

## 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: 
  - 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.**