

Every Counts

a poll worker's guide to assisting voters
with disabilities in Connecticut



For more information:

Office of Protection and Advocacy
for Persons with Disabilities

voice: (860) 297-4300

TTY: (860) 297-4380

voice/TTY: (800) 842-7303 (toll-free in CT)

www.ct.gov/opapd





the Poll Worker plays a large role

table of contents

access

ensure polling site is accessible

be an effective communicator

be familiar with the accessible voting machine

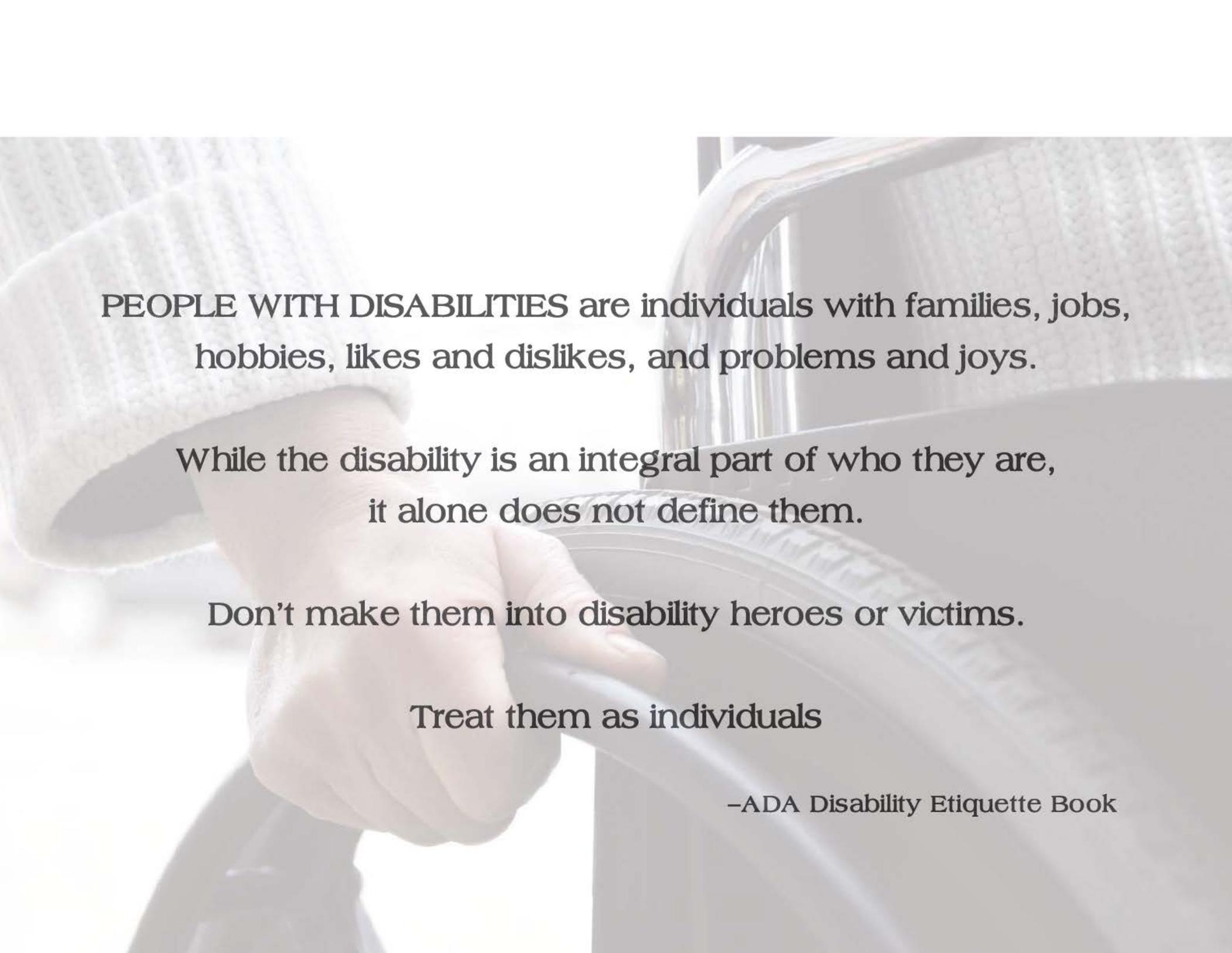
assist

assist voters with all types of needs

accommodate

locate & use election accommodations

resources

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a white ribbed sweater, firmly gripping the chrome handle of a wheelchair. The background is softly blurred, showing the side of the wheelchair and the person's torso. The overall tone is bright and positive.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES are individuals with families, jobs, hobbies, likes and dislikes, and problems and joys.

