

Guidelines for building a digital accessibility policy

The road to digital accessibility is a journey worth taking. Just like a building needs to be accessible to a person in a wheelchair, digital content needs to be available to people with disabilities. Accessibility is good for education, the right thing to do and required by U.S. law. You already have special education services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Now as you rely more and more on the Internet to provide cost-effective communication and learning materials, you must ensure you are not excluding people with disabilities from online information, programs, services, and activities. Developing a digital accessibility policy for your school/district is an important part of the solution.

Frequently asked questions

Who will benefit from digital accessibility in my district?

Students, parents, community members, faculty, and staff with disabilities will all benefit.

Why do I need a digital accessibility policy?

An official statement defining digital accessibility requirements for your school/district helps everyone understand what is expected and how to succeed.

Where should I publish my digital accessibility policy?

After your legal counsel approves your plan, post it on your school/district's public website where it is easy to find by your staff, faculty, parents, students, and the public.

How to write a digital accessibility policy

Your digital accessibility policy can be short and straightforward. Your policy should include these three things:

1. **Statement of commitment**—Establish your vision and goals for digital accessibility. This statement sets the tone for your policy and lets anyone reading it know that you care about equal access and civil rights for people with disabilities.
 - a. **Example:** “The district affirms its commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that of their nondisabled peers. We encourage students to participate in the district’s programs, benefits, and services, including those delivered through electronic and information technology, except where doing so would impose an undue burden or create a fundamental alteration.”
2. **Standard to measuring digital accessibility**—Define how you will test for digital accessibility. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights continues to set the benchmark for measuring accessibility to WCAG 2.0 Level AA.
 - a. **Example:** “The accessibility of online content and functionality will be measured according to the World Wide Web Consortium’s (W3C’s) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and the Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite (WAI-ARIA) 1.0 for web content, which are incorporated by reference.”

3. **Method to report accessibility barrier(s)**—Make it easy for people to find your accessibility policy and report a barrier via email. Include:

- a. An email address or form to report inaccessible content
- b. A phone number that will be answered during district hours
- c. Link to the formal complaint/grievance process for your district

Example: To request assistance or report an issue relating to the accessibility of this website, please email AccessibilityCoordinator@schooldistrict.edu or call 000.000.0000 during district office hours.

Also, add an accessible link in the footer or sidebar with information about how to file a grievance through the district's grievance procedure required by the Section 504 and Title II implementing regulation.

Any feedback that is received is seriously. Respond quickly to any reported barriers. Fix any identified barriers in a timely manner or you are at risk for a formal grievance/complaint.

1. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") and that statute's implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 104, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("Title II") and that statute's implementing regulations at 28 C.F.R. Part 35.
2. <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/settlements-reached-seven-states-one-territory-ensure-website-accessibility-people-disabilities>

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