

NASS IDEAS Award Application – 2022
State of Iowa



State Office: Iowa Secretary of State Paul D. Pate

Contact: Kevin Hall, Communications Director (515) 725-2942, Kevin.Hall@sos.iowa.gov

Title of Program: *The Voting Accessibility Quick Check Guide*

Project lead: Heidi Burhans, State Elections Director

Description of the program: The key to ensuring polling places are accessible is providing poll workers with the necessary tools in a format that is easy to follow. The Iowa Secretary of State's Office accomplished that objective with the Voting Accessibility Quick Check booklet. It includes valuable information about accessible voting equipment and signage and can be used as a measuring tool to ensure polling spaces are accessible for wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

All Iowa polling places are inspected for general ADA compliance. The Voter Accessibility Quick Check booklet is an additional resource for precinct election officials to have on hand to ensure the polling place stays accessible throughout Election Day. Partnering with Disability Rights Iowa, we produce and distribute these booklets to every precinct in the state.

Subject area of nomination: Elections

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HISTORY

When Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate returned to office in 2015, one of his top priorities was helping veterans and Iowans with disabilities vote. That initiative turned into a multi-pronged effort at voter and poll worker education, community outreach, and providing the necessary resources at every polling place. The initiative was a finalist for the [2017 NASS IDEAS Award](#).

The program continues, with additional tools to ensure polling place accessibility. A crucial one is the Voting Accessibility Quick Check booklet, which was provided for all 1,600+ polling places in Iowa ahead of the 2020 general election.

SIGNIFICANCE

Secretary Pate and Disability Rights Iowa partnered to produce the Voting Accessibility Quick Check booklet and distribute one to every polling place in the state. The booklet is a tool for precinct election officials to ensure polling places meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and to quickly recognize and fix any accessibility issues that may arise on Election Day.

Taking extra time and care to make sure the polling place is accessible allows Iowans with disabilities to have a positive voting experience when they show up to cast their vote. We want to provide all 99 Iowa counties with as many resources as possible to achieve that outcome.

The booklet includes information about accessible voting equipment, spacing, signage, and it can be used as measuring tool. The panels in the easy-fold booklet provide the necessary measurements and accessibility requirements for outside the polling place, entrances to the polling place, and inside the building.

Polling places are busy on Election Day. Due to a high volume of people coming in and out of the building, the initial set up could inadvertently change. Tables and chairs might move. Signs could shift. Walkways that were accessible when the polls opened might have obstacles accidentally placed in the path. That's why the Quick Check Guide is such a useful tool. It's a tangible, handy, easy-to-follow booklet that any poll worker can utilize to check for accessibility and adjust when needed.

The ADA Checklist is a 25 page document that provides technical assistance for polling place accessibility. A few years ago, the Secretary Pate provided tablets to all 99 counties with the ADA Checklist installed in app form. This allowed auditors to have a handy tool to identify and set up polling places ahead of elections.

The Quick Check Booklet is a fantastic supplement to the ADA Checklist to use on Election Day. It is just six pages, with graphics, and a measuring tool. It is an easy-to-manage instrument poll workers have found useful and helpful.

IMPACT/RESULTS

"The Quick Check booklet helps poll workers make the voting experience more welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities," said Jane Hudson, executive director Disability Rights Iowa. "Increased attention to accessibility will encourage more people with disabilities to participate, making our democratic process more obtainable for all."

All Iowa polling places are inspected for general ADA compliance. The Voter Accessibility Quick Check booklet is an additional resource for precinct election officials to have on hand to ensure the polling place stays accessible throughout Election Day. Having one at every polling place on Election Day helps ensure accessibility for all Iowa voters and is a tremendous tool for poll workers.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission's report on Disability and Voting Accessibility in the 2020 Elections showed significant progress in making voting easier for people with disabilities. Among people with disabilities who voted in person, 18% reported difficulties. This is down from 30% in 2012.

Despite the improvements, there is still much more work to be done. The Voter Accessibility Quick Check booklet is something every precinct election official in the country should have on Election Day. It's a tool that helps make elections more accessible for eligible voters. The booklet also makes our precinct election officials' jobs easier. Those are two goals every state election commissioner should strive to achieve.

Iowa's county auditors, poll workers and disability advocacy groups have praised the Quick Check Guide's booklet.