While the disability is an integral part of who they are, it alone does not define them.

Don't make them into disability heroes or victims.

Treat them as individuals

-ADA Disability Etiquette Book

Access: permission, liberty, or ability to enter, approach, or pass to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing.

—merriam-webster dictionary



access.

is your polling site accessible?



poll site accessibility checklist

At Check-In...

- Magnifying devices are out and readily available.
- Seating is available for voters who need it while waiting.

Parking...

- Accessible spaces (in Connecticut known as handicapped parking) are marked with appropriate signage.
- There are enough accessible parking spaces. At least 1 accessible space for every 25 parking spaces with a minimum of 2 accessible spaces. Every 8th accessible parking space starting with the first, must be van accessible.

Walkways are...

- Wide enough for a wheelchair or walker. (min. 36 in.)
- Free of debris, snow, and ice.
- Marked with signs clearly pointing voters to the accessible entrance.

Inside the Polling Site...

- All doors have levers or push bar handles.
- All doors on the accessible route are unlocked and can be opened by the voter.
- Accessible pathway inside the polling site is free of hanging or protruding objects.
- Doorways are a minimum of 32 inches wide. Hallways & voting areas are wide enough to maneuver a wheelchair (min. 36 inches.)
- Temporary ramps are placed in the proper locations and elevators are in working condition.





The voting process can be intimidating, especially because most citizens only vote every two to four years. As a pollworker, voters will go to you for assistance. You should know that there are different communication needs you might encounter.

are you an accessible poll worker?

understanding effective voter communication

Depending on his or her disability, a voter may require:

- Assistive Technology (see glossary)
- Pen & Paper
- Lip-reading
- American Sign Language Interpreter
- Communication Board

Remember to be patient:

- Some voters communicate in a way that may be difficult to understand.
They may require an assistant to help translate.
- Allow voters time to finish their thoughts or actions.
- Repetition may be necessary, for you or the voter.



“If a voter requires assistance to vote by reason of disability, inability to write or read the ballot, help may be provided by a person of the voters choice except:

1. the voter’s employer;
2. an agent of the voter’s employer;
3. an agent or officer of the voter’s union;
4. a candidate for any office on the ballot, unless the voter is a member of the immediate family of the candidate. (Definition of “immediate family” is located in the glossary at the end of this booklet).

Connecticut General Statutes §9-264

Make no assumptions
Ask if assistance is needed
Allow space for the voter to speak
Listen
Communicate directly with the voter
Use People First Language
Speak at a normal volume unless otherwise asked
Repeat yourself as often as needed
Open doors
Answer questions
Give directions
Guide a voter around the polling place
Complete voting forms
Adjust voting machine
Activate voting machine accessibility features
Read the ballot for a voter
Mark a voter's choices
Demonstrate respect



assist.

respect the voter...

As poll workers, you are responsible for offering assistance to every voter.

Remember:

Be Respectful

Voters with disabilities want to be treated the same as everyone else. Show them the same respect you expect to receive.

Use People First Language

Always put the person before their disability:

“Person who is blind.”

“Voter who uses a wheelchair.”

Address the Voter

Some voters may have an assistant or an interpreter.

Always look at and speak to the voter, not the assistant.

Just Ask

Offer assistance to every voter. However, don't automatically assist unless the voter clearly needs help or has asked for assistance.

...relax and use common sense

can i assist you?

assisting voters with physical or mobility disabilities



Filling out
paperwork.

Adjusting the voting
machine for my
wheelchair.

Removing barriers
from my path.

Opening a door.

“No, thank you.”

Respect the voter’s request.

