The Catskill Center for Independence
Project HAVA presents...

Working with Voters with Disabilities

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Interacting with people…not disabilities.

- Use Person First Language
  - Person with a disability; person who uses a wheelchair; person who is blind.

- This affirms the individual and confers respect.
Avoid outdated terms and negative terminology

– Do Not Say:
  - handicapped
  - victim
  - sufferer
  - invalid.

- Instead Say:
  - Person with a disability
  - Cancer survivor
  - Person with AIDS
  - Person who uses a wheelchair
HAVA’s Disability Access Requirements for Voting Systems.

- Accessible voting systems used in federal elections.
- At least one accessible system for each polling place.
- Same opportunity for access and participation as other voters – a private and independent vote.
How Voters Vote

- Anyone can use the accessible voting system or ballot marking device (BMD).
- How a person chooses to vote is up to the person, not the poll workers.
- Dissuading a voter from using a BMD is discriminatory.
Voting is a Civil Right; Discrimination is Illegal

- Without knowing it, poll workers can inadvertently be violating a person's civil rights by the questions they ask.

- Asking a voter what type of disability they have is unnecessary and illegal.
HAVA’s Voting Information Requirements

Specific information posted at each polling site to include:

– Sample ballot
– Hours of operation for polls
– Voting instructions, including how to cast a provisional ballot
– Instructions for first time voters
– Applicable Federal and State laws
Accessible vs. Handicapped

Accessible is an empowering word.

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Not So Politically Correct

- Don’t Use:
  - Physically challenged
  - Mentally challenged
  - Differently-abled

- People with disabilities do not like these terms.
In the Vernacular

- Using common everyday language is perfectly fine. For example saying:
  - “See you later” to someone who is blind or
  - “I hear that!” to someone who is deaf is part of normal speech.
- Relax, converse normally, use some sensitivity.

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Speak directly to the person

- When interacting with an individual with a disability who is accompanied by an interpreter or assistant, speak directly to that person, NOT their assistant.
Habits of Speech

- Some people who are blind can hear perfectly well – no need to shout!
- Some people who are deaf cannot hear perfectly well – no need to shout!
More on Communication

- Lip readers need to see lips: face the person, don’t turn away, don’t over exaggerate mouth movements.

- ASL interpreters are not required at polling sites; paper and pencil would suffice for communicating.
A Person’s Equipment is Part of Their Personal Space

- Never lean on someone’s wheelchair or move it without permission.

- Sit down next to individual who uses a wheelchair; this allows a comfortable and relaxed exchange.
When in doubt... ask!

- If you are not sure how to assist a person with a disability,
  
  - Ask that individual how best to help.
  
  - Allow the person to direct you.
  
  - Respect their answer even if it is a refusal.
Other Considerations & Things to Think About

– Service Animals
– Alternate Accessible Formats
– Policy Modifications
Service Animals:

- Are allowed in polling places.
- Should not be distracted from their work.
- Are NOT pets; they are working animals.
Service Animals Continued:

- Can be other animals besides dogs.
  - Miniature ponies

- No proof required; no special license needed.
Alternative Accessible Formats

- Material provided to the public must be provided in alternative accessible format. It is the law.

- Examples: large print, audio, Braille, electronic (CD/disk).

- Types of documents: registration forms, sample ballots, provisional ballots, & more.

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Policy Modifications

- May be permanent
  - responding to call button, maintaining clear path of travel

- or temporary
  - portable ramps, cones for parking, signage

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Physical Access of Polling Sites
Priorities for accessible voting

- Getting to the polling place
- Entering the polling place
- Using the polling place
Parking

Two 8’ wide designated accessible parking spaces can share one 8’ wide access aisle.
Exterior Accessible Route:

Must connect accessible parking to accessible entrance and be a minimum of 36” wide.
Signage
Barriers
A minimum clear width of 32” is required for the doorway at the accessible entrance.
Accessible Door Hardware
Latch Side Clearance:

Allows voter in a wheelchair or other mobility device to pull the door open and then enter; 18“ minimum required, 24” preferred.
Interior Accessible Route

By placing a large planter under the wall mounted object as a detectable warning, this man could avoid an accident.
Voting Area

Maintain a 36” wide clear path of travel throughout voting area.
Additional Barriers in the Voting Area:

- Chairs
- Lines
- Bake sales/dinners/craft fairs
Tips for Barrier-free Voting:

- Provide accessible parking
- Maintain 36” path of travel through out polling site
- Provide signage indicating accessible route
- Make certain bake sales/other events do not impede anyone’s ability to vote on election day!
For More Information
Contact Project HAVA at:

The Catskill Center for Independence

nyshava@ccfi.us
1-888-NYS-HAVA
1-888-697-4282
The Catskill Center for Independence & Project HAVA thank you for remembering...