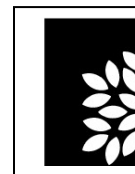


ASSISTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON ELECTION DAY

Prepared For:
The City Of London,
Municipal Elections Office



Prepared By:
Accessibility Advisory Committee for
The City Of London

1.0 INTRODUCTION



In Canada, we believe that all citizens have the right to vote. Legislation is in place to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to exercise this right and to ensure that the voting environment facilitates their ability to do so.

Ideally, polling stations should be universally accessible. This means that the location is one in which everyone can participate fully regardless of their ability. For more information on how to achieve universal accessibility, you may wish to consult the document entitled “Guide: How to plan accessible indoor events” prepared by the City of London Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Universal accessibility benefits everyone, not just people with disabilities. Parents with young children pushing strollers and seniors all benefit from environments that are fully accessible.

This short manual contains information that will help you with strategies to communicate with persons with disabilities and to provide assistance when needed.

Keep in mind that some people have invisible disabilities, which are not obvious and cannot be readily seen. Examples are a person who is blind, deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, or a person with a visual impairment, speech impediment, developmental disability, mental health or psychiatric disability, intellectual disability, learning disability and cardiac disability. All people, whether they have a disability or not, should be treated with the same respect.

Please feel free to contact us for clarification or for additional suggestions:

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**2.0
GENERAL
ETIQUETTE**

- Allow individuals to participate at their own pace
- Be observant; look to see if someone needs help
- Speak to the person with the disability, not the individual who may accompany him/her
- Provide assistance when asked. Let the person guide you as to what kind of assistance they need.
- Listen carefully and if you do not fully understand what was said, respectfully ask for something to be repeated.
- DO NOT raise your voice or speak slowly unless requested to do so
- Be familiar with your location and know the most accessible routes.
- Be yourself; it's all right not to know what to do. Ask the person to tell you what kind of assistance they would like.
- Use person-first language. Some examples are given at the end of this document

**3.0
PRE-ELECTION
DAY**

When a voter calls to inquire about municipal polling stations, staff responding to enquiries should:

- Know the location of each polling station and route of travel to each one
- Ensure each polling station is accessible
- Be prepared to give specific information including distance, direction and physical obstacles a voter with a disability may encounter
- Ensure the voter knows the time polling stations are open, as the voter may need to make arrangements for travel well in advance

**4.0
PERSONS
REQUIRING
ASSISTANCE TO
VOTE**

- If a voter with a disability requires assistance marking the ballot, the DRO may assist by marking the ballot as directed and placing it in the ballot box.

**5.0
PERSONS
REQUIRING
MOBILITY AIDS**

- Alternatively, if a friend accompanies the person with a disability, at the voter's request, the DRO may permit the friend to accompany the voter into the voting compartment and mark the ballot. The friend will first have to take an oral oath of confidentiality. In the DRO's comments' section opposite the voter's name, the DRO will enter the reason why the ballot was marked by someone else.
- Permit voters using crutches, canes, wheelchairs, or scooters to keep these devices at hand.
- Enable voters using such aids to sit down rather than having to stand for lengthy periods.
- Speak to the person at eye level, so if they are sitting, sit down or kneel down
- DO NOT lean on a person's wheelchair
- DO NOT move a mobility aid without first seeking permission to do so

**6.0
PERSONS WHO
ARE BLIND OR
HAVE LOW
VISION**

- Greet the voter by identifying yourself and anyone else with you
- When offering the voter a seat, place their hand on the back or arm of the seat while providing verbal cues
- If you move or need to end the conversation, tell the voter
- NEVER touch a service animal without permission from its owner
- If requested, the DRO may read the list of candidates aloud. The voter can find the candidate of their choice by feeling the notches, and mark the circle immediately to the left of the notch. Provide templates available to enable this process.
- Magnifier sheets should also be available at each polling station and can be provided as needed

**7.0
PERSONS WHO
ARE DEAF OR
DEAFENED**

- Some people who are Deaf use sign language. Sign language may be the person's first language, thus they may have difficulty with spoken or written English

- If accompanied by an interpreter, seat the interpreter beside staff, across from the person who is deaf
- Speak to the person who is deaf, not to the interpreter
- If the voter can lip read, look directly at him or her, speak clearly but at a normal pace. Do not exaggerate lip movement or shout. Do not cover your mouth with hands, food, cups, etc.
- Have a pen and paper handy, as the person who is deaf may wish to communicate with you in writing
- If you need to get the voter's attention, touch them lightly on the shoulder or wave your hand discreetly

Person first language is a respectful way of speaking to or about persons with disabilities. The following are examples of preferred language:

Do Not Use	Use Instead	Comments
(The) aged (The) elderly	Older adults Seniors	Adjectives like frail, senile, feeble suggest a negative image of seniors and should not be used
Birth defect	Persons with a disability since birth	
(The) visually impaired (The) blind	Person with a visual impairment or person who is blind	
Confined to a wheelchair Wheelchair bound	Person who uses a wheelchair	For persons with a mobility impairment a wheelchair is a means to get around independently
Cripple, crippled, lame	Person with a mobility impairment, person with arthritis, a spinal cord injury, etc.	
(The) deaf Deaf-mute Deaf and dumb	Person who is deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing	Use "the Deaf" only when referring to the Deaf culture
(The) hearing impaired	Person who is hard of hearing	These persons are not deaf and may compensate for hearing loss with an amplification device or system
(The) epileptic Fit, attack, spell	Person who has epilepsy Seizure	

(The) handicapped	Person with a disability	People with disabilities can be “handicapped by” physical, social, cultural, or attitudinal barriers. Handicaps are the result of barriers in the environment.
Insane, lunatic, maniac, crazy, mental patient, psychotic, psycho	Person with a mental health (or psychiatric) disability	
Mentally Retarded	Person with an intellectual disability	
Learning disabled, Dyslexic	Person with a learning disability	
Physically challenged	Person with a disability	
Suffers from, afflicted by, stricken with	Person with a disability, person who has cerebral palsy, etc	Having a disability is not synonymous with suffering; many people who have a disability perceive themselves to be healthy and have a good quality of life.
Victims of MS, CP, etc.	Person who has MS, CP, etc	
Normal		Human beings have a broad range of function and many different ways of “being”. There is really no such thing as “normal”. The term is acceptable only in reference to statistical norms.
Invalid	Person with a disability	The literal sense of the word “invalid” is “not valid.”

Source: Office of disability issues, Human Resources Development Canada, 2002