Sample slide presentation: Assisting voters with disabilities at the polling place

These slides are the sample slides described in *Training Poll Workers for Accessible Voting: Supporting Voters with Disabilities at the Polling Place.*

Instructions are on slide 2.

The sample slide deck starts with slide 3. Remove slides 1 and 2, when you customize.

How to customize this training for your jurisdiction

This training is intended to be part of your training for poll workers, focusing on how to assist voters with disabilities, while supporting private and independent voting.

In the slides:

- Text and image placeholders highlighted in grey should be customized to your own voting systems and procedures (and then removing the highlight)
- There are also customization notes on some slides in a grey box on the right that should be removed
- Slide notes contain additional information you might want to use in your training.
- Some slides can be removed if they do not apply to your jurisdiction.

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Assisting voters with disabilities at the polling place

Put your jurisdiction name, logo, or other credits here

About this training

This module of poll worker training covers:

- Disability rights during voting
- Accessible voting systems
- Assisting voters with disabilities
- How to assist voters
    - Checking in a voter
    - Setting up the voting system
    - While they are voting
    - While they are verifying and casting their ballot
- Summary and resources

Disability rights during voting

"There needs to be equal access to the ballot box so people with disabilities can exercise their constitutional right to vote."

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

What is a disability?

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 says:

The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual:

(A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more **major life activities** of such individual;

(B) a record of such an impairment; or

(C) being regarded as having such an impairment.

What rights do voters with disabilities have?

Accessible voting systems are required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

- Every voter with and without a disability has the right to use an accessible voting system

- Some voters with disabilities need the accessible voting system to vote **privately** and **independently**, especially:

  o Voters who are blind or have low vision

  o Voters with mobility disabilities or lack manual dexterity

  o Voters with cognitive disabilities

- Voters may use a screen magnifier on their phone, even if phones are not permitted in the polling place

What are the accessibility requirements for voting systems?

The federal standards, called Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) 2.0, say that systems must provide:

- **Equivalent and consistent voter access**, with equivalent information and options in all modes of voting

- **Voter privacy** so people can vote privately and independently (without assistance from others)

- **Voters can mark, verify and cast their ballot as they intend** because ballots are presented in way they can perceive (see or hear), operate the system, and understand the ballot information and instructions

Accessible voting systems

A voting system is "accessible for individuals with disabilities, including nonvisual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired", if it "provides the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters."

Help America Vote Act of 2002 Section 301

How do accessible voting systems support voters?

What it does	How it helps
Audio ballot	Helps voters who are blind, have low vision, or who do not read well, by reading the ballot aloud
Tactile controller and other assistive devices	Allows voters using the audio ballot or people with mobility disabilities to navigate and make their choices with buttons they can identify by touch
Setting text size	Helps voters with low vision and cognitive disabilities by making the text easier to see
Changing contrast	Allows voters with low vision to make the text stand out from the background
Personal assistive technology	In some systems, voters can bring their own input controls (assistive technology) or hearing devices

Put a photo of your systems controller here.

A tactile controller has physical buttons that can be identified by touch.

Our accessible voting system:
[insert name of your system here]

The features of this system include:

[Audio ballot]

[Tactile controls]

[Change text size and contrast]

[Sip-and-puff controls]

[Ability to plug in their own assistive technology]

[Set up at a height for sitting]

[add any more, remove any you don't have]

You can learn more about these features at [poll worker manual reference]

Put a photo of your system here.

If you have an illustration with callouts to identify accessible features, you can use it here.

Assisting voters with disabilities

[The poll workers] "explained the operation and voting procedure very clearly. After filling out my ballot by myself and completing the whole process, I had a wonderful feeling of self-satisfaction being able to do my civic duty to vote."

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

What tools do you have to help you assist voters?

Use this slide to introduce

- Procedures and forms
- Job aids for the accessible voting system features
- ASL interpreters if available remotely or in the polling place
- Who to contact if you need help troubleshooting a problem

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Who may assist voters?

If voters need help setting up the voting system or marking their ballot, they are entitled to assistance.

