

Is Your Website ADA Compliant?

Emergency Services Organizations (ESOs) are dependent on modern technology to assist in carrying out the mission of the organization. Departments are either interested in or required to have an active website for conducting general business or to maintain positive public relations.

In order to serve all citizens via digital technology, Federal law mandates that the websites of entities covered under the ADA meet certain compliance standards to ensure accessibility by individuals with disabilities. This bulletin explains this law and provides guidance on how to ensure your website meets this requirement.

Covered Entities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities (as defined by the ADA) in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation and all areas that are open to the public. Furthermore, Title II of the ADA prohibits disability discrimination by all public entities at the local and state levels. Public entities must comply with non-discriminatory regulations set by the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), which cover access to programs and services offered by the entity, including physical access and programmatic access (ADA National Network, n.d.).

One specific covered activity under the ADA is website accessibility for all entities included in Title II. ESOs must comply with this section to the degree that the departmental/agency website can be available in a usable format for all citizens, regardless if they are disabled.

Website Accessibility

Some agencies have ties to local government; in which case, the person who maintains the website, otherwise known as the webmaster, may be able to complete or confirm ADA compliance. If an ESO has a contracted service for a stand-alone website, this should be part of the service agreement but should still be confirmed. Independent ESOs may also wish to explore several free options to evaluate website compliance.

Summary

Online exposures in this area should be addressed in the most logical means available to the ESO. VFIS further recommends that your legal counsel be involved in this process prior to any changes of the current website content.

Additional Resources

The suggested hyperlinks listed below include Governmental agencies and supporting non-profit organizations that can provide additional resources.

U.S. Justice Department | Technical Assistance Document, “Accessibility of State and Local Government Websites to People with Disabilities” | www.ada.gov/websites2.htm

ADA National Research Foundation | www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap5toolkit.htm

Information Technology and Technical Assistance Training Center | www.ittatc.org

Federal Information Technology Accessibility Initiative | www.section508.gov

VFIS Client Risk Solutions thanks the dedicated Information Technology staff at Glatfelter Insurance Group/VFIS for their assistance in this Risk Bulletin.

References

ADA National Network. (n.d.). *What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?* Retrieved from <https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>

DISCLAIMER: This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm, or damage to personnel, property, and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control Representative at (800) 233-1957.