

Recommendations for county elections officials: Increasing accessibility for D/deaf and hard-of-hearing voters

DRC developed these recommendations in consultation with stakeholders, including members of the Deaf community and county elections officials.



Determine which services will be available at voting locations.

- In-person sign language interpretation
 - Certified professional interpreters (e.g., existing contract with County, need to contract with interpreting service)
 - Election workers with sign language fluency (e.g., recruitment, screening, assessment)
- Video remote interpreting (VRI) of sign language
 - VRI service
 - Video conferencing with fluent election worker(s) at another site

Publicize the availability of sign language interpreting services.

- What to publicize
 - Types of interpreting services available
 - How to request and access interpreting services
- Where to publicize
 - County voter information guide
 - County elections website
 - Social media
 - Voter education workshops
 - Targeted outreach to D/deaf and hard-of-hearing communities (e.g., through [Deaf Access Program service providers](#))
 - Signage at voting locations (see below)
- Use simple language, keeping in mind that the average reading level of a D/deaf person has been estimated to be at the third- to fourth-grade level.

Identify interpreters and interpreting services at voting locations.

- Post signage about interpreting services at the entrance to and at the check-in table for the voting location.
- Have interpreters and election workers with sign language fluency wear a badge, button, or sticker listing their language capabilities.
- Signage/badge/button/sticker examples
 - “American Sign Language (ASL)” (or other sign language)
 - Image of fingerspelled ASL: 
A S L
 - Image of interpreter hands: 

Plan for effective communication at voting locations.

- Secure reliable technology, including a sufficiently large video screen and stable internet connection, for using VRI.
- Train election workers
 - Needs of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing voters, including possible limited proficiency with written English
 - Etiquette for interacting with D/deaf and hard-of-hearing voters
 - Interpreting services available
 - How to connect voters with interpreting services
- Designate a sufficiently quiet and distraction-free space where interpretation can take place.
- Survey voters afterward about the quality and effectiveness of the interpreting services, and use their feedback to improve.

Create or link to short videos, with ASL interpretation and captions, to describe basic elections information, including the following topics:

- [How to register to vote](#)
- Days, hours, and locations for in-person voting
- How to vote using a ballot-marking device
- How to vote using a paper ballot
- Options and deadlines for returning a vote-by-mail ballot, including locations, days, and hours of operation of ballot drop boxes
- What is on the ballot
- How to get ASL interpretation at a voting location

Partner with [Deaf Access Program service providers](#) and other relevant stakeholders, including about the following topics:

- Training election workers about the needs of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing voters and proper etiquette
- Selecting voting locations
- Selecting interpreting services and screening for fluency
- Planning signage and effective communication
- Creating the videos recommended above
- Reaching D/deaf and hard-of-hearing voters
- Designing and implementing the survey recommended above, as well as incorporating survey feedback

Recruit D/deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to serve on county voting and language accessibility advisory committees.