Who may assist voters:

- A person of the voter's choice, such as a family member or personal care attendant
- [A poll worker] or [Two poll workers from different parties]
- [Insert any other state rules or procedures]

Who may *not* assist voters:

- A voter's employer or an agent of their employer
- An officer or agent of the voter's union
- [Insert any other state rules or procedures]

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Fill in the form for assistants as part of the election record

The names of people who assist a voter are recorded on the [Title of the Form].

Collect their
- Full name
- Relationship to the voter
- Address
- Signature

Show a copy of the form, so that poll workers will recognize it.

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How can assistance be given fairly and impartially?

When giving assistance, let the voter tell you what kind of help they need.

- Let the voter do as much as possible by themselves.
- Make your best effort to preserve a voter's privacy as they mark their ballot.
- Be neutral and nonpartisan. Do not give out advice or make comments on a voter's choice or try to influence a voter's choice.
- Be consistent in the instructions you give, so that all voters get equivalent information.

# How can assistance support voter privacy while voting?

Emphasize privacy and avoid looking at their ballot once they start voting

Position yourself so they can see you

- Don't look over their shoulder at the screen

After giving assistance, move away to give them privacy

- If you are assisting a voter with a vision disability, verbally communicate that you are moving away
- Let the voter know how they can get your attention if they need more help
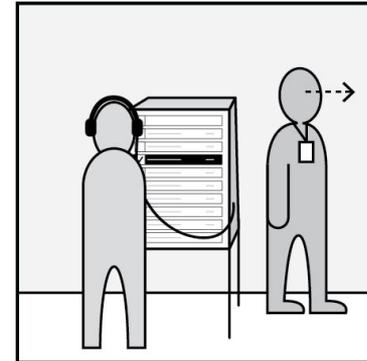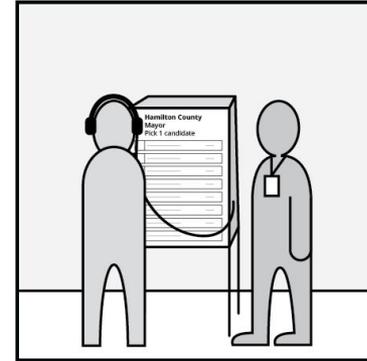
Communicating with Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing voters

Tip for communicating

- If they have an interpreter or support person, talk to the voter, not the interpreter
- Use gestures
- Rephrase your answers
- Don't raise your voice unless asked
- Be patient

[If the polling place has ASL interpretation available, add it here]

Ways of communicating

There are many different ways to communicate.
Some examples:

- Sign language interpreters
  Not all Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing voters use American Sign Language (ASL)

- Writing back and forth on a piece of paper

- Captioning apps

How to assist voters: Checking in a voter

"I have a long wait every time I go to vote [because] the poll workers don't know how to turn the voice on in the voting machine. Sometimes it takes two hours for them to figure out how to turn on the voice…. I have also been asked if someone could help me vote. I deserve to vote independently and privately, as is my right."

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

Ask voters how they want to vote

All voters have the option to vote on an accessible voting system. Ask them:

- "Would you like to vote on a paper ballot, or would you like to use the accessible voting system today?"

Remember

- Do not comment on a voter's choice to use the accessible machine

- Not all disabilities are apparent or visible

- If a voter wants to vote on the accessible voting system, you **may not ask** if they have a disability or why they need the machine.

When a voter chooses to use the [accessible system]

[If there are any special restrictions, rules or procedures, list them here and show any forms or affidavits that must be filled out.

If anyone can use the accessible system without any special procedures, delete this slide]
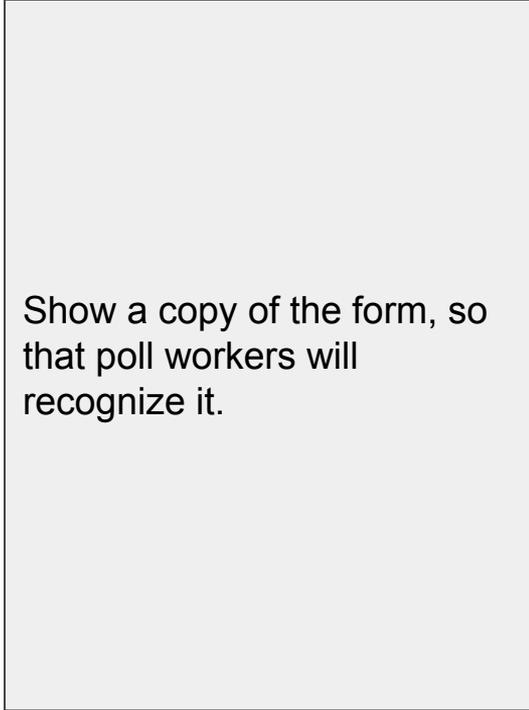
Show a copy of the form, so that poll workers will recognize it.

