

**State Bar of Arizona Committee on Persons With Disabilities
Accessibility Committee Site Visit
Mohave County Superior Court
Bullhead City, Arizona**

SURVEY BACKGROUND

Facility: Mohave County Superior Court, 2225 Trane Road, Bullhead City, Arizona

Date: June 4, 2004

Team: Colleen McManus, State Bar of Arizona (team leader); Jim Reed, Jaburg & Wilk P.C., Phoenix, Arizona

Auxiliary Team Member: Hon. Charlotte Wells (Ret.), Mohave Community College

Court and County Personnel: Kathy Sperando, Judicial Administrative Assistant; Tom Brady, Presiding Justice of the Peace



Overview

The overall impression is that this is a newer facility that was designed with many of the features needed to provide accessibility for and/or to accommodate persons with disabilities. The team noted several positive points, such as ramps to witness and jury boxes, and fully ADA compliant restrooms in the administration area. The team also noted suggestions that would enhance accessibility. All observations are discussed below.

Justice of the Peace Brady informed the team that at the time of this survey, a bidding process was underway for the construction of a new facility to house the Superior Court, with the Justice Court then taking over much of the existing facility.

Parking

The parking lot is immediately outside this building, and designated accessible spaces are prominently placed and identified just outside the main entrance.

Entrances and Exits

The team noted visible and height appropriate pushbuttons for the front doors. When activated, these doors opened for what seemed an adequate amount of time to allow mobility-impaired individuals to safely pass through.



The main lobby has some room to maneuver, although long banks of seating may make this a challenge for some. The lobby is flanked by an enclosed counter area, and one counter was an appropriately lowered height for access by individuals using a wheelchair.



The team noted Braille on many of the posted signs; however, there was no apparent signage directing those needing assistance or accommodation to a contact person. Ms. Sperando advised that individuals needing such assistance could make this request of one of the staff at the counter. The team suggested that incorporation of this signage would be inexpensive and helpful.

The public telephone, fire alarm and fire extinguisher in the lobby are located at a height that would allow ready access by someone using a wheelchair.

Visitors exit through the main entry and can use the automatic door opener if they desire.



Security

Individuals do not pass through any security check at this facility.

Division One Courtroom

This courtroom is entered by jury members via ramps outside the courtroom. There are also ramps to the bench, the witness box, and the jury box, making this a very accessible facility. The jury box holds moveable chairs, which allow maximum flexibility and maneuvering. Ms. Sperando noted that in the event a juror used a wheelchair, one of the regular jury chairs could just be moved out to easily accommodate the wheelchair. Ramps and open space in these areas appear to be fully accessible.



The public access doors to this courtroom are difficult to maneuver, and could be particularly so for an individual with a disability. There are no pushbuttons to otherwise activate these doors. The team recommended that the tension in these doors be checked and lowered to the five-pound level, if possible. There is church pew style seating for the public, and Ms. Sperando advised that a member of the public with a disability can be easily accommodated in open space and cut out spaces in and around this seating. The attorney areas are very open with moveable seating. Given their flexibility, these areas also appear to be fully accessible.



Restrooms

The women's restroom off the lobby has easy wheelchair access. There is a large stall with bars that would allow for side-to-side transfer, if needed. The counter has been lowered and under-counter pipes have been insulated for the safety and benefit of a person using a wheelchair. Soap and paper towel dispensers are all at an appropriately lower height.



The faucets use handles that must be pushed and held down to keep water running. These can be difficult for some individuals with a mobility disability to use, so the team suggested that handles be exchanged with larger flipper handles.

The first floor men's restroom is situated in a somewhat similar fashion, and similar suggestions were made for improvements.

On the plus side, the courthouse has installed fully accessible employee restrooms in the administration area. Ms. Sperando explained that members of the jury also use these restrooms when needed.



Justice Court Courtroom

This courtroom has many of the same features as the Division One courtroom, including a ramp up to the bench and the witness box. There is no jury box. Due to a proceeding underway at the time of this survey, the team did not tour this room. The team noted features by looking through a window and conferring with Ms. Sperando.

Juror Facilities

As previously noted, there are fully accessible restrooms that jurors may use in the administration area. Other jury areas appeared very accessible.

Court Administration Areas

The team noted that court administration areas were generally accessible. Ms. Sperando informed the team that they would do their best to accommodate a person with a disability who required access to those areas.

General Observations

The team noted the many features that this facility offers for individuals with disabilities. The team made some suggestions that would further enhance accessibility and accommodation:

- Install a sign in the lobby that directs individuals requiring assistance and/or accommodation to a staff point of contact.
- Check tension on doors and, if possible, reduce tension to 5 pounds to allow more ease in opening.
- Exchange handles on restroom faucets to the flipper type.

CONCLUSION

The Mohave County Courthouse in Bullhead City is a very functional facility. Ms. Sperando demonstrated a real awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs of the disabled. Ms. Sperando favorably received the recommendations of the team members, and made the tour a very welcoming and informative experience. The team is grateful for the opportunity to have visited this facility.

