

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires governments and businesses to provide effective communication (EC) to people with disabilities. EC means that a person with a disability is provided information in a manner that can be understood. This includes auxiliary aids and services which are paid for by the governments/businesses, including sign language interpreters.

Voters who are deaf or hard of hearing require EC to engage. It is the responsibility of the County Election Commission to make all aspects of the voting process accessible for a deaf or hard of hearing voter.

## SIMPLE STEPS CAN GO A LONG WAY TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL VOTERS

### THINK VISUALLY!

- Present information visually and verbally throughout the voting process.
- Use pictures and graphics in publications and signage.
- Train poll workers about the needs of deaf and hard of hearing voters.
- Provide tools to help poll workers interact with deaf and hard of hearing voters. Examples include:
  - Provide pen and paper.
  - Provide an easel for written announcements so that communication can be read.
  - Keep written information short and simple. Written information is not a substitute for providing a qualified sign language interpreter for complex or lengthy information.

### QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS AS AN AUXILIARY AID & SERVICE

Deaf and hard of hearing voters have the right to request EC through the provision of auxiliary aids and services.

Auxiliary aids and services include the provision of sign language interpreters. Under the ADA, qualified interpreters are those who are able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. Someone who is not trained as an interpreter and knows only a little sign language is not qualified.

To find interpreters in your area contact your local communication center or sign language interpreter agency. Contact information can be found at:

[tennessee.gov/humanserv/rehab/cics.pdf](https://tennessee.gov/humanserv/rehab/cics.pdf)  
[myaccount.rid.org/Public/Search/Interpreter.aspx](https://myaccount.rid.org/Public/Search/Interpreter.aspx)

The Commission should provide voters with notice of how far in advance they must request interpreters and other auxiliary aids and services.

### GET THE WORD OUT AND GET THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COMMUNITY INVOLVED

- Recruit individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to work as poll workers.
- Create a relationship with deaf voters in your area who can help disseminate election information.
- Host a registration event at the communication center for the deaf in your area or high school special education class for deaf and hard of hearing students.
- Make qualified interpreters available on specific days during Early Voting and inform the deaf and hard of hearing community about this option. Individual voters should still be provided qualified interpreters and other auxiliary aids/services on Election Day when requested within the timeline set by the Commission.
- Add a signed video to the Commission's website explaining your voting machines, introducing your Commission officials, how to register, when upcoming elections will take place, or other important voter information.

We all want more people engaged on Election Day. Voters who are deaf or hard of hearing require effective communication (EC) to engage. EC means that a person with a disability is provided information in a manner that can be understood. It is the responsibility of the County Election Commission (Commission), including Poll Workers, to make all aspects of voting accessible for a deaf or hard of hearing voter.

## SIMPLE STEPS CAN GO A LONG WAY TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL VOTERS

### THINK VISUALLY!

Use pictures and graphics on signs

Post clear directional signs throughout the poll site including parking lots and hallways so voters know where to go

Review your Poll Workers Guide, "Helping Tennessee Vote," provided by Disability Rights Tennessee

Use tools provided by the Commission when interacting with deaf and hard of hearing voters on Election Day



### TIPS AND ETIQUETTE

- Many deaf voters will communicate through sign language. American Sign Language is the primary language for most individuals who are deaf. English is often a second language for deaf people.
- The voter will let you know what he/she needs to access the poll site. Contact your Poll Officer or Administrator of Elections if you are unsure how to accommodate the voter.
- Know the Commission's guidelines for requesting a qualified interpreter and other auxiliary aids and services
- Smile and make eye contact. Wait until the person can see you before speaking. This conveys respect.
- Directly face voter when speaking and do not cover your mouth.
- Speak clearly at a normal rate and volume.
- Use good lighting. Do not stand in front of a light source.
- Touch the person's shoulder or arm to get his/her attention.
- Use paper and pen to exchange written communication with voters for whom this is effective. Keep written information short and simple. Written information is NOT a substitute for providing a qualified sign language interpreter for complex or lengthy information.
- Use gestures. When you point to something, such as a different area in the room or to some preprinted information, be sure you maintain or regain eye contact before speaking.