMON SENSE AND BE OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS FROM THESE VOTERS.