

U.S. Election Assistance Commission
1335 East West Highway, Suite 4300
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear EAC Awards Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the *Voting Accessibility Quick Check* program for the 2020 Clearinghouse Award in the category of Improving Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities. Two years ago, you rewarded my office's work with an EAC Clearie Award for our *Helping Veterans and lowans with Disabilities Vote* initiative. The Quick Check booklet is a continuation of our work to make all of Iowa's elections easy and accessible.

The key to ensuring polling places are accessible is providing poll workers with the necessary tools in a format that is easy to follow. We accomplished that objective with the *Voting Accessibility Quick Check* guide. Partnering with Disability Rights Iowa my office produced booklets and distributed them to every polling place in the state. The booklet includes information about accessible voting equipment and signage. It can also be used as a measuring tool to ensure polling spaces are accessible for wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

Voter participation is one of my top goals as Iowa's Commissioner of Elections. All Iowa polling places are inspected for general ADA compliance. The *Voter Accessibility Quick Check* booklet is an additional resource for precinct election officials to have on hand to ensure the polling place stays accessible throughout Election Day.

I am certain you will agree that helping citizens with disabilities vote is vital for our representative form of government. Their voices are often not heard in the legislative process. I want to change that by helping all of them #BeAVoter.

This useful tool can be replicated in every state at minimal cost. I hope all who administer elections will find this information beneficial.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul D. Pate". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "P" and "D".

Paul D. Pate
Iowa Secretary of State



U.S. Election Assistance Commission Award Application 2020

Iowa Secretary of State's Office

Accessibility Competition

State Office: Iowa Secretary of State Paul D. Pate

Contact: Kevin Hall, Communications Director (515) 725-2942, Kevin.Hall@sos.iowa.gov

Title of Program: *The Voting Accessibility Quick Check Guide*

Project lead: Heidi Burhans, State Elections Director; Heather Livingood, Elections & Voter Registration Specialist

Subject area of nomination: Improving Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities

THE VOTING ACCESSIBILITY

QUICK CHECK

How Accessible is Your Polling Place?



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The key to ensuring polling places are accessible is providing poll workers with the necessary tools in a format that is easy to follow. We accomplished that objective with the Voting Accessibility Quick Check guide. The Iowa Secretary of State's Office partnered with Disability Rights Iowa to produce booklets and distribute them to every polling place in the state. [The booklet](#) includes information about accessible voting equipment, spacing and signage. It can also be used as a measuring tool.

BACKGROUND

When Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate returned to office in 2015, one of his top priorities was helping veterans and Iowans with disabilities vote. That initiative turned into a multi-pronged effort at voter and poll worker education, community outreach and providing the necessary resources at every polling place. The initiative was recognized with an [EAC Clearie Award in 2018](#).

The program continued in 2020, with a new tool to ensure polling place accessibility.

ACTION STEPS

Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate and Disability Rights Iowa partnered to produce a Voting Accessibility Quick Check booklet and provide one for every polling place in the state. The booklet is a tool for precinct election officials to ensure polling places meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and to quickly recognize and fix any accessibility issues that may arise on Election Day.

Taking extra time and care to make sure the polling place is accessible will allow Iowans with disabilities to have a positive voting experience when they show up to cast their vote. We wanted to provide the counties with as many resources as possible to help them provide the best experience to all voters at the polls on Election Day.

The booklet includes information about accessible voting equipment, spacing, signage, and can be used as measuring tool.

The panels in the easy-fold booklet provide the necessary measurements and accessibility requirements for outside the polling place, entrances to the polling place, and inside the building.

ACCESS MATTERS!

Voters with disabilities are a critically active demographic. Unfortunately, not every polling place is built with an accessibility mindset and can present unique challenges. Here's why. If a voter with a disability encounters a barrier that makes it hard to vote on Election Day, it's a good practice to provide voters with an accessible means to exercise their right to vote. This booklet is your go-to guide to ensure an accessible experience.

Particular voters in a part of the voting process include, but are not limited to, voters with disabilities. The best way to ensure an accessible experience is to follow the guidelines in this booklet.

USE THIS RULER TO QUICKLY CHECK MEASUREMENTS

1 OUTSIDE

- Accessible spaces must be **CLEARLY MARKED**.
- Every parking lot should have **25 SPACES**.
- There should be a minimum of **1 VAN SPACE**.
- TWO** accessible voters on board.
- ONE** van space.