Proceed with voter verification and ballot request.



helpful notes

- When communicating with a voter who uses a wheelchair, give them some space and speak with them at their eye level.
- When helping someone take a step or move, ask which is the best way to do so.



Important

Every polling place is required by law to have an accessible voting machine. Make sure you know how to adjust this machine for voters using a wheelchair.

If you do not, ask the Moderator for assistance.

can i assist you?

assisting voters with sensory & speech related disabilities



Ensuring the IVS machine affords the voter privacy.

Using the audio headset on the accessible voting machine.

Knowing where to go.

Communicating.

“No, thank you.”

Respect the voter’s request.

Proceed with voter verification and ballot request.



helpful notes

Voters who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Let the voter establish how they want to communicate. Examples include: paper & pen, lip-reading, and sign language.
- Directly face the voter when you speak. Speak normally and respectfully.
- Be prepared to move to a quieter area if necessary.



Voters who have a Visual Disability

- Always verbally identify yourself and others.
- When guiding someone, ask the best way to do so. Describe any obstacles as you approach them.
- Guide Dogs - Do not pet or distract a guide dog. It is responsible for its owner's safety.





Important

Every polling place is required by law to have an accessible voting machine. Make sure you know how to activate the machine and its accessible features.

Accessible features may include adjustments, audio headset, and accessible keypad.

can i assist you?

assisting voters with cognitive & intellectual disabilities

Simplifying all the steps to casting a ballot.

Understanding how the voting machine works.

Reading the ballot.

Communicating.

“No, thank you.”

Respect the voter’s request.

Proceed with voter verification and ballot request.



helpful notes

Voters With a Cognitive Disability That Affects Communication

- Keep your communication simple and respectful.
- Stay on point by focusing on one topic at a time.
- Repetition - If appropriate, repeat back any messages to confirm mutual understanding.
- Allow the voter time to respond, ask questions, and clarify your comments.
- Focus on the person, paying attention to any body language or gestures.

Excerpted from Tennessee Disability Coalition; *Disability Etiquette: Engaging People with Disabilities*



“to give consideration”

“make room for”

“find a suitable fit”

“to provide helpful service
as desired or needed”

