

**State Bar of Arizona Task Force on Persons With Disabilities
Accessibility Committee Site Visit
Mohave County Superior Court
Kingman, Arizona**

SURVEY BACKGROUND

Facility: Mohave County Superior Court, 2001 College Drive, Kingman, Arizona
86402

Date: June 4, 2004

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

Auxiliary Team Member: Charlotte Wells, Mohave Community College

Court and County Personnel: Bob Lawless Court Security Coordinator; the Honorable
James E. Chavez



Overview

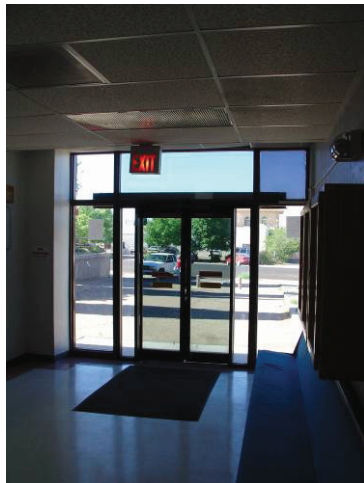
The overall impression is that this is an older facility for which administrators and court personnel, who are sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities, have done an excellent job to provide access and to accommodate. The team noted several positive points, such as newer, more accessible restrooms on the third floor of this historical building. The team also noted suggestions that would enhance accessibility. All observations are discussed below.

It should be noted that there are plans for the construction of a new courthouse, with the estimated completion date being in 2007.

Entrances and Exits

So as to accommodate individuals with disabilities, the courthouse no longer uses its historic and picturesque entrance, which is at the top of a small hill one must access via stairs from the street level. Instead, all visitors are directed to a more accessible door to the left of the main entrance, and just off the parking lot where there are designated accessible spaces. Signs mark the way. There is also a long sidewalk with a railing that extended from this area to the back of the building, where there was another small parking lot. Mr. Lawless said that the sidewalk had been installed for an attorney who practices at the court and who uses a wheelchair.

A very positive change that has been made to this older facility is the installation of automatic doors. When in use, the doors stay open for ample time to allow very easy access.



There is a ramp between the older and newer sections of the court building, and it seemed to be able to be easily negotiated.

Most visitors exit through the main entry with the automatic doors. Mr. Lawless pointed out some exits down stairways that are used in the event of emergencies.

Individuals with disabilities who could not use the elevator and could not maneuver stairs would be carried out in the event of an emergency.

Suggestion: Check tension on doors and, if possible, reduce tension to 5 pounds to allow more ease in opening.

Security

Mr. Lawless stated that all but on-duty police officers are screened through security. This includes the passing through a metal detector. Mr. Lawless noted that the security employees are trained to assist individuals using a wheelchair, walker or other assistive device so they may be screened with a minimum of disruption or inconvenience.

Informational Center

Upon entry, the team noted a sign directing persons with a disability needing assistance to a contact person. Mr. Lawless also noted that jury summons provide information to prospective jurors about how they may request accommodation.

Court Administration

The Court Clerk's office is right inside the main entrance, which is a convenient location for those who are doing business with this office. The counter height is too high for individuals using a wheelchair and staff members provide accommodation by escorting persons who have a mobility disability to a separate area away from the main lobby to conduct business.

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



Restrooms

The first floor women's restroom has very tight maneuvering around the door and in the main area, even for individuals whose mobility is not impaired. Despite this design flaw, some very positive changes have been made to provide better and safer accessibility. The counter has been lowered and under-counter pipes have been insulated for the benefit of a person using a wheelchair.

The "accessible" stall does not allow room for a side-to-side transfer; however, with its bars and higher toilet, it would accommodate some individuals with disabilities. The sinks have small flipper handles, which are easier than conventional handles for some individuals with a mobility disability. The team suggested that larger flipper handles would make the faucets even easier to operate. They also suggested relocating the soap dispenser to a more convenient location. Another suggestion was the placement of a sign outside the restroom advising that a fully accessible restroom is available on the third floor.



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

There are no public restrooms on the second or third floors; however, there are public restrooms located right off the stairwell, between the second and third floors. The team did not see these restrooms, as they cannot be accessed by individuals who have a mobility disability. On the plus side, the courthouse has installed a fully accessible restroom for jurors but which is available to all courthouse personnel and visitors with disabilities.

