

# Accessible Polling Places

What's Really Required?



# Issues



- ▶ Many polling places, wide variety of types, including
  - ▶ Older buildings
  - ▶ Historic buildings
  - ▶ Private buildings, including buildings not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements e.g., religious entities



# Critical Concept

- ▶ Program Accessibility

- ▶ Focus on the program, not necessarily the place

- ▶ For example, if a polling place is located in an inaccessible historic building, how are you going to make sure people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices can vote?

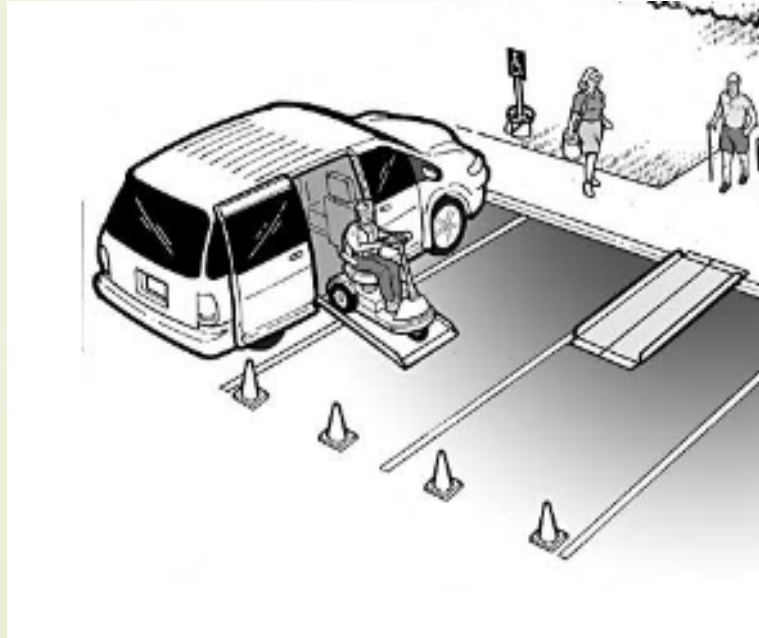
- ▶ Voting by mail or with technologies, e.g. online, apps, electronic delivery may be offered where available

- ▶ However, mail-in ballots and other options may present access issues for people who have vision or hearing disabilities, limited mobility, cognitive disabilities, or other limitations

- ▶ It's good to have multiple options, but they do not necessarily substitute for accessible polling places

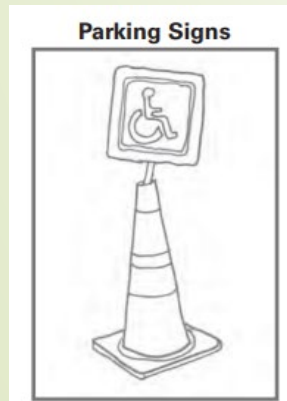
# Accessible Polling Places

- ▶ Temporary fixes are okay!



# Parking – Three Elements

- ▶ Parking Space
  - ▶ One of six, but always at least one, must be van accessible
- ▶ Access aisle
  - ▶ Must be at least 60 inches wide for cars and 96 inches wide for vans
- ▶ Signage
  - ▶ A sign with the International Symbol of Accessibility



Parking Signs

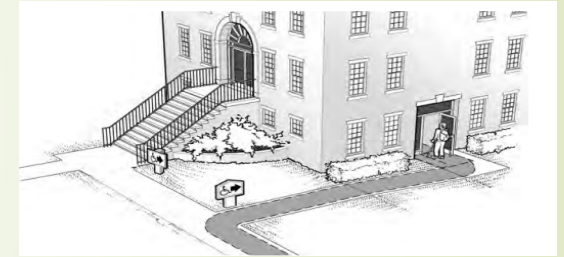


Parking space and access aisles must be on a surface that is stable, firm, and slip resistant without wide cracks or broken pavement and on the closest accessible route to the accessible entrance.