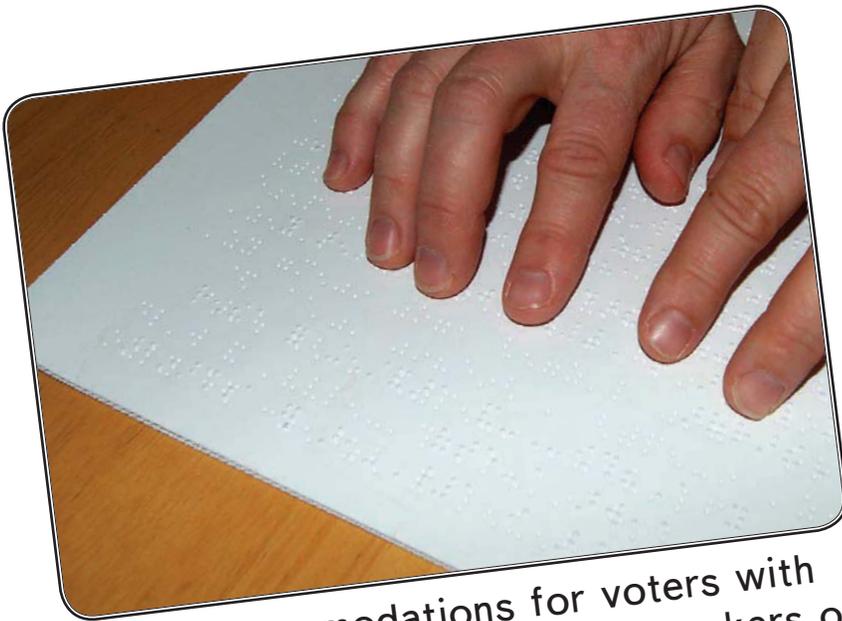
—merriam-webster dictionary



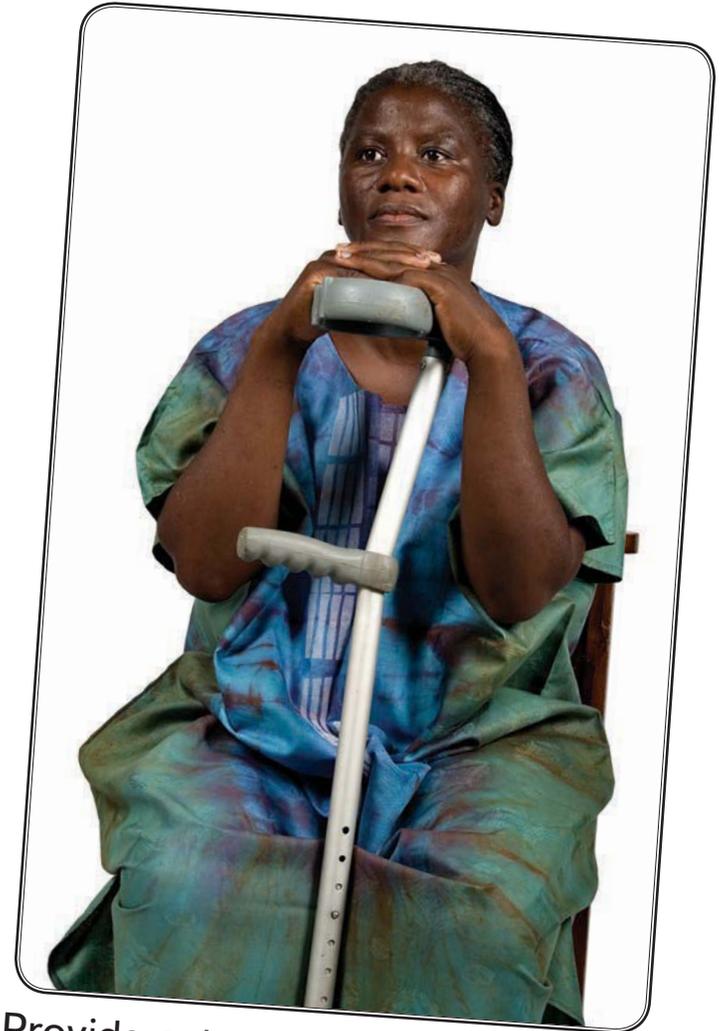
accommodate.

many accommodations are already provided by your Election Office

You may be familiar with
some of them



Some accommodations for voters with vision loss may include tactile markers on voting machines or materials in large print (if available).



Provide extra seating as needed.
Allow those who need assistance to
move to the front of the line.

navigate

- Signs & cones to create accessible parking spaces
- Temporary ramps for wheelchair access
- Signs to help mark the accessible path
- Door knob converters (for hard-to-open doors)
- Allowance for voters with disabilities to move to the front of the line and vote sooner if necessary to accommodate the disability
- Seating for voters who cannot stand for long periods of time
- At least one voting machine that can be adjusted for for a voter using a wheelchair



communicate

- Communication board
- Voter-owned communication boxes
- Voter's choice of companion or assistant to help them communicate





