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# VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES: POLL WORKER TRAINING

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# WHO.....WHAT IS DISABILITY RIGHTS TEXAS?

- We are part of a national network of protection and advocacy organizations (P&As) that work to secure and advance the rights of people with disabilities.
- Disability Rights Texas (DRTx) is the federally designated legal protection and advocacy agency (P&A) for people with disabilities in Texas.
- We provide a broad range of services to Texans with disabilities.
- Statewide agency with offices in Lubbock, El Paso, Austin, Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio
- DRTx is designated by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to ensure full inclusion of Texans with disabilities in the voting process. To achieve this goal, we provide the following services: training people with disabilities on voting rights, surveying polling places, working with election officials, and responding to legislative inquiries; and running a special toll-free Voter Rights Hotline to answer questions, respond to legal violations, and troubleshoot problems.

# DISABILITY STATS AND OTHER INTERESTING TRIVIA

- Disability is defined as a physical, mental, or sensory condition that limits major activities of daily living – walking, talking, seeing, hearing, concentrating, etc.
- Some disabilities are hidden (i.e., autism, mental illness, PTSD, chronic fatigue, cancer)
- In the state of Texas there is an estimated 2 million voters with disabilities
- In the 2016 Presidential election, 51.5% of Texas voters had a disability.
- Voters with disabilities have rights under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to be treated in a non-discriminatory way and to receive reasonable accommodations in voting.
  - Examples: To vote independently and privately; to have their polling place be physically accessible and free of barriers; to have access to an accessible voting booth; to receive assistance/support from a person of their choice or a poll worker; to be accompanied by a service animal; to be treated with respect and courteously.

# WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public entities to ensure that people with disabilities can access and use their voting facilities.
- Defined as a means of approach or admission. It is the opposite of segregation.
- Even though Private groups, such as churches, are not held to the same federal standards, when they choose to participate in a event that is provided by a state or local government, they must adhere to non-discriminatory/equal access laws.
- Making sure we all have equal opportunity (and availability) to exercise daily living activities and civil rights.

# GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Be respectful
- Just Ask
- Communicate with the person.
- Respect the person's privacy.
- Don't feel pressured to say/do the right thing.

## **Other helpful tips:**

- Always ask if the person would like any assistance, accept the idea that they may decline.
- Do not touch/move a person's mobility device.
- Look and speak to the person not their companion/interpreter.
- Do not pity or tell them they are inspirational.
- Treat them the same as any other voter!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv1aDEFIXq8>

# PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

- Person First Language is the preferred method of talking about or speaking to a person with a disability.

--examples--

- A person who uses a wheelchair.
  - A person with an intellectual disability.
  - A person who is blind/visually impaired
  - A person who is deaf/hard of hearing
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- People with disabilities have various abilities and capabilities. Avoid making generalizations or assumptions about their level of functioning.

# ASSISTANCE FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

- A voter with a disability may choose to have a person of their choice or a poll worker to support or interpret for them.
- The voter must make a notable request that they need assistance due to a disability.
- Assistance may be obtained to enter the voting booth, use the equipment, read the ballot, mark the ballot, and exit the polling booth.
- Voters have the right to vote in person. Just because they have a disability, does not mean they **MUST** vote by mail.
- Voters who cannot enter the polling site have the right vote curbside.

# HOPE YOU WERE PAYING ATTENTION!

## POP QUIZ/SCENARIOS!

- A man who is blind and using a white cane would like to vote. He is accompanied by a friend who will assist him in identifying the ballot items.
- There is a woman with hearing aids who cannot understand what you are saying.
- A man is waiting in line who is unsteady on his feet; he has speech that is difficult to understand.
- A woman with no visible disability who claims that her dog is a service animal for people with disabilities.
- A woman who says that the perfume worn by other people in line is making her faint.
- A person with a service dog which is barking constantly and jumping on people in line to vote.



# THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Focus on reasonable, doable solutions delivered in a responsive, courteous manner.
- Rely on the voter as the “expert.” If an issue you are unfamiliar with arises, ask them what you can do to best assist them.
- Make every effort to ensure your voting area is set up in an accessible manner and remains free of barriers during voting hours.
- It is not up to you to determine a persons registration qualifications or competence to vote.
- Make every effort to not embarrass a voter with a disability.
- Be okay with asking questions. Remember the Golden Rule!!



# QUESTIONS?

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DRTx Voter Rights Hotline.....1-888-796-VOTE (8683)

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