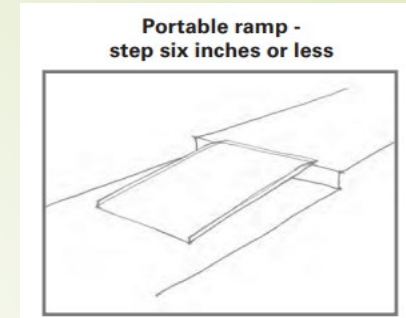


# Accessible Routes (Exterior and Interior)

- ▶ From accessible parking, passenger drop offsites, sidewalks and walkways, and public transportation stops to get to the entrance of the voting facility
  - ▶ Accessible route must be at least 36 inches wide
  - ▶ Must be the same as or near the general circulation path
- ▶ Inside the polling place
  - ▶ Must be an accessible route from entrance through hallways, corridors, and interior rooms leading to voting area
  - ▶ Must be free of abrupt changes in level, steps, high thresholds, or steeply sloped walkways
  - ▶ Essential for people who have difficulty walking or use wheelchairs or other mobility devices



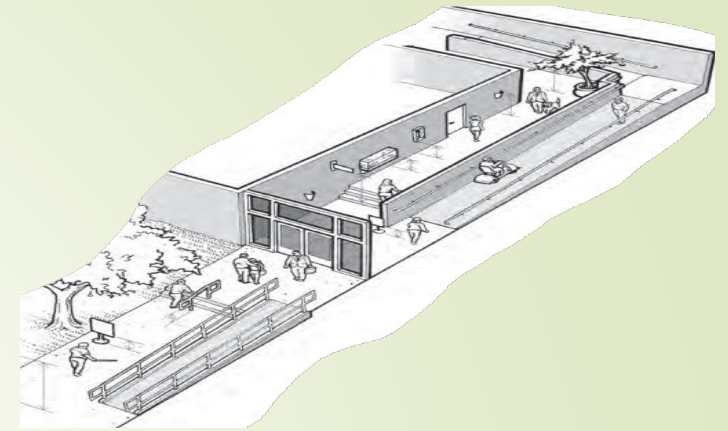
# Ramps



- ▶ If accessible route (exterior or interior) has slope greater than 1:20, it is a ramp
- ▶ If any part of accessible route contains steps, it must be ramped
- ▶ Interior and exterior ramps must not be too steep and must have a level landing at bottom and top, and where ramp changes direction
- ▶ Ramps must meet ADA's requirements regarding slope, width, landings, handrails, and edge protection
- ▶ Ramps with a rise greater than 6 inches must have handrails
- ▶ If vertical drop offs on the side, must have edge protection



# Protruding Objects Outdoors and indoors



- ▶ People who are blind or have vision loss use a cane to detect hazards
- ▶ Only objects located at 27 inches above the floor or ground or lower are detectable
- ▶ Objects higher than 27 inches and wall-mounted, must not protrude more than 4 inches into path of travel
- ▶ Post mounted objects higher than 27 inches must not protrude more than 12 inches into path of travel
- ▶ Must be at least 80 inches clear height above pedestrian route
- ▶ To make a protruding object detectable place an object or barrier (traffic cone, etc.) below protruding object in cane-detectable area not more than 27 inches above floor



# Building Entrance

Directional Signs



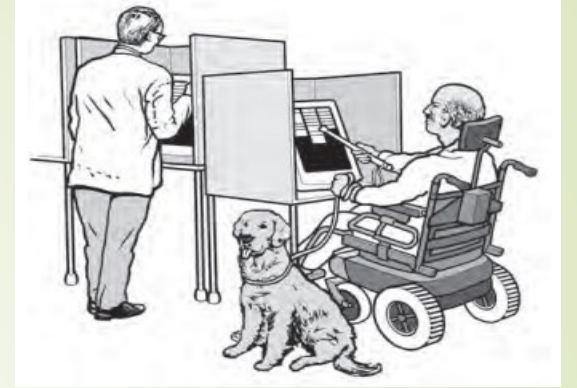
- ▶ Polling place must have at least one accessible entrance
  - ▶ One door at accessible entrance must have a min. clear width of 32 inches
  - ▶ Door hardware must be useable with one hand without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of wrist (for someone with limited hand mobility)
  - ▶ Doors must not have high thresholds that impede voters who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices
  - ▶ Inaccessible entrances must have signs directing voters to accessible entrance
  - ▶ Accessible entrance must remain unlocked at all times polling place is open