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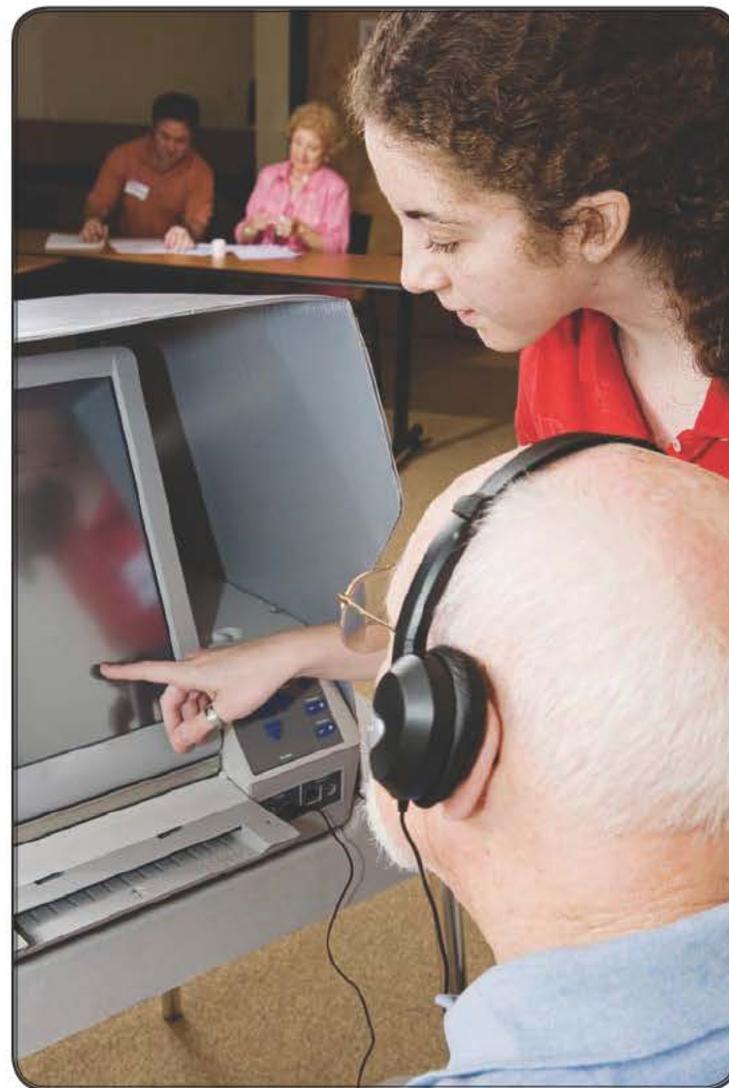


vision & audio aids

- Magnifying lenses
- Signature guides to help voters sign their name.
- At least one accessible voting machine in every polling place. The machine offers headphones for voters to hear the ballot.

other voter accommodations

- Voters may bring completed sample ballots to help remember their selection.
- Voters may request assistance from a poll worker or someone of their choice.



Accessibility:

permission, liberty, or ability to enter to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing

American Sign Language (ASL):

the primary language of many individuals who are deaf, conveyed by a system of articulated hand gestures in relation to the upper body

Assistive Technology:

assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices used to aid people with disabilities in everyday activities such as communication and mobility; e.g. electronic communication devices, voter-owned voice boxes, screen readers for people with vision loss, etc.

Cognitive Disability:

a disability that affects conscious intellectual activity such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering

Immediate Family:

For the purposes of Connecticut General Statutes §9-264 “Immediate Family” means a dependent relative who resides in the individual’s (voter’s) household or any spouse child or parent of the individual.

—Connecticut General Statutes §9-140b

People First Language:

the practice of referring to the person before their disability

Examples: “Voter with vision loss”

“Woman with cerebral palsy”

“Man with Down Syndrome”

“Someone who uses a wheelchair”

Physical Disability:

