

COPY

**FORT BEND COUNTY COUNCIL OF JUDGES
ORDER ADOPTING THE POLICY FOR ENSURING EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION
WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

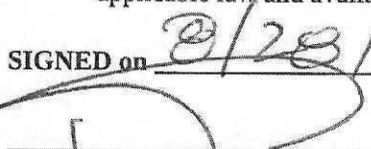
On August 19, 2026, at a duly posted meeting, the Fort Bend County Council of Judges considered the Fort Bend County Courts Policy for Ensuring Effective Communication with Individuals with Disabilities: Auxiliary Aids and Services for Court Proceedings and Related Court Services (the "Policy").

The Council finds that adoption of the Policy promotes equal access to court proceedings and related court services; establishes a uniform process for requesting, evaluating, and providing auxiliary aids and services; and supports compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and applicable implementing regulations.

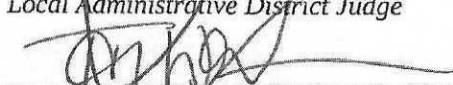
IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The Policy is adopted and approved effective August 19, 2026.
2. The Policy applies to the Fort Bend County district courts and county courts at law, including related court proceedings, services, programs, and activities within its stated scope.
3. The Fort Bend County Courts Administration Department, Court ADA Coordinators, and the Fort Bend County ADA Coordinator / Regulatory Compliance Officer are authorized and directed to coordinate implementation, training, public notice, operational procedures, and annual review consistent with the Policy and applicable law.
4. The signed original of this Order and the adopted Policy shall be maintained with the official records of the Council of Judges. Courts Administration shall distribute an accessible electronic copy to affected courts and supporting County departments and arrange publication on the appropriate County court and accessibility webpages.
5. Nothing in this Order or the Policy limits a judge's authority over courtroom proceedings, case management, or substantive legal determinations, and implementation remains subject to applicable law and available lawful appropriations.

SIGNED on 8/28/, 2026.


HON. CHRISTIAN BECERRA

Local Administrative District Judge


HON. TONI WALLACE

Administrative County Court at Law Judge

FILED**AUG 28 2026**AT 2:25 P.M.*Brendy McLean*
CLERK DISTRICT COURT, FORT BEND CO., TX

FORT BEND COUNTY COURTS

POLICY FOR ENSURING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Auxiliary Aids and Services for Court Proceedings and Related Court Services

Approved By	Council of Judges
Effective Date	August 19, 2026
Applies To	Fort Bend County district courts and county courts at law, related court services and programs
Policy Owner	Fort Bend County ADA Coordinator / Regulatory Compliance Officer
Review Cycle	Annual

1. PURPOSE, POLICY, AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

1.1 Purpose. This policy establishes a clear, uniform process for requesting, evaluating, and providing auxiliary aids, services, and other communication-related accommodations so that individuals with disabilities can participate fully and equally in Fort Bend County Courts.

1.2 Policy Statement. Fort Bend County district courts and county courts at law (collectively, the "Courts") will take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, litigants, attorneys, witnesses, victims, jurors, prospective jurors, spectators, companions, and other members of the public with disabilities are as effective as communications with others. When necessary to ensure effective communication, the Courts will provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services at no cost to the requestor.

1.3 Scope. This policy applies to the Courts, including in-person, remote, and hybrid court proceedings; jury service; court administration; court-coordinator interactions; and other public-facing court services, programs, or activities supported by County resources. This policy does not replace the Fort Bend County Courts Language Access Plan, which governs spoken-language interpretation and translation for limited English proficient court users.

1.4 Legal Authority. This policy is intended to be consistent with the following authorities:

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131–12134;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794;
- 28 C.F.R. Part 35, including §§ 35.130 and 35.160–35.164; and
- Applicable Texas law governing court interpreters, accessibility, and court proceedings.

1.5 Non-Limitation of Rights. This policy is an implementation document. It is not intended to narrow any right, remedy, or protection available under federal or state law.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Auxiliary Aids and Services. Services, equipment, technology, or methods of communication that enable effective communication with individuals who are blind, have low vision, are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, have speech disabilities, or have other communication disabilities. Examples include qualified interpreters, CART or other real-time captioning, assistive listening systems, qualified readers, large-print or Braille materials, accessible electronic documents, audio recordings, and other effective methods.

