

Ensuring an Accessible Polling Place

An Election Day Reference Guide for Clerks, Precinct Chairs and Poll Workers



Clerks, Precinct Chairs and/or poll workers should review accessibility at their site before the polls open. Follow the path a voter with a disability would take, from the parking lot through the accessible entrance to the voting area. Test all accessibility features (push buttons, elevators, lifts). Look for the barriers below. Fix what you can with the tools and supplies on hand. Report what you cannot fix.

Curbside voting: Curbside voting creates access for any voter who cannot physically reach the voting space, whatever the cause. This includes a missing ramp, no curb cut, a locked, narrow, or broken door, a blocked path, or a broken elevator or lift.

Do not wait until you have tried every fix. Inform the precinct chairperson that there is a potential access barrier that makes the site inaccessible to some voters. Request signage be posted outside the site where voters can see it explaining how to access curbside voting.

1. Parking

Barrier	What to do
No accessible parking spaces, or the spaces are blocked, narrow, or unmarked	Use cones or tape to mark the spaces. Ensure there is at least one van accessible space with a 5-foot access aisle.
Accessible parking signs are missing or damaged	Create temporary signage with paper, a thick marker, and the accessibility symbol. Tape it where drivers can see it.

2. Exterior Paths

Barrier	What to do
Path is unpaved, cracked, uneven, or blocked	Clear the path. Mark the smoothest route with cones or tape. Use a portable ramp at the curb if the site has one.
No curb cuts, steps with no ramp, or a steep ramp	Set up a portable ramp if the site has one. It should rise no more than 1 inch for every 12 inches of length.

3. Entrances and Doors

Barrier	What to do
Door is locked, including the accessible door	Unlock every door voters may use. If needed, call the building contact or the clerk's office right away.
Trash can, chair, or brick is propping a door open	Replace a large prop with an alternative option that does not block or narrow the opening.
Push-button or automatic door is off or not working	Check that it is turned on. If it still fails, prop the door open and keep the opening clear. Ask a worker to hold the door.

Barrier	What to do
Doorway is narrower than 32 inches	Open both doors if there is a pair. Move voting to a space with a wider door.
Signage directing voters to the accessible entrance	Make temporary signs. Post them at eye level at each entrance, corner and wherever the path splits.

4. Interior Paths

Barrier	What to do
Path inside, from the door to check-in is narrow or blocked	Move chairs, tables, boxes, and rugs. Keep a clear path at least 36 inches wide.
Path from the entrance to the voting space is unclear	Make temporary signs. Post them at eye level at corners and wherever the path splits. Signs should guide voters both into and out of the site.
Elevator or lift is not working	Call the building contact. Move voting to a location before the elevator or lift.

5. Wheelchair-Height Voting Booth

Barrier	What to do
Wheelchair-height booth is missing or not set up	Set up a booth at wheelchair height with a chair that moves. Keep it separate from the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT).
Path to the booth is blocked, or the booth is too close to a wall	Keep the path at least 36 inches wide. Leave at least 60 inches of open space in front of the booth. Move the booth or nearby furniture if needed.
Other people can see a voter's ballot	Turn or relocate the booth, add a privacy screen. Never use the check in table or other poll worker station.

6. Voter Assist Terminal (VAT)

Barrier	What to do
VAT is not set up and ready	Set it at wheelchair height. Turn it on. Make sure all the accessories are available.
Headphones or the controller are missing or unplugged	Find them. Plug them in. Test that they work.
Path to the VAT is blocked or has loose cords	Keep the path at least 36 inches wide. Move cords out of the way, or tape them to the floor. Use cord covers if available.
VAT is too close to a wall, or the screen faces the room	Leave at least 60 inches in front of it. Point the screen away from where people walk. Add a privacy screen.

7. Report What You Cannot Fix

Write down the problem, the time you found it, and the fix. Report these items to your precinct chairperson. Ask them to contact the clerk about any barriers you were unable to fix.