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Curbside Voting with an accessible voting system

[If your polling place offers curbside voting with an accessible voting system, describe specific procedures or instructions. Note: curbside voting needs to be ADA-compliant and also not block voters from entering the polling place.]

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How to assist voters:
Setting up the voting system

"I have a long wait every time I go to vote. The primary issue is the poll workers don't know how to turn the voice on in the voting machine. Sometimes it takes two hours for them to figure out how to turn on the voice, and I sit there, holding up the line in my tiny precinct.

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

Adjusting the system: physical setup

Before the voter even starts the system, they may need it physically adjusted.

On our voting system we can
- [Raise or lower the height of the screen or controls]
- [Tilt the screen for a better view or to avoid glare]
- [Add any other adjustments possible for your accessible voting system]
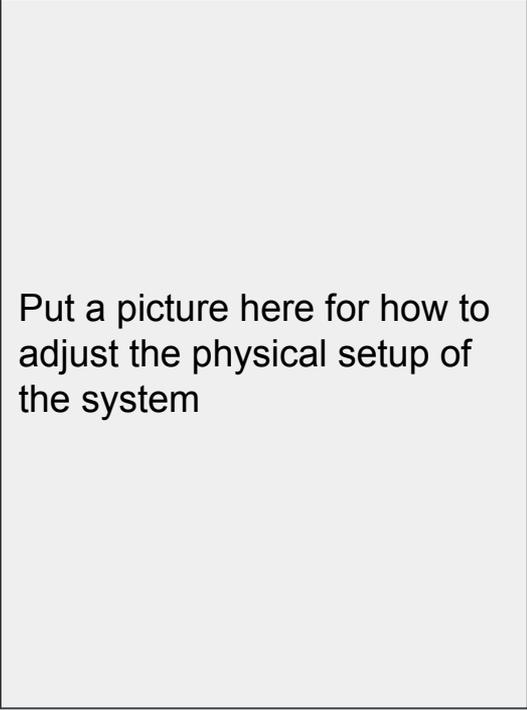
Put a picture here for how to adjust the physical setup of the system

Adjusting the system: system controls

The next step is to make sure the voter has the system set up so they can interact with it.

Our systems include:

- [The # button tactile keypad]
- [Paddles or dual switches]
- [Sip-and-puff]
- [Audio output with the screen on or off]

[if there is a screen to set up the system controls, show it here]
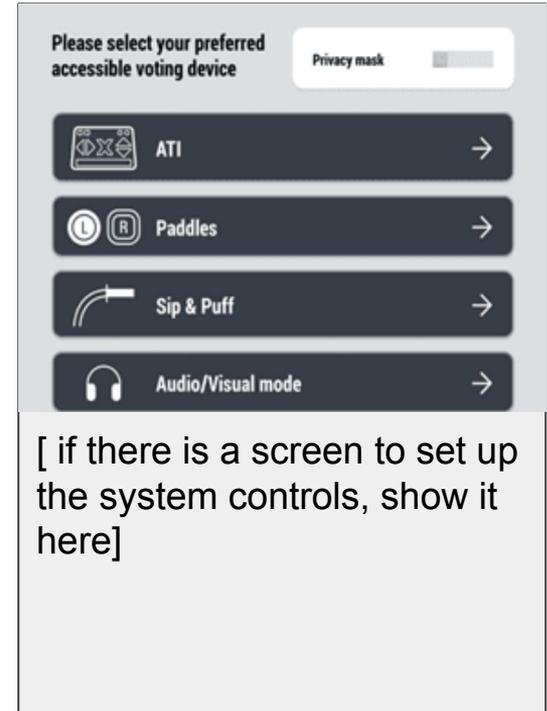
Help voters learn the buttons on the controller

If the voter is using the tactile controller, ask if they would like an orientation to the main features. [You can also direct them to the tutorial in the system.]

