

Building a More ADA Accessible & Privacy-Friendly Downtown Website



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A great website isn't just about looking good—it's about being accessible to everyone and respecting user privacy. By making your website easy to use and transparent in its data practices, you create a digital space that serves all visitors equally. Here's what you need to know to meet the coming DOJ 28 CFR Part 35 standards and enhance your website's effectiveness.

ADA Accessibility: Making Your Website Available to All Citizens

New federal accessibility requirements are on the horizon, with compliance deadlines set for April 2026 for larger municipalities and April 2027 for smaller ones. Taking proactive steps now will not only keep your website compliant but also improve user experience for everyone.

Key ADA Accessibility Features Your Website Needs

- **Color Contrast Matters** – Ensure text stands out against its background with a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for standard text and 3:1 for larger fonts.

- **Screen Reader Compatibility** – Structure your content so screen readers can interpret it logically, allowing visually impaired users to navigate with ease.
 - **Logical Page Structure** – Use clear headings and an intuitive layout to make browsing effortless, especially for those with cognitive disabilities.
 - **Interactive Elements** – Forms, buttons, and links should follow a logical order for easy use with assistive technology.
 - **Descriptive Link Text** – Instead of vague phrases like “click here,” use specific descriptions of where the link leads.
1. **Resizable Text and Layouts** – Users should be able to enlarge text up to 200% without losing readability or functionality. And, a 1280px screen should be resizable to 400% without requiring horizontal scrolling.
- **Alt Text for Images** – Provide alternative text descriptions so users relying on screen readers can understand the purpose of visual elements.
 - **Accessible Documents** – PDFs and other downloadable files should be structured for readability, with searchable text and tagged images, tables, and charts
 - **Captions and Transcripts for Multimedia** – Videos should include captions, and audio content should have transcripts for full accessibility.
 - **User-Friendly Forms** – Label all form fields clearly and avoid relying solely on placeholder text.
 - **Accessibility Policy and Feedback** – Post a clear accessibility policy on your website and provide a way for users to report accessibility issues.

Meeting these standards isn’t just about legal compliance—it’s about making sure every resident and visitor can fully engage with the resources your DDA offers.

Cookies and User Privacy: Best Practices for DDA Websites

User privacy is another critical area where DDAs need to be vigilant. Although specific state or federal laws may not directly govern Michigan DDAs, the use of tracking tools like Facebook Pixels, YouTube videos, or Google Analytics may require compliance with broader privacy regulations, such as California’s CCPA or the European Union’s GDPR.

Actionable Suggestion for Your Website

- **Publish a Clear Privacy Policy** – Inform visitors what data your website collects, particularly if third-party tools are used.
- **Implement a Cookie Consent Notice** – Give users the ability to accept or decline cookies when they first visit your site.
- **Consistently Display Privacy Notices** – Include links to your privacy policy on all pages where users submit information.

- **Inform Users About Third-Party Links** – If your site redirects visitors to external platforms for payments or other services, clearly state that your DDA is not responsible for those sites' privacy practices.
- **Configure Google Analytics for Compliance** – Adjust settings to limit data retention and provide users the option to access, correct, or delete their data. Another option is to choose another analytics vendor, such as Fathom that is compliant out-of-the-box.

Being upfront about how your website collects and uses data is a double win for your DDA. It signals to your community that you care about their privacy and helps protect you from potential legal challenges.

Final Thoughts

A well-designed website isn't just visually appealing, it's functional, accessible, and privacy-conscious. By ensuring your website meets ADA accessibility standards and follows best practices for data privacy, your DDA creates a welcoming and trustworthy digital space. Now is the time to review your website and make the necessary updates so it truly serves your entire community. A little effort today will make a big impact on your visitors' experience tomorrow!