2.2 Companion. A family member, friend, support person, guardian, or associate of a person seeking access to court services or proceedings who is an appropriate person with whom the Courts should communicate.

2.3 Court ADA Coordinator. The person designated by a court or court administration to receive, route, and coordinate requests under this policy.

2.4 County ADA Coordinator. The Fort Bend County ADA Coordinator / Regulatory Compliance Officer, or authorized designee.

2.5 Effective Communication. Communication that is as clear, timely, and understandable for a person with a disability as it is for others, and that protects the person's privacy and independence.

2.6 Individual with a Disability. A person with a disability as defined by applicable law.

2.7 Primary Consideration. Reasonable deference to the aid or service requested by the individual with a disability, unless another equally effective method is available or the requested method would result in a fundamental alteration or undue financial and administrative burden.

2.8 Qualified Interpreter. An interpreter who can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. Depending on the circumstances, a qualified interpreter may include an on-site or remote sign language interpreter, oral interpreter, tactile interpreter, cued-speech interpreter, or Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). Not all interpreters are qualified for every setting or individual.

2.9 Qualified Reader. A person who can read effectively, accurately, and impartially, using any necessary specialized vocabulary, in a manner the person receiving the information can understand.

2.10 Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). Interpreting services provided through video conferencing technology that meets applicable ADA standards and is actually effective for the communication at issue.

3. GENERAL STANDARDS

3.1 No Cost / No Surcharge. The Courts and County will not require a person with a disability to pay for auxiliary aids or services needed for effective communication and will not assess those costs as court costs. Standard copy fees may be charged only to the same extent they would be charged for a standard copy. No additional fee may be charged for converting a document into an accessible format or for extra pages caused solely by the format change.

3.2 Individualized Assessment and Primary Consideration. The Courts will determine the appropriate aid or service on an individualized, case-specific basis. In doing so, the Courts will give primary consideration to the individual's usual method of communication and requested aid or service.

3.3 Timely, Accessible, and Respectful Delivery. Auxiliary aids and services must be provided in accessible formats, in a timely manner, and in a way that protects the person's privacy, dignity, and independence.

3.4 No Requirement to Bring One's Own Interpreter or Reader. The Courts will not require an individual with a disability to bring another person to interpret, read, or otherwise facilitate communication.

3.5 Limited Use of Accompanying Adults or Children. The Courts will not rely on an accompanying adult or minor child to interpret or facilitate communication except as allowed by applicable ADA regulations.

- An accompanying adult may be used only when there is an emergency involving an imminent threat to safety or welfare and no interpreter is available, or when the individual specifically requests that adult, the adult agrees, and reliance on that adult is appropriate under the circumstances.
- A minor child may not be used to interpret or facilitate communication except in an emergency involving an imminent threat to safety or welfare where no interpreter is available.

3.6 Alternative Aid or Service. If the requested aid or service cannot be provided, the Courts will provide another effective aid or service, if available, that ensures effective communication to the maximum extent possible.

3.7 Fundamental Alteration or Undue Burden. A determination that a requested action would fundamentally alter the nature of a court service, program, or activity, or would result in an undue financial and administrative burden, must be made in writing by the County ADA Coordinator or other lawfully designated official after considering all resources available for use in the funding and operation of the service, program, or activity. Even when the preferred request cannot be granted, the Courts will take any other action that would not result in such alteration or burden but would nevertheless ensure effective communication to the maximum extent possible.

3.8 Judicial Authority. Nothing in this policy limits a judge's authority over courtroom proceedings or substantive legal determinations. Requests that may affect scheduling, courtroom procedure, appointment of interpreters under applicable law, evidentiary presentation, confidentiality, or a party's substantive rights shall be referred promptly to the assigned judge or other appropriate judicial officer, with coordination support from the Court ADA Coordinator and County ADA Coordinator.

4. EXAMPLES OF AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES

4.1 Blindness, Low Vision, or Deaf-blindness. Appropriate aids and services may include:

- qualified readers;

- large print, Braille, accessible Word, PDF, or text documents, audio recordings, or other accessible formats;
- assistance reading forms or navigating public-facing materials;
- screen-reader compatible or magnification-compatible electronic materials;
- oral description of visual information when appropriate; and
- orientation or wayfinding assistance to courtrooms or related court locations.

