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2014 Professional Practices Program

Access Elections! – Wisconsin's Polling Place Accessibility Data Collection System

State of Wisconsin

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DATE: For the August 19-23, 2014 National Conference

TO: The Election Center

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SUBJECT: Access Elections! - Wisconsin's Polling Place Accessibility Data Collection System

The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) audits polling places on Election Day to ensure the physical accessibility of facilities used for voting. This process includes a review of all aspects of a location from the accessible parking area to the accessible entrance to the voting area, where auditors review the layout to ensure that it is compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. The data collected through this process is initially used to identify and report polling place accessibility concerns to local election officials, but aggregate data is also used to bolster training materials and safeguard the opportunity for all voters to cast a private and independent ballot on Election Day.

Auditors are sent out into the field for each election equipped with tablet computers loaded with the electronic version of the polling place accessibility survey (Appendix A). The hardcopy version of this survey is 27 pages long and organized into five sections containing 168 possible questions. The electronic survey is designed to increase auditor efficiency by limiting an individual survey to questions relevant only to the facility being audited. Customization is accomplished through the use of a summary section at the beginning of each survey where physical characteristics of the polling place are identified by the user. Once this initial input is complete, inapplicable questions are then excluded and the survey displays only those sections and questions that the auditor must address.

The electronic survey also has built-in branching logic that utilizes auditor answers to prefill and exclude subsequent questions. For example, if an auditor indicates that a polling place does not have accessible voting equipment available the survey would update and not display questions about the booth or table where that machine should have been set up. The branching logic also

does not allow a user to enter conflicting or contradictory information. Thus, if an auditor identifies the presence of a door knob, the auditor would not be able to indicate that the facility met the standards for accessible door hardware. This modification has increased data quality and provided insurance against auditor confusion on Election Day, when field operatives have to consider complicated state and federal accessibility standards in a fast-paced environment.

Once the data is collected in the field, it is returned to our office and that information is electronically transferred to our accessibility database. This automated process eliminates data entry errors and preserves the integrity of the information gathered on Election Day. Included in the data are photos of each visited polling place. Each tablet has camera functionality that auditors can use to document polling place problems or identify best practices for accessibility compliance. These photos are used during the review process to verify and confirm findings before audit reports are generated and transmitted to local election officials.

The report generation tool currently uses information from the accessibility database to create audit reports for each facility visited on Election Day, which are then printed and mailed. An electronic survey platform is currently under development to replace this paper-sensitive process with a more interactive and efficient on-line reporting system (Appendix B). Once deployed, this system will provide the audit data electronically to local election officials and allow G.A.B. staff to include supporting evidence, such as photos, and reference materials along with audit information. Local election officials will also be able to use the system to respond to audit findings and provide their action plan for addressing accessibility problems.

Collecting audit information electronically allows our agency to analyze the data and identify trends that can be addressed by our training program. A top 10 list of the most common findings has been created from the aggregate audit data and is posted on the agency website (Appendix C). Using this resource, local election officials and poll workers can view an information page that explains each accessibility standard in question, identifies common problems associated with that standard and provides examples of best practices for compliance. G.A.B. staff can also review audit data for any trends common to a specific geographic area or election cycle (Appendix D). Using the data in this manner, agency staff has identified that accessible pathway hazards, normally the 40th most common accessibility problem, become the fifth most common problem during spring primary elections where snow and ice is common in Wisconsin.

The G.A.B. has conducted almost 2000 polling place accessibility audits over the past four years. The electronic collection of data has been a driving factor in the evolution of the program from the original paper-driven process to the more efficient process currently employed. Increased efficiency of auditors in the field allows for a larger number of polling place visits and increased data quality allows agency staff to address accessibility concerns in more effective manner. The availability of extensive data enables a proactive approach to training and public outreach and education efforts. This information is essential as we try to meet our goal to ensure that all polling places in Wisconsin are accessible and that all voters, regardless of ability, can cast a ballot at their polling place on Election Day.

Appendix A

Electronic Polling Place Accessibility Survey Screen

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board - Elections Division
Access Elections! Wisconsin Disability Compliance System

Surveys
  Accessibility Survey
Reports
  Accessibility Survey
Admin
  Survey Templates
  Random Visits
  Activity Log
  Survey History
  Voting System Security
  Manage Supplies
  G.A.B. Resource Support

Accessibility Survey

Polling Places | Survey | Comments (0) | Photos (0)

MUNICIPALITY: CITY OF WATERTOWN   POLLING PLACE: SENIOR CENTER   HINDI: 14291

SURVEY SETUP

Polling Place

NOTE: You must complete a separate survey for each polling place within a municipality. You are responding to the following polling place Accessibility Survey

Polling Place Name	SENIOR CENTER
Address	514 S 1ST ST WATERTOWN, 530944469
Municipality	CITY OF WATERTOWN
County	DODGE COUNTY

ZONE 1 - PARKING

Check all that apply, and complete the corresponding subsections.
- ☑ Parking Lot/Off-Street Parking
- ☐ Drop-off Zone(specifically designated with signage)
- ☐ On-street parking (main entrance or accessible entrance only)

ZONE 2 - PATHWAYS

Check all that apply, and complete the corresponding subsections.
- ☑ The accessible pathway is not interrupted by any curbs or steps on the way to the building.
- ☐ The accessible pathway is interrupted by a curb on the way to the building (but not the curb at the parking lot), and a curb cut is provided.
- ☐ The accessible pathway is interrupted by steps on the way to the building (but not immediately at the entrance) and a ramp is provided.

