

# Accessible Online Learning: What the Updated ADA Guidelines Mean for You

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# Disclaimer

- This presentation is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to serve as legal advice or official guidance.
- For specific questions about compliance with the DOJ's web accessibility rule or Section 504, please consult your institution's legal counsel or compliance office.
- Information presented reflects current regulations as of 2024 and may be subject to change.

# What Are the updated Distance Education Accessibility Guidelines?

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a final rule under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II. The updated rules align with WCAG 2.1 Level AA, and set of web accessibility standards

This rule establishes legal accessibility requirements for state and local government websites, mobile apps, and other digital content.

The goal is to eliminate barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing important public services online.

# Who Is Impacted by These Guidelines?

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State and local governments

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Cities, counties, courts, and public safety services

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Public schools, colleges, and universities

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Transportation and law enforcement agencies

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Faculty and staff who create online learning materials

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IT, design, and compliance teams

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Students with disabilities who need accessible content

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# Compliance Deadlines

- State and local governments must make their websites, and mobile apps meet WCAG 2.1
- Level AA standards within 2 to 3 years after the rule was published on April 24, 2024.
- The deadline depends on the size of the local population.
  - 0 to 49,999 and special district governments must comply by **April 26, 2027**
  - 50,000+ persons by **April 24, 2026**

State and local government size	Compliance date
0 to 49,999 persons	April 26, 2027
Special district governments	April 26, 2027
50,000 or more persons	April 24, 2026



# Why It Matters

- Closes accessibility gaps in websites and mobile apps, making public information easier to access.
- Improves the user experience for everyone including users with disabilities
- Reduces legal risks for government agencies by providing clear compliance standards.

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# Key Changes and Requirements



**All websites and course platforms must follow WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards**

**Example:** A university's homepage, course sites, and student portals must be easy to use for everyone, including those using screen readers.



**Third-party companies working with the school must also follow ADA rules**

**Example:** If a company helps with student recruitment or tutoring, their websites and materials must also be accessible.



**Online tools must be accessible to both the public and school staff**

**Example:** Learning management systems (like Canvas or Blackboard) should be easy to use with a keyboard or screen reader.

# Key Changes and Requirements (continued)



**All content must be tested and updated regularly for accessibility**

**Example:** Schools should check that videos have captions, PDFs are readable, and online forms can be used with a keyboard.



**Mobile apps used by the school must meet accessibility rules**

**Example:** Apps for student schedules, advising, or class registration should work on phones and be readable by assistive technology.



# Accessible Design Considerations

## Weekly Readings

- [The giant panda : a morphological study of evolutionary mechanisms](#) ↗
- [Giant Panda Fact Sheet from the United States Fish & Wildlife Service](#) ↗
- [The giant panda as a social, biological and conservation phenomenon](#) ↓

## Other Activities

Watch the following YouTube Videos:

- [Saving The Endangered Giant Panda](#) ↗



- [Why Are Giant Pandas So Hard to Save?](#) ↗



Use accessible text formatting (e.g. headers and bullet points)

Hello

Hello

Be intentional with color



Provide alternative text for images or mark decorative



Provide accurate and synchronized captions including audio descriptions and transcripts

# Questions?

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