4.2 Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafblind, or Speech Disabilities. Appropriate aids and services may include:

- qualified interpreters on-site or through VRI when effective;
- CART or other real-time captioning;
- assistive listening systems and devices;
- exchange of written notes for brief, simple communications when effective and requested or agreed upon;
- accessible telephones, videophones, captioned telephones, text telephones (TTY), relay- or VRS-compatible communications, or equally effective telecommunications;
- speech-to-speech transliteration or additional time to communicate; and
- accessible electronic communications and captioned audiovisual content.

4.3 Remote Proceedings and Technology. When court proceedings or services are conducted remotely, the Courts will make reasonable efforts to:

- identify the participant's preferred communication method in advance;
- ensure interpreters or captioners can join as participants with appropriate permissions;
- provide or request accessible electronic documents in advance when practicable;
- use platforms and settings that support accessible participation; and
- implement a backup plan if technology fails or proves ineffective.

5. REQUESTING AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES

5.1 How to Request. Requests may be made orally or in writing by the individual with a disability or by an attorney, family member, guardian, support person, or other authorized representative acting on the individual's behalf. No specific form is required, although the Courts may make optional forms available for convenience.

5.2 Where to Request. Requests may be directed to the applicable Court ADA Coordinator, court coordinator, jury office, clerk's office, or the County ADA Coordinator. Any court employee who receives a request must promptly route it to the appropriate person for action. Each court should post current contact information for its Court ADA Coordinator on its website and in public areas. Countywide questions may be directed to:

Fort Bend County ADA Coordinator / Regulatory Compliance Officer
401 Jackson Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond, Texas 77469
Phone: 281-238-3267
Email: ADACoordinator@fbctx.gov

5.3 Timing. Requests should be made as early as possible. For scheduled proceedings or events, at least 48 hours' advance notice is strongly encouraged, and earlier notice is preferred for sign-language interpreting, CART, Braille, or accessible document conversion. Lack of advance notice will not, by itself, result in denial; day-of and walk-in requests will be addressed to the extent feasible based on the circumstances.

5.4 Information That May Be Requested. The Courts may ask only for the limited information reasonably needed to understand the communication need, the requested aid or service, and the timing or context of the proceeding. Ordinarily, the Courts will not require medical records or formal disability documentation to provide auxiliary aids or services for effective communication.

5.5 Interactive Process. When appropriate, the Court ADA Coordinator, County ADA Coordinator, and relevant court staff will communicate with the requestor to confirm the preferred method of communication, evaluate available options, and arrange an effective aid or service.

5.6 Prompt Response. The Courts will respond to requests as promptly as practicable. If a request is denied in whole or in part, or if a different aid or service is being provided instead of the requested one, the requestor should be told promptly and, when practicable, in writing, including the reason and the alternative being offered.

5.7 Day-of or Unexpected Needs. If a communication need first becomes known on the day of a proceeding or after the proceeding begins, the Court ADA Coordinator, court staff, and judicial officer shall make reasonable efforts to secure effective communication without unnecessary delay, which may include a recess, short continuance, relocation, remote participation arrangement, or other effective measures.

5.8 Proceeding Without Effective Communication. When an aid or service necessary for effective communication is not in place, court staff shall immediately alert the judicial officer and Court ADA Coordinator. The court should pause, recess, continue, relocate, or otherwise modify the proceeding as necessary to avoid proceeding without effective communication, unless the individual knowingly declines the aid or service after being informed of available options or an equally effective alternative is provided.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Designation of Court ADA Coordinators. Each court shall designate at least one Court ADA Coordinator or designee and shall ensure the designee knows how to receive, elevate, and coordinate requests.

6.2 Court ADA Coordinators. Court ADA Coordinators shall:

- receive or help route requests;

- coordinate with the County ADA Coordinator, court staff, IT, facilities, security, vendors, interpreters, and captioners as needed;
- keep current contact and vendor or resource information;
- arrange auxiliary aids and services when approved or administratively available;
- ensure public notice of accommodation availability is posted; and
- maintain confidential records as required by this policy.

6.3 County ADA Coordinator. The County ADA Coordinator shall:

- provide countywide guidance and support;
- assist with difficult, urgent, unusual, or disputed requests;
- make or coordinate written determinations regarding undue burden or fundamental alteration when required; and
- support training, implementation, and policy review.

