



# Wisconsin Elections Commission

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**DATE:** July 31, 2020

**TO:** Wisconsin County Clerks  
Wisconsin Municipal Clerks  
City of Milwaukee Elections Commission  
Milwaukee County Elections Commission

**FROM:** Richard Rydecki, Assistant Administrator  
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**SUBJECT:** Top 5 Accessibility Considerations with COVID-19

## 1. Many voters with disabilities or elderly voters may rely on curbside voting.

Solution: Curbside voting is required by law for any voter who cannot enter the polling place due to a disability. The Commission believes that individuals who are immunocompromised or have symptoms of COVID-19 are eligible to curbside vote. Curbside voting should also be available during in-person absentee voting at the clerk's office or alternate site.

All poll workers should be aware of the curbside voting process and there should be a procedure at each polling place for a voter to request curbside voting. Many clerks choose to have a doorbell with a sign, a sign with a phone number, or a greeter outside to alert poll workers of a voter in need of curbside voting.

The Commission's Election Day Manual (pp. 66-67) provides recommended procedures for conducting curbside voting which are consistent with Wis. Stat. § 6.82(1). Election inspectors confirm with the voter that they are unable to enter the polling location and then accommodate the voter by observing the photo ID, and vote the ballot while still in the vehicle. To avoid removal of the pollbook from the polling location, the curbside voter is exempt from signing the pollbook. Instead, a notation is made on the pollbook indicating that the ballot was cast at the entrance of the polling location and that the person was exempt from signing. The voter may also complete a registration form and show proof of residence from their vehicle. If there are no challenges, the ballot is placed in the tabulator or ballot box by the inspector and the incident is logged on the Inspectors' Statement.

### The Supply Program

Clerks may order accessibility supplies to assist with curbside voting and other parking signs, signature guides, wireless doorbells, and cones from the WEC Supply Program free of charge. Please email all supply requests at least a week in advance. to [elections@wi.gov](mailto:elections@wi.gov).

To view a complete list of supplies or to order supplies, go to <https://elections.wi.gov/clerks/guidance/accessibility/new-polling-place>.

*Wisconsin Elections Commissioners*

Ann S. Jacobs, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Dean Knudson | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

Administrator  
Meagan Wolfe

## **2. Polling places may have lines to vote.**

Solution: Place chairs along the path of the lines for voters with disabilities to sit. If this is not an option, provide a waiting area and allow a voter to put a place marker in the line.

## **3. New polling places may not be as accessible for voters.**

Solution: Ensure all polling places follow standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The resources below review the standards and offer solutions for any accessibility issues.

### [New Polling Place Accessibility Survey](#)

If a municipality is moving any polling places to new locations, the clerk must conduct a Polling Place Accessibility Survey. This survey is newly revised and ensures that each area of the polling place is accessible for voters. Completed surveys should be sent to [elections@wi.gov](mailto:elections@wi.gov).

### [Polling Place Set-up Guide](#)

The polling place set-up guide outlines basic information for setting up a polling place to allow voters with disabilities to participate in the election process without necessary assistance. The guide reviews the five polling place zones with tips to make them accessible.

### [Election Day Accessibility Checklist](#)

The Election Day Accessibility Checklist was created by Disability Rights Wisconsin to allow an election inspector to review the polling place quickly on Election Day to ensure that it is accessible. The checklist reviews various areas of the polling place, as well as election inspector interactions with voters.

### [Quick Fix Guide](#)

The Quick Fix Guide highlights common accessibility issues and easy and/or low-cost ways to eliminate barriers. This is a great tool to use to supplement the polling place set-up guide and the election day accessibility checklist.

## **4. Masks may create a barrier for voters who rely on lip reading to communicate.**

Solution: In this situation, consider using a clear face covering, if possible. If a clear face covering is not available, consider whether you can use written communication to interact. It may be easier for voters who rely on reading lips to communicate more easily with a poll worker or election official if a face covering is removed or relaxed during these interactions. We recommend that these interactions take place using plexiglass barriers or shields from at least a 6-foot distance between the parties.

## **5. Sanitizing accessible voting equipment.**

Solution: Every polling place must have an accessible voting machine that is set and ready to use, including audio and tactile devices on Election Day. It is a best practice to offer the use of the machine to every voter, and any voter has the right to use the machine. Public health guidance recommends sanitizing equipment after every user if poll workers are able. At a minimum, equipment should be sanitized every 10 minutes. Sanitizing practices can be seen here:

<https://elections.wi.gov/node/6723>.

Please contact the WEC Help Desk at (608)261-2028 or [elections@wi.gov](mailto:elections@wi.gov) with questions or concerns.