- Focus on the buttons to navigate and mark the ballot. On our system:
  - [buttons to scroll within a contest]
  - [button to select a candidate or option]
  - [buttons to move from page to page]
- Describe buttons by shape and location, not just color

Show the controller and button layout here.

Adjusting the system: screen display

Finally, there are screen display and audio options.

Help the voter make these adjustments before starting to vote, so that you can assist them without seeing their ballot.

Our systems include:

- [# of text sizes]
- [# of options for color contrast]
- [Audio volume]
- [Audio speed (or rate)]
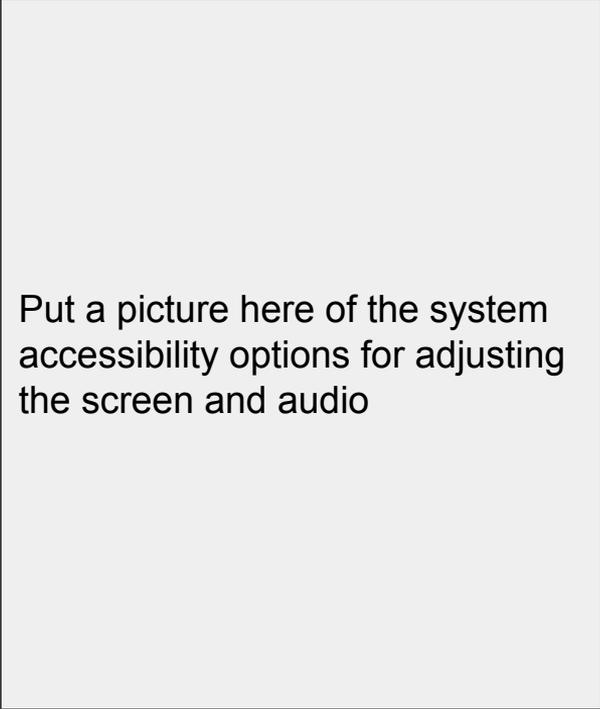
Put a picture here of the system accessibility options for adjusting the screen and audio

Follow the script so you don't leave anything out.

"This is the accessible voting system. You will use it to read and mark your ballot. Once you're done, you'll [print the ballot and take it to the scanner] [review and cast your ballot].

You can make the text larger and smaller or change the contrast. It also has [insert other features].

If you want to use the audio ballot, the headphones and controller are in front of you. You can change the volume and speech rate.

[Some screens have more than one contest on a page][Some contests have many candidates], so make sure that you scroll to the bottom of the page to see all the choices.

Do you have any questions?"

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Include important reminders about how to vote

- [Voters may need to scroll to see all contests/choices on a page]
- Voters can verify their choices before printing/casting their ballot
- If the voter finds a mistake after they print their ballot, they can spoil the ballot.
- When starting a voting session, let the voter know what features are available:
  - "The voting machine can [read the ballot to you, make the text larger or smaller, etc]"
- Let them know that headphones and a controller are available
  - Offer them but do not place the headphones on the voter unless they ask
- Remind them that they will mark their ballot on the accessible system, and [they must then print it and take it to the scanner to cast it] [the ballot is cast at the machine]

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How to assist voters:
While they are voting

"While I was voting the poll worker stepped back about 20 feet and waited until I was finished voting. "

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

Be available to help, but don't hover

If a voter asks for help while they are voting:

