

ACCESSIBILITY AT THE POLLS



Making voting more accessible is an important part of the role of poll workers. But you might not know what that looks like in practice. Use this guide to help prepare you to make your polling place accessible and welcoming to all voters.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

According to the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission, 66.6 million people in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home. While many voters will be able to speak and read English while voting, having translated materials and poll workers who can answer questions in voters' first language has many benefits and in many states it's required by law to have translated ballots.

If you speak a language other than English, make sure you let your elections office know in advance so they can assign you to a polling location where you can best put your skills to use. On the day of, make sure that the supervisor at your polling location knows this as well, so they can call on you for assistance.

You may want to wear a nametag that says "*I speak*____" in the language you're able to speak to make sure the other poll workers and voters know you're able to help.

If a voter asks for assistance in a language you can't help with, ask your supervisor if another poll worker can provide help to them. If not, find out if there is a hotline you and the voter can call together or if there is another resource.

Remember to ask these questions during your official poll worker training:

- What type of assistance can be offered to a voter who speaks another language or is having difficulty communicating with me in English?
- What is the process for me (or someone else) to provide assistance?
- Are there any limitations on the assistance a poll worker can offer?
- What is the process for providing a voter with a ballot in a language other than English?

HEALTH ACCESS

Voters may have a variety of health concerns at the polls, including COVID-19. Ask about the COVID-19 safety protocols in your official training, and about whether items like masks and hand sanitizer will be provided at your polling location for voters who request them.

Even if your local polling location does not have a policy on COVID-19 safety, wearing a face covering while working the polls is a great way to mitigate risk for yourself, and for voters who are at high risk for serious illness.

Your role is to provide a safe, easy voting experience—and that includes protecting people from all airborne viruses.

Remember to ask these questions during your official poll worker training:

- What COVID-19 and/or other health-related protocols do we need to follow?

DISABILITY ACCESS

Voters with disabilities have a right to assistance from a person of their choosing. Remember that even if a voter's disability is not visible or obvious to you, they have the right to request assistance. This may be a poll worker or someone else they've brought with them to the polls. Ask during your poll worker training what type of assistance you and/or other individuals are allowed to provide.

Many polling locations will have accessible voting machines which may require additional training to know how to set up / work. Make sure you know how to handle these machines.

Remember to ask these questions during your official poll worker training:

- What kind of accessible voting machines will we have on site for voters with disabilities, and how do they work?
- What type of assistance may I provide to ensure access to vote if someone has a disability?
- What is the process for me (or someone else) to provide assistance? Are there any limitations on the assistance a poll worker can offer?

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO!

Finally, remember that your well-being is important too. Make sure you bring any medication or other health supplies you may need during the day. Wear comfortable shoes and ask for an assignment that meets your physical needs.

Remember to ask these questions during your official poll worker training:

- Do I get a break? Will I be expected to stand all day?
- If I'm not able to stand the full day, can I bring a folding chair for myself?

As a poll worker, considering access for voters with varying language, ability, and health needs is crucial to making sure every eligible voter gets to cast their ballot. The information provided here does not replace local and/or state guidance you receive in your official training.

Thanks for powering the polls and ensuring an accessible election!



www.powerthepolls.org

Note: These are supplemental resources and are not intended to take the place of any official poll worker training or resources that your elections office provides. Rules and laws vary from place to place, so for any specific questions related to your service as a poll worker or the rules and resources in your jurisdiction, always defer to your local elections office.