Suggestions: Install larger flipper handles on faucets in restrooms. Relocate restroom soap dispensers for easier access by those in wheelchairs. Install signs outside of all public restrooms advising that a fully ADA compliant restroom is available on the third floor.

Hallways

Hallways are wide. Public telephones and drinking fountains in the lobby area are at an appropriate height and are functional. The team also noted Braille on all signage.



Elevators

There is a Braille sign outside the elevator, but no Braille in the elevator to indicate floor numbers or provide directions. The team suggested that an inexpensive Braille sign be installed in the elevator.

Suggestion: Install a Braille sign and Braille on the floor numbers in the elevator.

Law Library

A newly remodeled law library was being completed, with plans for computer terminals that could be easily accessed by all users. There was a long ramp with a railing up to the higher level entrance to this space, and maneuvering would certainly be relatively easy for persons using a wheelchair or other assistive device due to this enhancement. There is also a fully accessible restroom in this area.

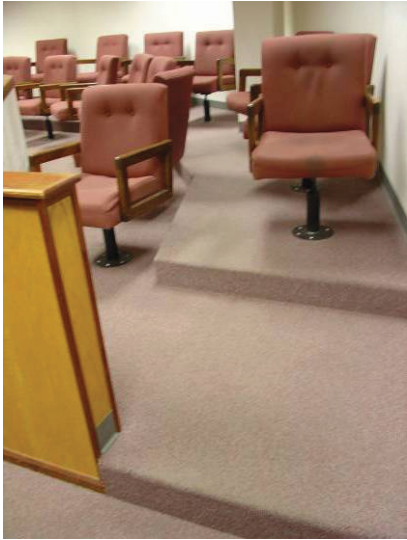
Courtrooms

Division Three

This courtroom is entered via double doors from the lobby. The doors have a tension of around eight pounds. It was suggested that if the tension could be reduced to five pounds, individuals would have easier access.



The main seating is similar to church pew seating, with one space for a wheelchair in the last row. There are steps up to the jury and witness boxes, which was how the room was originally constructed. Mr. Lawless noted that witnesses and jurors who need accommodation are seated in front of the boxes. Likewise, there is a step up to the bench that would most likely render it inaccessible by a judge with a mobility disability. On the plus side, the attorney areas, which are on the ground level, can be easily accessed and rearranged if needed.



Another plus discussed by Mr. Lawless is the infrared listening system that has been installed in the courtrooms. Signage outside the courtrooms alerts individuals with a hearing disability that the system is available and, upon request, they are provided with assistive listening devices.

Division Six

This courtroom has many of the same features as the Division Three courtroom. Please refer to that section of this report for observations. One additional plus noted by the team near this courtroom was the lower height placement of fire extinguishers and drinking fountains for easier accessibility by individuals using a wheelchair.

Family Court

This courtroom is a smaller room that has microphones and computers in addition to the hearing devices in the other courtrooms. As construction for witness and jury boxes is similar to the other courtrooms, individuals using a wheelchair are accommodated by placing them in front of the respective boxes.

Division Four

The team was met by the Honorable James Chavez, who very graciously talked with the team about his courtroom. This room has a more contemporary look to it and, given its newer construction, the jury and witness boxes are on the same level as the main floor. This is a wonderful accessibility feature. There is also wheelchair space in the public seating areas. The attorney areas are fully accessible, and the furniture can be moved to accommodate any particular needs. Fire alarm pulls were placed at a height that could easily be reached by someone using a wheelchair. This courtroom was the most fully accessible of all courtrooms in this facility.



Visiting Judges

This courtroom is located on the third floor of the older part of the building, and has the look of a very historic and traditional courtroom. Many of the original features still abound, including beautifully carved woodwork and racks on the bottoms of hardwood theatre-style chairs that were once used to hold one's cowboy hat. The jury and witness boxes are raised, and the bench is at a prestigious height, creating a real focal point. A very positive point is that an infrared hearing system has been installed in this courtroom.



Juror Facilities

As previously noted, there are fully accessible restrooms for jury members on the third floor. Except as otherwise noted in terms of jury boxes in most courtrooms, other jury areas, including jury deliberation rooms, appeared to be very accessible.

General Observations

The Mohave County Courthouse in Kingman is a stately and historic facility with many picturesque aspects. Mr. Lawless and other court employees have demonstrated a real awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs of persons with disabilities. Despite the age of this facility, and the inherent accessibility challenges created by original construction, they have done a very good job of providing accessibility and accommodation. Mr. Lawless 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.