Appendix B

Online Accessibility Audit Reporting Platform

Polling Place Accessibility Report

Parking
Voting Area
Certify

Municipality: Town of Pleasantville
Location: Jones School

Parking

First Assessment

Finding: The parking area at this polling place has 10 parking spaces. For off-street parking with 1 - 25 spaces, there needs to be at least 1 van-accessible space(s) and 0 accessible spaces. This location had 0 van-accessible space(s) and 2 accessible space(s).

Discussion: Please set aside additional accessible spaces with proper signage in the off-street parking area. In addition, submit a request for the Reserved Accessible Sign using the G.A.B. Polling Place Accessibilities Supplies List.

Recommendations/Action Plan for Achieving Compliance: (Please Choose One)

☐ Please make available a van-accessible space with proper signage in the off-street parking area.

☐ OR, create an access aisle combining two regular parking spaces next to the van-accessible space using traffic cones and signage.

☐ Other (Please Specify):

Upload a photo: Choose File No file chosen

Appendix C

Top 10 Most Common Accessibility Problems

Top 10 Most Common Accessibility Problems

Posted in Accessibility

The G.A.B. conducts audits of polling places during each election. Listed below are the most common accessibility problems identified as a result of those visits. Click on each item for details and photos of best practices and common problems associated with each problem.

1. Required election notices are not always posted and those posted are not printed in 18-point font.
2. Lack of accessible parking spaces and/or insufficient signage for accessible parking spaces.
3. Insufficient signage for accessible entrances.
4. Doors that require more than 8 lbs. of force to open.
5. Gaps and uneven pavement in the pathway from the parking area to the accessible entrance.
6. Lack of privacy for voters casting a paper ballot.
7. Interior routes that had obstacles, were poorly lit, and/or were not clearly marked.
8. Accessible voting equipment that was not functional or was not clearly available for voters to use.
9. Doors that do not have lever door handles or an electronic feature such as an automatic opener, power-assist, or bell/buzzer.
10. Pathways to the accessible entrance that were not clearly marked.

You can also download a guide to solving these common accessibility problems below.

Attachment	Size
Top 10 Polling Place Accessibility Problems Explained.pdf	3.59 MB

Example of Information Page

3. Insufficient signage for accessible entrances.

Posted in Accessibility

Details

The accessible entrance of the polling place must be marked with the universal symbol of accessibility. This allows voters with mobility issues to easily identify the accessible entrance. It also lessens the possibility that a voter with a disability will enter a facility at an entry point that does not afford them access to the voting area or to an elevator or wheelchair lift that they would need to use to travel to the voting area.

Best Practices

Accessible entrances can be identified using a window decal or sign like the examples found below (figures 1 and 2). If a municipality does not own the facility where a polling place is located, a reusable or temporary sign can be displayed for Election Day.

(figure 1)   (figure 2)

Appendix D

Election Data Report

Election Name: 2012 PRESIDENTIAL AND GENERAL ELECTION ▼

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Audit Data Report

Total Audits	Total Municipalities	Total Counties	High Severity	Medium Severity	Low Severity
213	31	4	552	413	561

Top 20 most common audit findings

Problem	Question Id	Section	Count
The accessible entrance was not clearly marked at the door.	Q3602	3	148
The parking area at this polling place has #PARKING# parking spaces. For off-street parking with #NUMBER# spaces, there needs to be at least #VAN# van-accessible space(s) and #ACCESSIBLE# accessible spaces. This location had #NUMVAN# van-accessible space(s) and #NUMACC# accessible space(s).	Q401	1	132
The Type D Polling Place Hours and Location Notice was not posted.	Q6503	5	109
The off-street parking area did not have accessible spaces designated by clearly visible signs bearing the proper symbol of accessibility.	Q402	1	83
The accessible entrance door required more than 8 pounds of force to open with a closed fist.	Q3902	3	77
The Type B Sample Ballot and Voting Instructions Notice was not posted.	Q6501	5	57
There were not two samples of each ballot type posted.	Q6504	5	57
The accessible voting equipment was positioned in a way that, if a person was seated or standing at the machine, others might see how the voter was marking his/her ballot.	Q7005	5	53
The on-street parking area did not have any marked accessible spaces.	Q17A01	1	51
The off-street parking area did not have 8'2" of unobstructed vertical clearance to the van-accessible parking space, at the parking space and access aisle, or along the route to the exit.	Q303	1	45