a disability that affects mobility in any part of the body

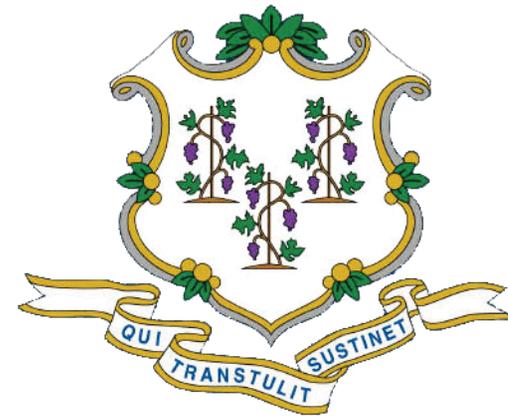
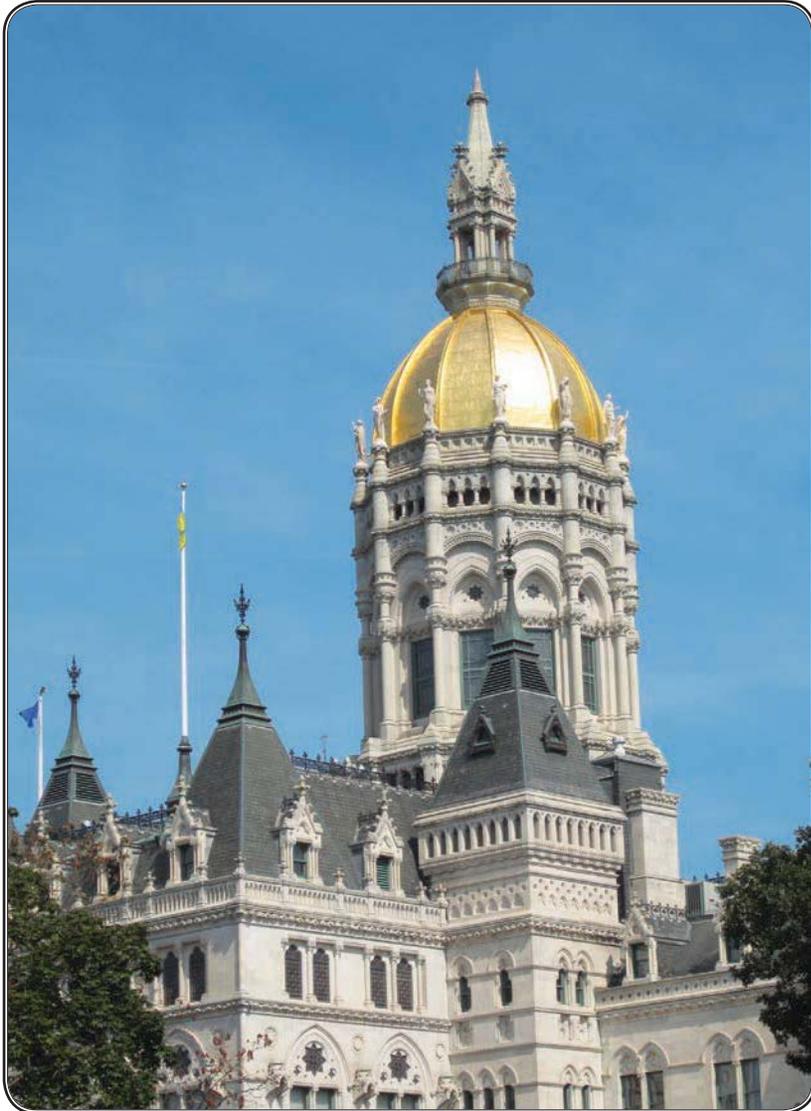
Sensory Disability:

a disability that affects the senses, including vision, hearing, and touch

Signature Guides:

a plastic mask with an opening to correspond with a standard signature area.





Connecticut State Capitol Building
Hartford, CT

connecticut “voter’s bill of rights”

Every registered voter in Connecticut has the right to:

1. Inspect a sample ballot before voting.
2. Receive instructions concerning how to operate voting equipment, on sample voting equipment before voting.
3. Cast a ballot if the voter is in line when the polls are closing.
4. Ask for and receive assistance in voting, including assistance in languages other than English where required by federal or state law.
5. Vote free from coercion or intimidation by election officials or any other person.
6. Cast a ballot using voting equipment that accurately counts all votes.
7. Vote by provisional ballot if the individual had registered to vote and the individual's name is not on the voter list.
8. Be informed of the process for restoring the individual's right to vote if the individual was incarcerated for a felony conviction.
9. Vote independently and in privacy at a polling place, regardless of physical disability.

poll worker resources

- **Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities**

60B Weston Street

Hartford, Connecticut 06120

Phone: (860) 297-4300 (voice)

TTY: (860) 297-4380 (TTY)

Voice/TTY: (800) 842-7303 (toll-free in CT)

Website: www.ct.gov/opapd

- **Office of the Secretary of State**

30 Trinity Street

Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Attn: LEAD

Phone: (860) 509-6100

Toll-free: (800) 540-3764

Website: www.sots.ct.gov

- **Registrar of Voters Association of Connecticut**

www.ROVAC.org

“Vote as if your life depends on it. Because it does.”

—Justin Whitlock Dart Jr.

Activist and advocate for people with disabilities



thank you

you make a difference when

Every  Counts



Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities
www.ct.gov/opadp



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Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee
www.DLACTn.org



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