6.4 Judges and Judicial Officers. Judges and judicial officers retain responsibility for requests that affect court procedure, scheduling, courtroom management, or substantive rights.

6.5 Supporting County Departments. Supporting County departments and offices that assist court operations shall cooperate in good faith to implement approved auxiliary aids and services promptly.

7. NOTICE, SIGNAGE, AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

7.1 Public Notice. The Courts shall provide notice that auxiliary aids and services are available at no cost and that requests may be made orally or in writing.

7.2 Posting Locations. Notice should be posted on relevant court webpages, in jury materials where applicable, and in public areas such as clerk counters, court coordinator offices, and other locations where court users commonly seek assistance.

7.3 Accessible Information. Public notices, forms, and instructions related to requesting accommodations should be available in accessible formats. When practicable, electronic documents used for hearings and court communications should be shared in accessible formats.

7.4 Relationship to Language Access. This policy supplements, and does not replace, the Fort Bend County Courts Language Access Plan for limited English proficient individuals.

8. TRAINING AND PREPAREDNESS

8.1 Staff Training. Court ADA Coordinators and relevant staff should receive initial and periodic training on this policy and on practical implementation, including:

- how to receive and route requests;
- how to secure interpreters, CART, readers, or accessible materials;
- confidentiality and respectful communication;

- operation of assistive listening or VRI technology; and
- day-of hearing response procedures.

8.2 Operational Preparedness. Courts and supporting departments should maintain current vendor or provider information, test available communication equipment periodically, and develop backup methods for urgent requests and technology failures.

9. RECORDS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

9.1 Request Records. The County ADA Coordinator shall maintain records of requests for auxiliary aids and services, except for simple requests that are immediately granted and do not require additional coordination.

9.2 Minimum Record Content. Records should include, when applicable:

- date of request;
- name of requestor and, if different, person to be accommodated;
- case number or proceeding, if any;
- aid or service requested;
- action taken and dates;
- aid or service provided;
- any alternative aid or service offered;
- reason for denial or modification, if applicable; and
- identity of the decision-maker.

9.3 Separate and Confidential Storage. Records relating to disability or accommodation requests shall be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law and maintained separately from public case files unless inclusion in the case file is required by law or court order.

9.4 Need-to-Know Disclosure Only. Information about a disability or request for an aid or service shall be shared only with personnel who have a legitimate need to know in order to evaluate, arrange, or implement the request, or as otherwise required by law.

9.5 Aggregate Review. The County ADA Coordinator may review aggregate, non-identifying data periodically to monitor trends, vendor availability, training needs, and policy compliance.

10. REVIEW AND GRIEVANCE

10.1 Administrative Review. A person who believes a request was improperly denied or inadequately addressed may ask for prompt review by the County ADA Coordinator. If the request affects a pending proceeding or is tied to courtroom management, the matter may also be referred to the assigned judge, presiding judge, or other appropriate judicial officer consistent with applicable law and local practice.

10.2 ADA Grievance Procedure. A person who believes they were subjected to disability discrimination in a County program, service, or activity may file a complaint under Fort Bend County's ADA grievance procedure. Use of the grievance procedure is separate from, and does not replace, immediate efforts to secure an accommodation for an upcoming proceeding or event.

10.3 Countywide ADA Complaint Contact:

Fort Bend County ADA Coordinator / Regulatory Compliance Officer
401 Jackson Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond, Texas 77469
Phone: 281-238-3267
Email: ADACoordinator@fbctx.gov

10.4 Other Rights Preserved. Nothing in this policy limits the right to seek relief through any other process or remedy available under law.

APPENDIX A

Suggested Public Notice of Accommodation Availability

Fort Bend County Courts are committed to ensuring that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others. Auxiliary aids and services are available at no cost when needed for effective communication. Requests may be made orally or in writing to the Court ADA Coordinator, court coordinator, or Fort Bend County ADA Coordinator / Regulatory Compliance Officer. Please make requests as early as possible and preferably at least 48 hours before a scheduled proceeding or event. Late requests will be addressed to the extent feasible.

Court ADA Coordinator: [Insert court-specific contact information]

Countywide ADA Contact: ADACoordinator@fbctx.gov | 281-238-3267 | 401 Jackson Street, 3rd Floor, Richmond, Texas 77469