# Lifts and Elevators

- ▶ If voting area is not on same level as entrance, must have an independently operable elevator or lift to provide accessible route
- ▶ Door into elevator or lift and space within must be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices
- ▶ Controls should be operable without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting and should be no higher than 48 inches
- ▶ Chair or seated lifts found on staircases do NOT comply with 2010 Standards because they are not suited for many voters with disabilities including people using wheelchairs

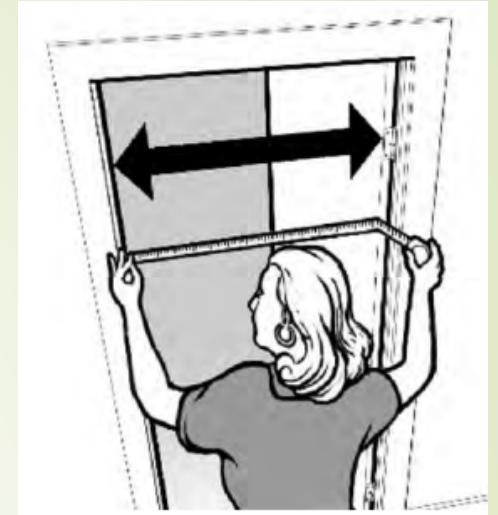
# Voting Area



- ▶ Must have an accessible entrance, adequate circulation and maneuvering space for voters who use wheelchairs or scooters or walk with mobility devices
- ▶ Must be able to get to voting area, sign in at check-in table, and go to voting stations or machines
- ▶ In voting area must be enough clearance to access and use all voting equipment
- ▶ Voting machines should be positioned so that highest operable part is no higher than 48 inches
- ▶ If voting at counters or table, should be a writing surface that provides knee and toe clearance so that voter who uses wheelchair may sit at and use

# Tools for Surveys

- ▶ Metal tape measure at least 20 feet long
- ▶ Digital level or bubble level at least 24 inches long
- ▶ Door pressure gauge
- ▶ Digital camera with flash
- ▶ Copy of 2016 Checklist for each location to be surveyed
- ▶ Clipboard and pens/pencils





# Top Tips



- ▶ Look for and choose accessible polling places whenever possible
- ▶ Consider temporary measures for Election Day, including signs when needed to help voters with disabilities, e.g. location of accessible parking, entrance, etc.
- ▶ Train poll workers about accessible features of the polling place, voting machines, assisting people with disabilities
- ▶ Make communications accessible, e.g. accessible websites, captioned public service announcements, voter registration and education materials in accessible formats such as large print, etc.
- ▶ Make accessibility part of purchasing and contracts; insist that subcontractors, equipment vendors, web designers, and other providers follow accessibility guidelines and standards



Best Tip—Contact Your Local Center  
for Independent Living





# Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living

- ▶ 17 Centers for Independent Living: Abingdon, Arlington, Belle Haven, Big Stone Gap, Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Grundy, Hampton, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Manassas, Norfolk, Radford, Richmond, Roanoke, Rocky Mount, Winchester,
- ▶ 51% of Board of Directors and Staff are individuals with disabilities
- ▶ 5 Core Services including peer mentoring, independent living skills training, advocacy, information and training, transition, and information and referral
- ▶ Additional services including technical assistance

▶ [www.vacil.org](http://www.vacil.org)





# Resources

- ▶ U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
  - ▶ ADA Checklist for Polling Places
  - ▶ (<https://www.ada.gov/votingchecklist.htm>)
  - ▶ Solutions for Five Common ADA Access Problems at Polling Places
  - ▶ ([https://archive.ada.gov/ada\\_voting/voting\\_solutions\\_ta/polling\\_place\\_solutions.htm](https://archive.ada.gov/ada_voting/voting_solutions_ta/polling_place_solutions.htm))
- ▶ U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)
  - ▶ Voting Accessibility (<https://www.eac.gov/voters/voting-accessibility>)



Karen M. Karney, MPA

[kmichalski@brilc.org](mailto:kmichalski@brilc.org)

540-342-1231

VA Relay 711



Blue Ridge Independent Living Center