



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS)

Digital Accessibility Plan

1. Purpose

The **Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS)** is committed to ensuring all individuals, including those with disabilities, have equitable access to digital information and services according to federal and state guidelines. This **Digital Accessibility Plan** outlines the agency's strategy to meet and exceed accessibility standards, ensuring compliance with the Virginians with Disabilities Act (§ [51.5-1](#) et seq.), Code of Virginia Information Technology Access Act (§ [2.2-5300](#) et seq.), [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), and the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1 Level AA](#).

This plan supports VDSS's mission to design and deliver high-quality human services that help Virginians achieve safety, independence, and overall well-being by ensuring that Information and Communications Technology (ICT), along with other products, programs, and services, are usable and accessible to all.

Major programs administered in whole or in part by VDSS include Benefits [e.g., [medical assistance](#) such as [Medicaid](#), [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#), [food assistance](#) such as the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), [Child Care Assistance](#), [Energy Assistance](#)]; [Family Services](#) (e.g., [Child Protective Services](#), [Foster Care](#), [Adoption](#)); [Child Support Enforcement](#); [Licensing](#) (e.g., [assisted living facilities](#)); and [Community & Volunteer Services](#) (e.g., [Office of New Americans](#), [Refugee Services](#)).

This plan may also apply to VDSS's vendors, subcontractors, and subrecipients (such as [Virginia's 120 local department of social services](#), and the [Virginia Community Action Partnership](#) which are each required to have their own digital accessibility guidelines.

2. Accessibility Commitment Statement

VDSS affirms its commitment to digital accessibility by implementing the following actions:

- Appointing a [Digital Accessibility Coordinator](#) (DAC)
- Ensuring all digital and web-based content and service platforms comply with [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#) and [WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards](#)
- Assigning clear digital accessibility targets and responsibilities, integrating accessibility at every stage of the digital content lifecycle - from design and development to procurement and maintenance
- Embedding digital accessibility requirements into internal policies, including procurement processes, in accordance with the Code of Virginia
- Providing ongoing digital accessibility training for staff
- Establishing quality assurance methods for digital accessibility
- Utilizing both automated accessibility reporting tools and manual checks
- Reinforcing the principle that accessibility is a shared responsibility across all departments and roles within VDSS

3. Governance and Leadership

3.1 Accessibility Leadership

- Digital Accessibility Coordinator (DAC): Appointed to oversee policy development, implementation, compliance and training. The DAC will also assess and implement user accessibility and user experience improvements for digital products and services and ensure integration of accessibility policies within digital modernization projects and workflows. This role will also be responsible for auditing the agency's digital platforms, portals, applications, internal systems and processes as well as conducting accessibility training for state employees, providing technical expertise and evangelizing the importance of digital accessibility.

The DAC will work closely with the Language and Disability Access Coordinator (LDAC) to ensure that digital platforms and services are inclusive of individuals with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency. This partnership will support the alignment of digital accessibility efforts with broader language access

and disability inclusion goals. DAC and LDAC will coordinate on policy development, training initiatives, and platform audits to ensure that both language and disability access standards are met. The collaboration will help identify and address barriers to access, promote equitable service delivery, and foster a unified approach to inclusive digital transformation across the agency.

- Accessibility Workgroup: A cross-functional team including representatives from Information Technology (IT), Communications (Public Affairs), Human Resources (HR), Procurement, Community and Volunteer Services, and Divisional Program Support, as needed.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

- Information Technology: Ensure technical compliance and incorporation of accessibility requirements into IT lifecycle management, and procurement of accessibility remediation tools.
- Communications/Public Affairs: Ensure accessibility conformance within digital content and design processes, develop user interfaces and experiences that provide equitable access to all - including persons with disabilities.
- Procurement Officers: Include accessibility in vendor contractual agreements.
- Program Managers: Ensure accessibility in service delivery.

4. Accessibility Standards and Guidelines

VDSS adopts the following standards:

- [WCAG 2.1 Level AA](#) for all web and mobile content
- [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#) for state compliance
- Code of Virginia Information Technology Access Act (§ [2.2-5300](#) et seq.) for state compliance

These standards apply to:

All external public facing content and non-public facing official agency communications. ICT and internal official communications include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Web, desktop and mobile technologies and applications
- Printers, scanners, phones, and kiosks
- Digital documents (email, PDFs, Microsoft Office documents, etc.)

