

**State Bar of Arizona Task Force on Persons with Disabilities  
Accessibility Committee Site Visit  
Pinal County Superior Court (new facility)  
Florence, Arizona**

**SURVEY BACKGROUND**

**Facility:** Pinal County Superior Court, 971 Jason Lopez Circle, Building A, Florence, AZ 85232, (520) 866-6317

**Date:** October 21, 2004

**Team:** Ilona DeRemer, ASU College of Law, Assistant Dean of Career Services (team leader) and Jim Reed, Jaburg & Wilk.

**County Personnel:** Stephanie Jordan, Assistant Court Administrator and Assistant to Court Administrator, Paul O'Connell.



## **COURT PERSONNEL FACILITATING VISIT:**

### **General Observations:**

Stephanie Jordan, Assistant Court Administrator and Assistant to Court Administrator, Paul O'Connell, enthusiastically and ably facilitated the site visit to the new Pinal County Superior Court. Assistant Court Administrator Jordan was extremely helpful during the tour and was informed about ADA standards and accommodations for the disabled. The Court personnel were anxious to showcase the new courthouse that was occupied on July 6, 2004. The administration should be commended for constructing a courthouse facility that meets or in some instances exceeds federal disability access standards.

### **Parking:**

Ample, identified accessible parking spaces are provided in the front of the courthouse building.

### **Entrances/Exits:**

The main entrance to the courthouse is easily accessed by two ramps and there are push button entry doors. Emergency exits have crash door bars, and all doors within the building have Braille identification to accommodate blind patrons.



## **Security:**

The Court is to be commended for thoroughly training security personnel to sensitively handle the needs of people with disabilities. All visitors are required to pass through security, however, security personnel appear quick to respond to special issues presented by visitors with disabilities. When a visitor self identifies as disabled, the security check is conducted with a wand. This procedure is routinely used for those with pacemakers, braces, canes, or wheelchairs. A plan for emergency evacuation of the new facility is in the design stages and specific details will be outlined for the evacuation process for employees and visitors with disabilities.



## **Clerk's Office**

The Clerk's Office is fully accessible to visitors and employees. One filing counter is low enough to easily accommodate an employee and individual in a wheelchair.

## **Restrooms:**

The courthouse provides men's and women's bathrooms on each floor. All bathrooms are equipped with low counter tops and adequately placed dispensers and handles. The entry doors return slowly. One stall in each bathroom is of sufficient size to accommodate a wheelchair. Motorized wheelchairs must enter and reverse for exit as there is not sufficient space for the turnaround of a motorized wheelchair. One urinal in each men's bathroom is wheelchair accessible. There is a baby changing station located in one of the men's bathrooms.





## **Hallways**

All hallways in the building are extremely wide and spacious. Accessible water fountains and telephones are provided throughout the building.

## **Elevators**

Elevators provide access to all floors of the building and are large and accessible. The control panels are equipped with Braille.

## **Library**

The library is large and accessible. Push doors provide entrance and there is great signage. Computers are easily accessible and there are 48-inch aisles between and around the shelving. Counters are low and accessible.

## **Courtrooms:**

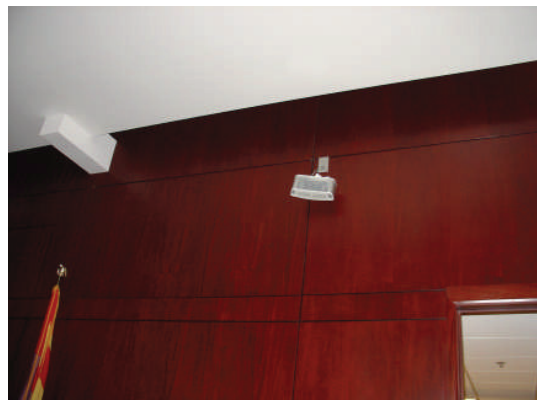
The courthouse is designed to accommodate 10 courtrooms. Nine of the 10 courtrooms are completed and 7 are currently occupied. All courtrooms are the same, however, one is set up for double counsel. All are accessible for the lawyers, jurors, and witnesses. Judges present all options for assistance to persons with disabilities prior to commencing with the trial or hearing. Three of the 10 courtrooms have both a lift and ramp for the judge. There is space for wheelchair maneuverability in the courtroom workroom at the entrance to the courtroom and in the viewing areas, counsel's tables, witness stands, and jury boxes. Chairs are easy to move and there is a ramp to the jury box where there is room for a wheelchair. All 10 courtrooms are equipped with Infrared Assisted Listening Systems. Headsets and interpreters are provided and signing and channels are available in English and Spanish.



Criminal holding cells are located outside the courtrooms. These cells are accessed by a “sally port” which connects the jail and the courtrooms and special elevators.

**Juror Facilities:**

The Jury Assembly room is located on the first floor of the building and is accessible with crash bars on the entry doors and large aisles to accommodate persons using wheelchairs. Jurors are provided access to a porch and food room. Phones are provided for the hearing impaired.







All courtroom jury boxes and all jury deliberation areas are accessible. Jurors are provided with an accessible bathroom off the deliberation area and the Infrared Assisted Listening System.



Courtroom “wells” were consistently accessible and easy to move around in, with castered counsel chairs.



Suggestion: The ramps to the courtroom jury boxes are wide enough to provide accessibility but a little more width would provide a greater sense of security to individuals traveling on the ramp in a wheelchair.

### **Chambers:**

All chambers are identical and are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Chambers and judicial conference rooms are accessible and each chamber has its own accessible bathroom.



### **Conclusions:**

The new Pinal County Courthouse is a beautiful efficiently functioning facility that reflects considerable thought and planning detail by those who were responsible for providing full accessibility to that building. The new facilities housing the County Attorney's Office, Adult Probation, and Victim's Assistance Program have the same excellent features as the County Courthouse.