2 ENTRANCES

- All entries must be **36" WIDE** for easy passage.
- Margins can have no more than a **1:12 SLOPE**.
- The path from sidewalk/parking to the building should be **RELATIVELY LEVEL**.
- The ramp should be **NO MORE THAN 50"** between handrails.
- There are **48"** from the main entrance to the accessible entrance.
- There are **18"** of **CLEAR WALL SPACE** at the end of the door next to the handle.
- Doors should open **WITHOUT TOO MUCH FORCE**.

3 INSIDE

- Paths must clear an area to get around that is **5' SQUARE** for a minimum of each 30' pathway.
- Any objects hanging from the ceiling or protruding **MORE THAN 4"** from the wall must be marked with a cone to be easily accessible.
- All signage should be **48" AND 60"** above the ground.
- Tables must clear an area to get around that is **36" WIDE**.
- Any furniture should be **EASILY MOVABLE** so that pathways can be clear.
- All carpet must be **SHORT AND FLAT**.
- Seating must be **36" HIGH**.
- If seating is used on the first floor, there must be an **accessible** path to the **ELEVATOR**.

ACCESS MATTERS!

Voters with disabilities are a politically active demographic. Unfortunately, not many polling places were built with accessibility in mind and can prevent people with disabilities from voting. If a voter with a disability encounters a barrier, they are less likely to vote in person during the next election.

It's a poll worker's duty to provide voters with an accessible venue to exercise their right to vote.

This booklet is **your** portable tool to expand election access.

Each section relates to a part of the polling place: **outside, entryways, and inside**. If you encounter barriers, the red **!** boxes provide explanations and same-day fixes for some access issues.

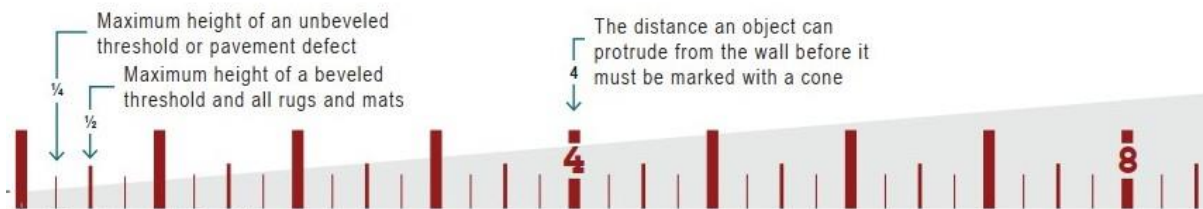
VOTING MACHINES

It is important that the ADA accessible voting machine is **set up and ready to go** when the polls open! Even if you've never had a voter ask to use the machine, it must be ready! More people are turning out to vote than ever before, and your precinct might have a new voter who wants to use the accessible machine. If a voter who needs the machine sees that it is not set up, they may be discouraged and decide not to vote.

Machines should be set up so that no one can see how a person is voting.

If a voter needs an accommodation that you do not know how to provide, contact your county auditor for assistance at (____) - ____ - ____.

USE THIS RULER TO QUICKLY CHECK MEASUREMENTS



The first page provides valuable information about overall polling place accessibility, voting machines, and the contact number for the county auditor's office.

1

OUTSIDE



Every parking lot should have 1 accessible space for every

25 SPACES

There should be a minimum of

1 VAN SPACE



TWO accessible spaces can share **ONE** van aisle

Accessible spaces must be

CLEARLY MARKED



If an accessible space does not have a sign, it can be temporarily marked with cones, chairs, or other objects at the end of the yellow parking lines

The path from accessible parking to the building should be

RELATIVELY LEVEL



Even seemingly small cracks and potholes in the pavement can prevent someone from reaching the building. If a defect is more than 1/4" high, consider smoothing it out, placing a rug over it, or marking an alternate route.

All ramps must be

36" WIDE

for easy passage



Ramps can have no more than a

1:12 SLOPE

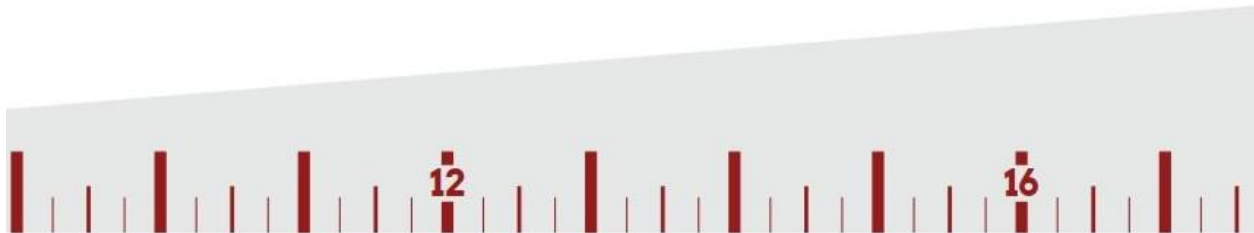


The slope is a ratio between height and length. For every 12" along the base of the ramp the height increases 1". Ex: a 5' ramp should only be 5" tall.