- Multimedia content, such as anything posted to or used on social media sites
- Online forms and tools such as survey questionnaires, templates or forms
- Notices of benefits, program eligibility, opportunity, or personnel action
- Educational or training materials
- Emergency notifications and broadcasting systems (i.e. PA Systems, text services)
- Initial or final decisions adjudicating an administrative; claim or proceeding; a formal acknowledgement of receipt
- An internal or external program or policy announcement

5. Digital Content and Platform Accessibility

5.1 Web and Mobile Accessibility

- All new, existing and redesigned websites must meet [WCAG 2.1 Level AA, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#) and Code of Virginia Information Technology Access Act (§ [2.2-5300](#) et seq.) best practices and include automated or human translational functionality
- Mobile applications and websites must be tested for screen reader compatibility and keyboard navigation

5.2 Document Accessibility

- PDFs and other documents must be tagged, structured and readable by assistive technologies.
- Templates will be provided for accessible document creation
- [Archived web content](#) is exempt from the accessibility requirements as outlined in WCAG 2.1, Level AA. To meet the requirements for exception, all the following criteria must be met:
 - The content must have been created prior to the date of compliance for state and local governments. As of December 22, 2025, State and local governments with populations greater than 50,000 must comply by [April 24, 2026](#)
 - The content is retained for reference, research or recordkeeping. It is not actively used in agency or business processes
 - The content is retained in a special area for archived content
 - The content has not been altered or edited since it was archived
- Any archived content that is requested by a person with disabilities who requires accessibility accommodation must be granted. The requested archived content must be made accessible to satisfy the accommodation.

5.3 Multimedia Accessibility

- All videos with dialog or audio components must include captions and/or transcripts
 - Audio content must include text alternatives
 - Live events must offer real-time captioning or sign language interpretation when requested
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6. Procurement and Vendor Management

VDSS will:

- Include accessibility clauses in contracts and RFPs
 - Evaluate the accessibility of vendor products throughout the procurement and deployment process, including the review of Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs) where applicable
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7. Training and Development

7.1 Mandatory Training

- Annual accessibility training for:
 - Web developers and content creators
 - Procurement staff
 - Program managers and supervisors
 - VDSS' vendors, subcontractors and subrecipients

7.2 Resources

- Accessibility style guides
 - Document and media accessibility checklists
 - Access to internal accessibility subject matter experts
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8. Testing, Monitoring, and Compliance Correction

8.1 Testing Tools

- Automated tools: WAVE, SiteImprove, etc.
- Manual testing: Screen reader testing (e.g., NVDA, JAWS), keyboard navigation, zoom and text resize, color contrast checkers

8.2 Monitoring schedule

- Quarterly audits of public-facing websites
 - Annual review of internal systems
 - Corrective action plans with clear timelines and defined accountability (program areas are responsible for remediating their own content, with guidance and support provided by DAC, Language & Disability Access Coordinator (LDAC) and Communications/Public Affairs)
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9. User Feedback and Continuous Improvement

- Accessibility feedback form on all digital platforms
 - Dedicated email and phone line for accessibility concerns (LanguageAndDisabilityAccess@dss.virginia.gov)
 - Feedback is reviewed monthly by LDAC in collaboration with DAC and is used to inform ongoing updates
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10. Language and Disability Access Integration

- Coordination with VDSS's Language and Disability Access Plan
 - Multilingual accessibility for key services
 - Compatibility with assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, magnifiers, etc.)
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11. Appendices

- **Appendix A:** [Glossary of Accessibility Terms](#)
- **Appendix B:** [Sample Accessibility Procurement Language](#)
- **Appendix C:** [Accessibility Testing Checklist](#)
- **Appendix D:** [Contact Information for Accessibility Support at VDSS](#)
- **Appendix E:** [VDSS Accessibility & Archiving Tips](#)
- **Appendix F:** [Fact Sheet: New Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Applications Provided by State and Local Governments](#)
- **Appendix G:** [Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Applications Provided by State and Local Government Entities: A Small Entity Compliance Guide](#)