"It is of the utmost importance that people of all abilities have the proper access to their polling location, so this tool is great for county auditors and their staff to do a comprehensive review of polling locations and make any necessary adjustments to those locations," said Ryan Dokter, Sioux County Auditor and president of the Iowa State Association of County Auditors.

This project can be replicated in every state at minimal cost. It is a simple addition to the election toolkit, but an extremely valuable one.

"We hope that the Quick Check booklet can be used by other states to improve election accessibility for more voters with disabilities." – Annie Matte, Communications and Voting Outreach Coordinator with Disability Rights Iowa

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

ACCESS MATTERS!

Voters with disabilities are a politically active demographic. Unfortunately, not many polling places were built with accessibility in mind and can prevent people with disabilities from voting. If a voter with a disability encounters a barrier, they are less likely to vote in person during the next election.

It's a poll worker's duty to provide voters with an accessible venue to exercise their right to vote.

This booklet is **your** portable tool to expand election access.

Each section relates to a part of the polling place: **outside, entryways, and inside**. If you encounter barriers, the red **!** boxes provide explanations and same-day fixes for some access issues.

If a voter needs an accommodation that you do not know how to provide, contact your county auditor for assistance at () - - - .

1 OUTSIDE

Accessible spaces must be **CLEARLY MARKED** with a red 'X'.

Every parking lot should have 1 accessible space for every 25 SPACES.

There should be a minimum of 1 VAN SPACE.

TWO accessible spaces can share ONE van space.

2 ENTRANCES

All ramps must be **36" WIDE** for clear passage.

Ramps can have no more than a **1:12 SLOPE**.

The path from accessible parking to the building should be **RELATIVELY LEVEL**.

The ramp should be **NO MORE THAN 30"** between buildings.

3 INSIDE

There **MUST BE SIGNS** for the accessible voting accommodation entrance.

Handicap must be **48" FROM THE GROUND** and consider with a single, closed top frame, a sliding and locking position.

Handicapped signs must be at least **36" WIDE**.

Handicapped signs **WITHOUT TOO MUCH FORCE**.

VOTING MACHINES

It is important that the ADA accessible voting machine is set up and ready to go when the polls open! Even if you've never had a voter ask to use the machine, it must be ready! More people are turning out to vote than ever before, and your precinct might have a new voter who wants to use the accessible machine. If a voter who needs the machine sees that it is not set up, they may be discouraged and decide not to vote.

Machines should be set up so that no one can see how a person is voting.

USE THIS RULER TO QUICKLY CHECK MEASUREMENTS

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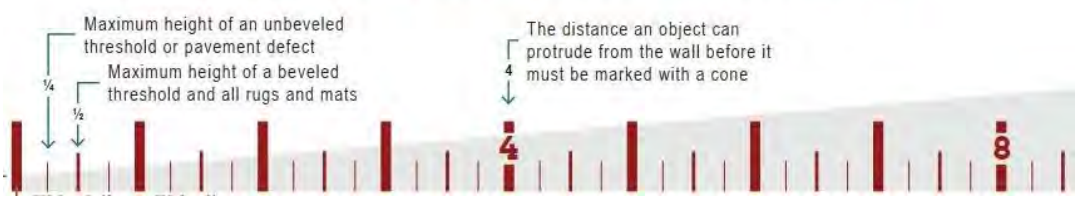
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The first page provides valuable information about overall polling place accessibility, voting machines, and the contact number for the county auditor's office.

1

OUTSIDE



Every parking lot should have 1 accessible space for every

25 SPACES

There should be a minimum of

1 VAN SPACE



TWO accessible spaces can share **ONE** van aisle

Accessible spaces must be

CLEARLY MARKED



If an accessible space does not have a sign, it can be temporarily marked with cones, chairs, or other objects at the end of the yellow parking lines

The path from accessible parking to the building should be

RELATIVELY LEVEL



Even seemingly small cracks and potholes in the pavement can prevent someone from reaching the building. If a defect is more than 1/4" high, consider smoothing it out, placing a rug over it, or marking an alternate route.