The ramp should rise

NO MORE THAN 30"

Between landings



The second page provides information about how to ensure the area outside the polling place is accessible. It includes a graphic on the required number of accessible parking spaces, measures for ramps, and information about the path from accessible parking to the building.

2 ENTRANCES

If there are stairs at the main entrance, there must be an

**ALTERNATE,
ACCESSIBLE**
entrance available



Entrances should have
**18" OF CLEAR
WALL SPACE**
on the pull side of the door next to the handle

! *A person using a mobility aid like a wheelchair or crutches needs this space to get close enough to the door.*



There
MUST BE SIGNS
from the main entrance to the accessible entrance



Entryways must be at least
36" WIDE

Handles must be
**48" FROM
THE GROUND**
and operable with a single, closed fist from a sitting and standing position

! *No doorknobs! They are too difficult to operate.*

Doors should open
**WITHOUT TOO
MUCH FORCE**

! *If a door is too heavy, consider propping it open or posting a greeter to open the door for all visitors.*

The amount of clear space next to a door handle

18



Page three provides details about entrances to polling places. This includes information about signage, necessary entryway width, door handles and wall space.



All paths of travel must be at least
36" WIDE

Any furniture should be
EASILY MOVABLE
so that pathways can be cleared



All carpet must be
SHORT AND FLAT

Paths must have an area to turn around that is
5' SQUARE
or is an intersection of two 36" pathways



All thresholds must be
¼" UNBEVELED
or **½" BEVELED**
and all rugs should be secured and no more than a
½" HIGH

! An unbeveled threshold is squared on the sides while a beveled threshold is sloped.



Any objects hanging from the ceiling or protruding
MORE THAN 4" from the wall must be marked with a cone to be cane detectable.

All signage should be hung between
48" AND 60" above the ground

If voting is not on the first floor, there must be an operational
ELEVATOR

1:12 ramp slope

The minimum width of ramps, doorways, and paths of travel

36

28

32

The fourth page covers the area inside the polling place. It includes necessary measurements for paths, signage, objecting hanging from the ceiling and useful tips about carpets and furniture.

Unfolded, the entire booklet spans 36 inches and includes a ruler at the bottom that can be utilized to quickly check measurements.

ONE LAST CHECK

Use this list to keep track of what is accessible and what isn't — and then what you're going to do about it!

1 OUTSIDE

- Appropriate number of accessible spaces
- Minimum of 1 van space
- Pathway to the entrance is relatively level
- Accessible spaces are clearly marked

2 ENTRANCES

- Clearly marked accessible entrance
- Entryways are at least 36" wide
- Handles meet all listed accessibility requirements
- Doors are easy to open

3 INSIDE

- Adequate space to navigate and turn around
- Thresholds, rugs, and carpets are short and flat
- Signs are an appropriate height
- Hanging or protruding objects are marked with a cone

On the back side is the 'One Last Check' page. This simple checklist offers an easy review of the major steps that election officials need to take to ensure full accessibility at the polling place. Completing the checklist means you've ensured all voters can navigate the polling place, outside and inside, and are easily able to cast their ballot.

There is also a 'Notes' page in case poll workers want to write important information onto the booklet.

Altogether, the Voting Accessibility Quick Check Guide is a very useful tool that helps election officials ensure polling places are accessible at the beginning of Election Day, and is a great asset for poll workers to ensure it remains accessible throughout Iowa's 14-hour Election Day timeframes.

RESULTS

“The Quick Check booklet helps poll workers make the voting experience more welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities,” said Jane Hudson, executive director Disability Rights Iowa. “Increased attention to accessibility will encourage more people with disabilities to participate, making our democratic process more obtainable for all.”

All Iowa polling places are inspected for general ADA compliance. The Voter Accessibility Quick Check booklet is an additional resource for precinct election officials to have on hand to ensure the polling place stays accessible throughout Election Day. Having one at every polling place on Election Day on November 3, 2020 helped ensure accessibility for all Iowa voters and was a tremendous tool for poll workers.

This project can be replicated in every state at minimal cost. It is a simple addition to the election toolkit, but an extremely valuable one.