

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

### **OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE**

The right to vote is an American principle and a basic democratic right that should be protected, promoted, and practiced by everyone. As a result, the D.C. Board of Elections (DCBOE) is committed to ensuring that all District residents have equal access to the voting process. We strive to achieve this goal by providing extensive theoretical and practical voter access training to our election workers on how to assist senior citizens and people with disabilities.

Additionally, during the recent election season, we recruited an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Team to assist the ADA Coordinator ensure operationally accessible vote centers across the city.

### **ELECTION WORKER TRAINING**

The ADA Coordinator provided training on Title II of the ADA, compliance, awareness, and disability etiquette to election workers serving in the position of Voter Assistance Clerk (VAC) during the recent election cycle. The voter access and disability rights etiquette portion of the election worker training class was revamped to include more practical application of theoretical information. Election workers were trained on how to set up the voting machines in an accessible way, using the legal dimensions provided by the ADA and interpreted by the Department of Justice.

### **VOTER ACCESS**

DCBOE collaborated with disability rights advocacy organizations such as Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (ULS) to achieve a consensus with respect to identifying and correcting accessibility issues at several DCBOE vote centers. The ADA Coordinator coordinated with the Voter Education and Outreach program to bring the voting machines to meetings held at various nursing homes, disability focused organizations, and schools, including Gallaudet University, to teach senior citizens and people with disabilities how to register to vote and cast ballots. There was an accessibility hotline available to voters who had questions regarding voting access. The following language was printed in the Voter Guide, which was available in print and online:

“If you need a reasonable accommodation to vote, have questions concerning these services, or would like to receive this information in an alternative language or format (e.g., braille, large print), please email the ADA/Language Access Coordinator at [ogc@dcboe.org](mailto:ogc@dcboe.org) or call (202) 727-5411 (711 TTY).”

The phone number indicated was forwarded to the ADA Coordinator’s BOE cell phone and was answered during the hours of 8am-7pm.

### **INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION**

The ADA Coordinator worked with representatives from the following agencies to make various vote centers structurally and operationally accessible on Election Day:

- Department of General Services (DGS)
- DC Department of Transportation (DDOT)
- DC Department of Corrections (DOC)
- Office of Disability Rights (ODR),
- The Mayor’s Office for the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing (MODDHH)
- The Office of Human Rights (OHR)
- The DC Commission on Persons with Disabilities.

## **VOTE CENTER ACCESSIBILITY**

The ADA Coordinator surveyed each of the twenty-five (25) early vote centers to ensure structural and operational accessibility. Twelve (12) election workers were recruited and trained to be a part of the ADA Compliance team. They assisted the ADA Coordinator with surveying all vote centers to ensure that each of the Election Day vote centers were structurally and operationally accessible on Election Day. They also assisted Site Coordinators and election workers with maintaining the integrity of the vote centers with periodic checks while centers were open on Election Day. Temporary modifications were made to structurally inaccessible vote centers; specifically, temporary ramps were installed at Nalle Elementary School, Barry Farms Recreation Center, and Covenant Baptist Church.

In addition to conducting vote center surveys, the ADA Coordinator surveyed each of the fifty-five (55) ballot drop boxes around the city, to ensure that they were accessible to voters with disabilities.

## **LANGUAGE ACCESS**

DCBOE deployed qualified Mandarin, Spanish, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters to designated vote centers on during Early Voting and on Election Day to provide on demand interpreting services as needed. Accessibility Poll Pads (iPads) loaded with online Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) functionality were deployed to each vote center where no interpreter was deployed. Relevant election-related documents and forms were translated for use by limited English-proficient or non-English-proficient voters. These included voter registration applications, What Every Voter Needs to Know posters for vote centers, Voter Guides, and Time Off to Vote fliers for employees and students.

## **SIGNAGE**

The following signs were included in each ADA/Language Access Signage kit deployed to each vote center:

- Contact the Site Coordinator
- Elevator Voting Location Sign (English/Spanish)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (left pointing arrow) (English/Spanish)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (right pointing arrow) (English/Spanish)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (left pointing arrow) (English/Mandarin)
- Alternate Entrance Sign (right pointing arrow) (English/Mandarin)

- Accessible Entrance Hotline Sign/Voter Access (English/Spanish)
- Accessible Entrance Hotline Sign/Voter Access (Mandarin)
- Accessible Parking Sign (English/Spanish)
- Accessible Parking Sign (Mandarin)
- Multi-language Interpreter Available Sign

## **AREAS OF CONCERN**

### **Availability of election workers:**

Due to concerns about serving during the ongoing pandemic, election workers weren't always available to fill each of the election worker positions. This resulted in vacant VAC positions in some vote centers.

**Opportunity for improvement:** DCBOE will explore providing all election workers with voter access and disability rights etiquette training, not just individuals assigned as Voter Assistance Clerks. Election workers are continuously reassigned on Election Day and therefore should have the basic knowledge required to proficiently assist seniors and people with disabilities. Special emphasis should be given to training of Site Coordinators, specifically on accessible parking, curbside voting, and signage. As is done in other jurisdictions, DCBOE will explore producing an Accessible Voting Training Video to uniformly train all Election workers. DCBOE will explore having the ADA Compliance team work with the Site Coordinators the day before the election to help with set up rather than solely on Election Day.

### **Vote Center Operations Manual:**

The Vote Center Operations Manual is not accessible for limited English proficient and non-English proficient District residents who wish to work for DCBOE during the election season.

**Opportunity for improvement:** DCBOE will explore developing electronic and/or PDF versions of the election worker training manual, to accommodate individuals with disabilities that utilize screen readers. This will require extensive review by the ADA Coordinator to ensure appropriate reading order for screen readers.

### **Language Access:**

All signs were not translated into all languages.

**Opportunity for improvement:** DCBOE will explore translating all signage in all 6 of languages specified in the Language Access Act of 2004 (Amharic, French, Korean, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese).