



# Think 508 First!



## Section 508 Quick Reference Guide

[intranet.epa.gov/accessibility](http://intranet.epa.gov/accessibility)

# Section 508 – Access for All, Barriers for None

## What is Section 508?

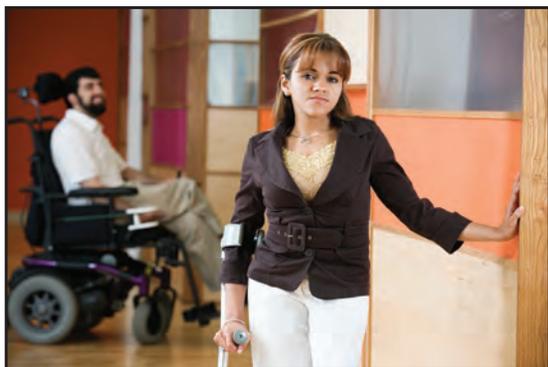
Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794d) requires federal agencies to develop, procure, maintain, or use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that is accessible to people with disabilities – regardless of whether or not they work for the federal government. The U.S. Access Board establishes the Section 508 standards in order to implement the law.

## Is Section 508 the same as Reasonable Accommodation?

Section 508 and Reasonable Accommodation (Section 501) are often confused with each other. Section 508 is about the ICT – the equipment and the tools that people use to access information or to do their jobs. