

Accessibility

“Out of the box,” “plug and play,” and a host of other buzzwords surround the deployment of new digital technology and in many cases the promise is fulfilled. However, for millions of American citizens this is not the case. Whether through physical or mental limitation or a preference to use alternative technologies for accessing digital media, there are numerous reasons why the promise of the digital world fails to live up to the hype. This is unacceptable, inaccessible, and against the law.

Accessibility is a commitment — one aimed at creating a culture where everyone has equal access to information, regardless of any condition that may impair one’s ability to consume that information. This commitment has no stronger government champion than the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Information and Technology (OIT).

The Laws

- » Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, commonly referred to as simply [Section 508](#), requires that all digital products must be able to be used regardless of how they are accessed.
- » In addition to the technical requirements outlined in Section 508, the [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#) requires that content, regardless of media, be written in a way that is easily understood by the target audience.
- » The [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act](#) signed on December 20, 2018, not only reinforces Section 508 compliance, it requires making all forms digitally available as well as physically available. It also makes the Chief Information Officer responsible for all aspects of the law.

What Does This Mean for OIT

Every employee, including contractors hired to support the VA mission, that creates digital content — websites, documents, presentations, etc. — whether a draft for internal use or final product for public dissemination, is responsible for ensuring accessibility.

Where to Get Help

- » [VA Section 508](#)
- » [OIT Design Guide](#)
- » [VA Talent Management System \(TMS\)](#)
- » [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#)
- » [Accessibility for Teams](#)



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