

November 5, 2013 Poll Site Survey Report

CIDNY conducted poll site surveys for the general election on November 5, 2013. While some things have improved since the last survey – most notably attitudes of the poll site coordinators, other issues remained the same.

There were fewer instances than in previous elections of the Ballot Marking Device being broken and not fixed. Of the 80 sites surveyed, only 4 sites were identified with the BMD not working. However, limited space to access the BMD was one of the major barriers encountered. In most cases this was as a result of poll workers measuring with doors closed on BMDs. The BMD spacing was corrected when surveyors informed the poll workers of the faulty measurements. In other situations where placement of the equipment was a problem, surveyors were shown schematics that did not appear to account for objects in rooms and/or a lack of outlets to ensure privacy. It was also noted by surveyors that poll workers in many cases, did not understand privacy issues.

From our observations there was increased awareness and understanding by poll workers on the use of the BMD. In most cases, poll site coordinators and staff were accommodating, responsive and willing to assist in making the equipment and pathways more accessible to voters with disabilities when they could. Also, some coordinators reported that only a few voters asked to use the BMD, despite stated difficulty reading the ballot. This may suggest that many voters and poll workers still aren't aware that anyone can use the BMD.

We visited 80 sites in all 5 Boroughs, finding that 66.3% of the sites surveyed had barriers. All too often, polling sites had the same barriers we see during every survey: inadequate signage, non-ADA compliant ramps, narrow doorways, and poorly placed machines. Some of these problems were corrected when CIDNY surveyors notified poll site coordinators; some were architectural and could not be corrected for this election.

Some sites had multiple problems such as inadequate signage, not enough clearance space for wheelchair users in the voting area, especially to maneuver around the BMD and ADA privacy booths, and a lack of privacy resulting from incorrect positioning of the privacy booths and the BMD.

Results of the November 5, 2013 CIDNY surveys are similar to surveys done since 2003 (see chart at end of report). On average, 66 percent of polling sites in New York City continue to manifest barriers for voters with disabilities and others.

November 5, 2013 General Election

	No. of Sites	% of sites
Ramps	7	8.8%
Exterior Signage	10	12.5%
Entryways/Pathways	24	30.0%
Interior Signage	7	8.8%
Interior Access*	35	43.8%
	80	

**Interior access barriers include insufficient space to access the BMD. At 25 of the 80 sites surveyed, the placement of the BMD did not provide enough space for wheelchair user access.*

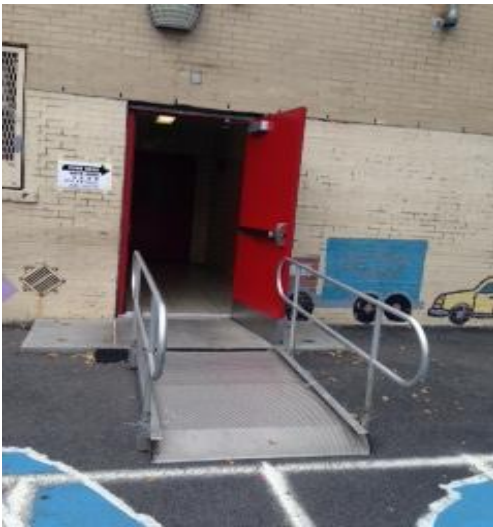
Ramps – We still find too many problems with ramps. Of the sites visited, 8.8% or 7 ramps did not meet the ADA required standards. Ramps were very steep in some cases.



NYU Carlyle- steep ramp with one handrail



Bethel Baptist Church, Brooklyn - Ramp too small for the space



122 Henry St. NY - temporary ramp with gap between the landing.



Other problems included:

- A ramp that was too steep and too long and had only one handrail;
- Inadequate temporary ramps;
- Poorly constructed ramp;
- The temporary ramp had a gap between the ramp and the landing.

Signage – Too many sites have inadequate or confusing signage, leading us to assume that the signs are not displayed with the needs of people with disabilities in mind.



Seward Park III, NY, NY – Universal sign blocked



PS 214, Brooklyn, NY – Confusing signage at main entrance. Accessibility sign with no directional information.

Of the sites surveyed, 10 (12.5%) did not have adequate signage. The Universal Access symbol was clearly displayed at most sites, which was an improvement from past elections. However, in cases where the address to the accessible entrance was hand written, it was not legible.

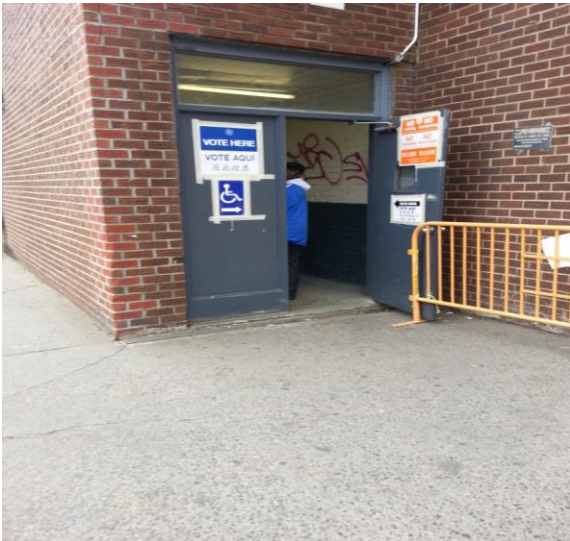
A few sites had signs which were very confusing or missing with:

- Inadequate direction to accessible entrance.
- The accessible sign at the immediate entrance is 50ft in and therefore not visible from the sidewalk.
- A lack of interior signage was observed at 7 sites.
- On entering the building there was no directional signs to the voting area, especially where one had to use an elevator.

