



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

Technology and Telecommunications Task Force – The Importance of Web Accessibility and Inclusive Design

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in activities across all areas of life. While many understand the requirements of accessibility for physical spaces, such as wheelchair ramps to enter buildings, this mandate extends to virtual spaces as well. As more and more of our daily lives are spent engaging with the Internet and other digital content, it is critical to ensure that information hosted online and in digital format (including via websites, mobile applications, online systems, and all forms of information and communication technology - ICT) remains fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Designing and maintaining accessible websites and other forms of ICT allows people with disabilities to receive and engage with all content that is increasingly hosted online, including health care information, school systems, transportation options, job applications, social media, public benefit applications, and information touching nearly every aspect of daily life. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has consistently reiterated its position, including most recently in guidance released in March 2022, that the ADA requires all websites operated by state and local governments and public accommodations as defined in the ADA to be fully accessible and usable by people with disabilities.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an independent, international body that develops and administers standards for the Web, has developed Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which are widely recognized as the base standard for defining website accessibility. While these guidelines are voluntary, WCAG 2.1 has been cited in the most recent settlement agreements as the minimum level with which to conform when creating accessible websites. Given that widely accepted voluntary technical standards do exist, it is critical that any entity operating a website, including state and local governments and public accommodations, conform with these standards to ensure that all people are able to access their content online.

The Department of Justice should issue regulations including clear and enforceable standards for the procurement, design, maintenance, and use of accessible websites and other forms of ICT under Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The regulations must also clarify that the ADA applies regardless of whether a public accommodation also owns or operates a physical location offering the same or similar goods or services.

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Comprised of over 120 national organizations, the mission of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is to engage in concerted advocacy for national public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQ+ based discrimination and religious intolerance; that enhances the civil rights and quality of life of all people with disabilities and their families; and that reflects the values of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all civil rights law. The CCD Technology and Telecommunications Task Force focuses on policy issues related to access to telecommunications and assistive technology in education, employment, and independent living.

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