All ramps must be

36" WIDE

for easy passage



Ramps can have no more than a

1:12 SLOPE

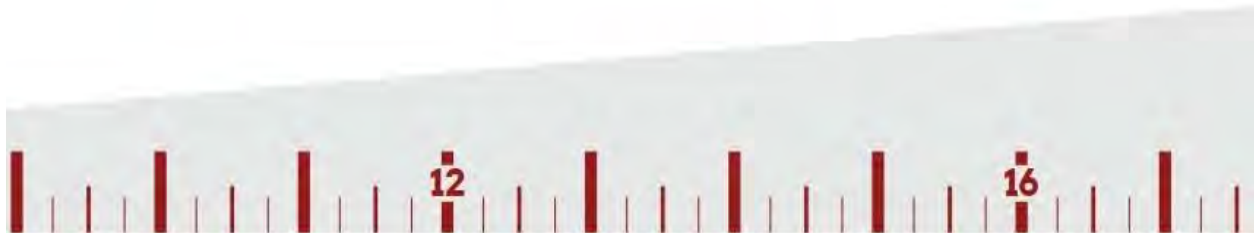


The slope is a ratio between height and length. For every 12" along the base of the ramp the height increases 1". Ex: a 5' ramp should only be 5" tall.

The ramp should rise

NO MORE THAN 30"

Between landings



The second page provides information about how to ensure the area outside the polling place is accessible. It includes a graphic on the required number of accessible parking spaces, measures for ramps, and information about the path from accessible parking to the building.

2 ENTRANCES

If there are stairs at the main entrance, there must be an

**ALTERNATE,
ACCESSIBLE**
entrance available



Entrances should have
**18" OF CLEAR
WALL SPACE**
on the pull side of the door next to the handle

! A person using a mobility aid like a wheelchair or crutches needs this space to get close enough to the door.



There
MUST BE SIGNS
from the main entrance to the accessible entrance



Entryways must be at least
36" WIDE

Handles must be
**48" FROM
THE GROUND**
and operable with a single, closed fist from a sitting and standing position

! No doorknobs! They are too difficult to operate.

Doors should open
**WITHOUT TOO
MUCH FORCE**

! If a door is too heavy, consider propping it open or posting a greeter to open the door for all visitors.



Page three provides details about entrances to polling places. This includes information about signage, necessary entryway width, door handles and wall space.



All paths of travel must be at least **36" WIDE**

Any furniture should be **EASILY MOVABLE** so that pathways can be cleared



All carpet must be **SHORT AND FLAT**

Paths must have an area to turn around that is **5' SQUARE** or is an intersection of two 36" pathways



All thresholds must be **¼" UNBEVELED** or **½" BEVELED** and all rugs should be secured and no more than a **½" HIGH**

! *An unbeveled threshold is squared on the sides while a beveled threshold is sloped.*



Any objects hanging from the ceiling or protruding **MORE THAN 4"** from the wall must be marked with a cone to be cane detectable.

All signage should be hung between **48" AND 60"** above the ground

If voting is not on the first floor, there must be an operational **ELEVATOR**

1:12 ramp slope

The minimum width of ramps, doorways, and paths of travel **36"**



The fourth page covers the area inside the polling place. It includes necessary measurements for paths, signage, objecting hanging from the ceiling and useful tips about carpets and furniture.

Unfolded, the entire booklet spans 36 inches and includes a ruler at the bottom that can be utilized to quickly check measurements.

ONE LAST CHECK

Use this list to keep track of what is accessible and what isn't — and then what you're going to do about it!

1 OUTSIDE

- Appropriate number of accessible spaces
- Minimum of 1 van space
- Pathway to the entrance is relatively level
- Accessible spaces are clearly marked

2 ENTRANCES

- Clearly marked accessible entrance
- Entryways are at least 36" wide
- Handles meet all listed accessibility requirements
- Doors are easy to open

3 INSIDE

- Adequate space to navigate and turn around
- Thresholds, rugs, and carpets are short and flat
- Signs are an appropriate height
- Hanging or protruding objects are marked with a cone

On the back side is the 'One Last Check' page. This simple checklist offers an easy review of the major steps that election officials need to take to ensure full accessibility at the polling place. Completing the checklist means you've ensured all voters can navigate the polling place, outside and inside, and are easily able to cast their ballot.

There is also a 'Notes' page in case poll workers want to write important information onto the booklet.

Altogether, the Voting Accessibility Quick Check Guide is a very useful tool that helps election officials ensure polling places are accessible at the beginning of Election Day and is a great asset for poll workers to ensure it remains accessible throughout Iowa's 14-hour Election Day timeframes.