- Some voters may need more time to be able to vote, so don't rush them.
- Do not speak over an audio ballot session.
- Let the voter know a poll worker will be nearby but not looking at their ballot.
- If you are going to remain very close by but you aren't helping the voter, turn your back to the screen or make sure it is out of your sight line.
- Try to answer their question without looking at the screen.
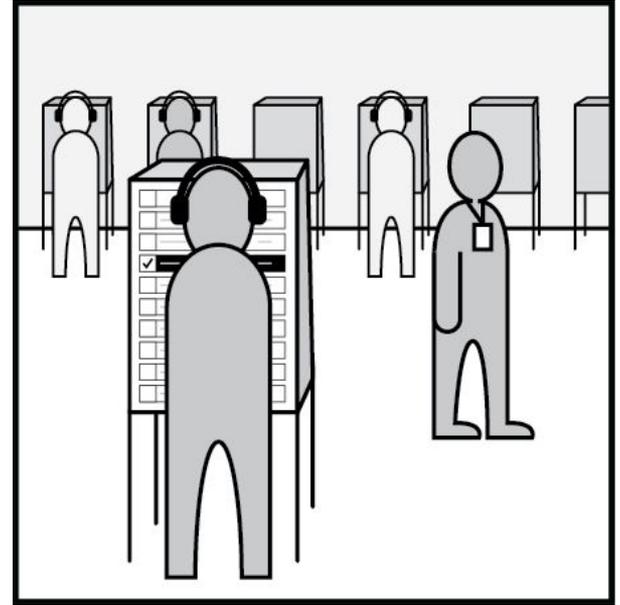
Let the voter know what you are doing

In addition to letting voters tell you what help they need, you can tell them what you will do to help them.

For example, if they need help while they are voting, you might say:

> "I would need to look at the screen to answer your question. Once I'm done, I will move away to give you privacy so that you can continue voting. Is that okay?" If so, "Let me know when you are ready for me to look at the screen."

Troubleshooting during the voting session

Communicate directly with the voter:

- Even if they have an assistant or interpreter
- Explain what you are doing
- Let them know if you are waiting for assistance or how long it may take
- Troubleshoot the problem as much as possible

Let them know about any alternative options, but don't pressure them to vote on a paper ballot if they want to use the accessible voting system

How to assist voters:
While they are verifying and casting their ballot

"Once the paper print ballot is released from the machine, we should have an envelope immediately provided at the machine to avoid the poll worker or anyone else to "peek" and see our voting choices."

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

Helping voters verify and cast their ballot

Voters should verify their choices before [printing] [casting] the ballot.

Voters can spoil a ballot after printing it and have three tries.

Handling the printed ballot
- Let the voter handle the ballot themselves unless they ask for help
- If the voter needs help with handling the ballot, ask before taking it from them
- [Place the ballot in secrecy sleeve]

Helping voters get to the scanner

Ask the voter if they would like assistance getting to the scanner

For voters who are blind or have low vision:
- Tell the voter where the scanner is located and offer to guide them
- If they want you to guide them, do not grab them. Offer them your elbow so they can walk with you to the scanner
- If they have a service animal, stand on the opposite side of the voter from the animal

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Helping voters scan their ballot

Tell voters who are blind or low-vision where and how to insert the ballot

- Tap the scanner where they will insert the ballot for an audio cue

If using privacy sleeves, let them know they can feed the ballot through the sleeve

If there is an error message, maintain ballot privacy while troubleshooting

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When they are done

Offer the voter their "I voted" sticker

- Don't try to put the sticker on the voter, let them ask if they need help
- For voters with blindness or low vision, let them know how the sticker is oriented so they don't put it on upside down

Ask them if they need directions to the polling place exit

Summary and resources

"Having the accessible voting machine already set up by the poll workers familiar with its set up and operation speeds up the process and makes it less unequal in experience for disabled voters."

Public comment from NIST Request for Information for E.O. 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

Summary: Do

- Offer every voter the option to use the accessible voting system
- Ask if a voter needs help
- If the voter is listening to the audio ballot, wait until they signal you that they are ready before you speak to them
- Give voters time to vote. Everyone votes at a different pace
- Offer a voter headphones if they are voting by audio ballot
- [BMDs] Offer to help them navigate to the scanner or ballot box
- Troubleshoot a voter's problem as much as possible, so they can vote privately and independently

Summary: Don't

- Ask someone about what disability they have

- Assume a voter needs help

- Speak over a voter's audio session

- Rush a voter if you think they are taking too long

- Place headphones on a voter unless they ask you to

- Take a voter's ballot to the scanner unless they ask you to

- Try to discourage someone from using the accessible voting system if they're having a problem

Your Election Day Resources

Use this slide to review

- Procedures and forms
- Job aids for the accessible voting system feature
- Any other information in the poll workers' manual
- ASL interpreters if available remotely
- Who to contact if you need help troubleshooting a problem