Entryways/Pathways – Over one-quarter of the sites have problems where people try to access their polling places. Too many barriers making going out to vote in your neighborhood difficult, if not totally inaccessible.

Thirty-six sites or 27.3% had barriers at entryways/pathways, including:

- Abrupt level changes along the pathway including uneven sidewalks with big cracks and no signage to warn people.
- Steps or lip at doorways ranging from 1"- 1 1/2" high and not beveled, without a ramp.
- Inaccessible door handles and heavy doors without door monitors.
- Narrow doorways.



Linden Plaza, Brooklyn - Lip at entrance



St Francis Church, Brooklyn - Narrow doorway



Seward Park II, NY, NY – Extreme crack, uneven sidewalk



LH Pink Housing, Brooklyn - Path obstruction

Interior Access – Voters with disabilities still find that they have to ask for changes in the set up when they get to the voting stations. The biggest problem overall is poor set up of the voting area that also produces a lack of privacy for voters.

Interior access issues, which includes insufficient space to access the BMD, accounted for 43.8 percent of barriers - the highest percentage of the survey.



NYU Carlyle, NY - ADA Privacy Booth and BMD placement too close to door and wall.



Stewart Tenant Corp, NY – BMD placement

The positioning of the equipment was often affected by the position of the electrical outlet when extension cords were not available. Clearance space was often measured with the doors of the BMD closed, so in cases where spacing could be corrected, the coordinators did so when this was brought to their attention by CIDNY surveyors.

It must be noted that there was a heightened level of awareness and cooperation among the poll workers. One surveyor reported that he was “treated with openness and friendliness while doing his monitoring, and without exception coordinators and other NYC BOE staff wanted to know how they were doing on access issues – clearly hoping to be told they were doing well”. Surveyors reported that poll workers were eager to correct mistakes and that site coordinators were responsive to surveyors.

There were a few sites where the interior doors did not meet the required ADA requirements. Width measurements ranged from 28” to 31”, the ADA standard is 32”. In some cases there were double leaf doors where the divider prevented access to the wider space of both sides.

Ballot Marking Device (BMD) – Awareness about the machines seems to have improved somewhat, although in too many cases, workers either did not know how to use the machines, the machine was placed improperly or machines were downed for long periods of time by paper jams or other problems that required technicians from the Board of Elections.

There was more awareness of the BMD and surveyors observed some poll workers were able to assist voters who wanted to use the machine. One coordinator reported that up to the time of CIDNY surveyors visit, 15 voters had used the BMD – a marked improvement from previous elections. However, it seems that not enough voters are aware that they can use the BMD whether they have a disability or not. And we are still hearing poll workers say that the machine is only for people with disabilities. In some cases, surveyors heard poll workers refer to the BMD as the “handicapped machine.” This would suggest more education for poll workers on the machine and a better public education campaign.

There were only 4 sites identified where the BMD was not working, in two cases this was as a result of a paper jam – these cases were reported by poll site coordinators, but no one had come from the NYCBOE when CIDNY surveyors arrived. At one site the poll workers did not know how to operate the BMD and sought help from CIDNY surveyors.

In a few cases, the BMD was segregated from the rest of the voting area, making it difficult for voters to identify and use it. This was a result, in part, of a site that was too small to accommodate all voting booths, scanners and BMDs; however, by moving the BMD outside the voting area, voters who needed the BMD could feel that they had an unequal voting experience or that they were being treated differently because of their disability.

Poll site coordinators still tell CIDNY surveyors that while they had been told they would be in a specific space, when they arrived to set up, building representatives brought them to a different, smaller space. In these cases, lack of appropriate outlets and space can create inaccessible voting. CIDNY believes that the NYCBOE must create Memoranda of Understanding with all polling sites that identify the space to be used and the conditions that the space must be in on Election Day.

CIDNY Poll Site Survey Summary from 2003-2013

CIDNY poll site accessibility surveys were conducted in New York City in November 2003, March 2004, September 2004, November 2004, November 2005, November 2006, November 2007, February 2008, September 2008, November 2008 and November 2009, September 2010, November 2010, November 2011, September 2012, November 2012, November 2013.

Below are the number of sites visited during each survey and the number of sites where access barriers were found:

November 2003	31 Sites Visited, 14 Sites or 42% with Barriers
March 2004	44 Sites Visited, 30 Sites or 68% with Barriers
September 2004	35 Sites Visited, 15 Sites or 43% with Barriers
November 2004	85 Sites Visited, 52 Sites or 61% with Barriers
November 2005	77 Sites Visited, 57 Sites or 74% with Barriers
November 2006	15 Sites Visited, 15 Sites or 100% with Barriers
November 2007	50 Sites Visited, 42 Sites or 84% with Barriers
September 2008	24 Sites Visited, 21 Sites or 87% with Barriers
November 2008	65 Sites Visited, 54 Sites or 83% with Barriers
November 2009	51 Sites Visited, 43 Sites or 84% with Barriers
September 2010	53 Sites Visited, 42 Sites or 80% with Barriers
November 2010	53 Sites Visited, 40 Sites or 75% with Barriers
November 2011	55 Sites Visited, 46 Sites or 84% with Barriers
September 2012	43 Sites Visited, 37 Sites or 86% with Barriers
November 2012	132 Sites Visited, 108 Sites or 81.8% with Barriers
November 2013	80 Sites Visited, 27 Sites or 66.6% with Barriers

Since 2003, CIDNY has surveyed 893 polling sites; with an average of 75% with barriers.