

**State Bar of Arizona Task Force on Persons with Disabilities
Accessibility Committee Site Visit
Arizona Superior Court in Yavapai County
Yavapai County Courthouse
Prescott, Arizona**

SURVEY BACKGROUND

Facility: Arizona Superior Court in Yavapai County, 120 South Cortez, Prescott, Arizona 86302

Date: Thursday January 8, 2004

Team: Mary Birmingham (team leader) (University of Arizona College of Law); Emily Johnston (Board of Governors, State Bar of Arizona); Matt Perry (UA 3L); Melinda Parry (PhD candidate); Bill Sheldon (State Compensation Fund)

Court Personnel: Deborah M. Schaefer (Court Administrator) and Devin Anderson (Court Services Coordinator). Presiding Judge: The Hon. Raymond W. Weaver. Other Courthouse Officials: County Facilities Department, Compliance Specialist - Robert Boyett



Overview

The Yavapai County Courthouse ("Courthouse") is a beautiful older building set in the middle of the town square. It has four floors, with the main entrance (security) on the second floor, up wide and long steps. The entrance for visitors with disabilities is on the first or ground floor. The visitor rings the main entrance and a guard comes down and escorts the visitor up to security. The team had two persons with disabilities (wheelchair users) on our team. County employees Devin Anderson and Robert Boyett accompanied us on the tour.

Parking

Parking for attorneys, jurors, visitors and court employees is a major problem for all visitors to the Courthouse. There are very few parking slots on the Courthouse property, and they are reserved for the judges. Visitors park on the street. There are two accessible parking slots on the property.

Suggestion: Accessible parking is sufficient and the entry ramp is good and easy to use. If the accessible slots are taken, however, street parking will be a major issue because of deep curbs and the inability to open doors wide.



Entrances and Exits

The entrance for visitors with disabilities is on the first or ground floor. The visitor rings the main entrance and a guard comes down and escorts the visitor to the elevator and up to security on the second floor (in our case, a guard arrived within 30 seconds). The security personnel were very helpful, and made the entrance to the building easy for our disabled team members.

Suggestion: For an old building, the entrance and exit plan works well for visitors with disabilities.

Security/Emergency Evacuation

Security had both X-ray and wand search devices. The carry-on items on the wheelchairs were searched.

The Court provided a copy of its emergency evacuation procedures.

Information Counter Center

This is the first place visitors seek information about court calendars, courtroom locations, etc. The Information Desk works very well for persons using wheelchairs, because the protective glass allows a chair user to speak directly to the staff person over a low counter.

Court Administration

A lower filing window provides excellent access for persons using wheelchairs. The file review desk is acceptable.



Restrooms

First Floor

These are is the best restroom in the building for persons using wheelchairs. The doors are light, but closure is too fast. The stalls are huge and allow for easy transfer. Sinks are a good height. Suggestion: Lower the sanitary product dispenser and check the tension on doors.

Fourth Floor

The women's restroom stalls have no room to go beside the toilet, and the seat protectors need to be on the side wall. The "push" on the door needs to be lightened, or provide a push button. The sinks are very high. In the men's restroom, the sinks are too high (36"), and the paper towel dispenser is too high to reach.

There are two exterior restrooms that are also accessible.

Hallways

All hallways are wide and allow easy maneuverability. Drinking fountains are not available on the 4th Floor.

Suggestion: Signage needs to be improved in general (directions, room numbers, etc), and Braille needs to be included. We understand that upgrades to signage are underway.

Elevators

The elevators worked well for wheelchair access, and the doors had good closing time. Third floor sign did not have Braille.



Library

The law library had good access, but need signage for the best computer station.

Courtrooms

First Floor

Judge Markham's Courtroom on the first floor has hinged double doors to enter the counsel tables, and entry via wheelchair would not be possible except for very narrow chairs. The counsel table was a little low for wheelchair use. The jury box had a 4 ½ inch step up and 2 tiers at 3 inches each. The entry to the Bench was very narrow and had 2 steps up.



Suggestion: L ramp for the jury box in Judge Markham's Court, and a portable ramp to the bench could be installed as needed.

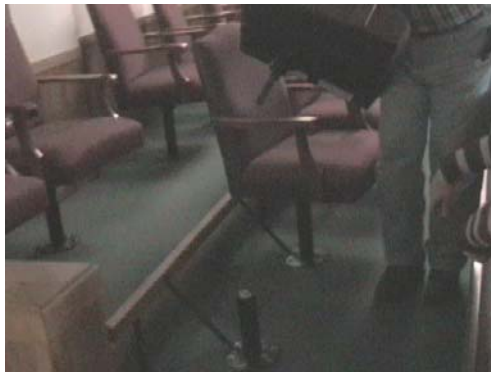
Second Floor

The entrance door to Courtroom 221 needs to be slowed some. There is no space for wheelchairs (except sport chairs), and we recommend amending the last bench for wheelchair space. Counsel tables have good space and height. To take the Bench or witness box, there are two long steps up on each side, plus a short approach on the ramp. Courtroom 204 was in trial.



Third Floor

Courtroom 301 entrance door is good; however the entrance to the counsel area is too narrow for all but a sport model wheelchair. Counsel table is acceptable. The counsel podium is a fixed height, and too high for persons using a wheelchair.



Fourth Floor

Courtroom 400 was in trial so we could not visit it.

Juror Facilities

This room is on the 3rd Floor (Room 306).

The bathroom has a step up at the entry, and would be difficult for wheelchair access; however there is another option on the floor. The table area and seating is adequate.

Suggestion: The glass doors to the room are too heavy and too fast, and the telephone is placed too high on the wall. The door to Room 307 (Jury Commissioner) opens in and is very hard to operate.

Chambers

Judges chambers are all acceptable.

Conference Rooms

Room 200 – the door works well, however the entrance past the Judicial Assistant is too tight for a motorized chair (only 33 ¼ inches from table edge to wall corner).

General Observation

Because it is difficult for first-time visitors to know what accommodations are available in many relevant areas (such as those described in this report), we recommend each court post a link on its website, providing information including a map with access ramps, etc., clearly marked as well as details about parking, security clearance procedures, availability of listening devices, etc.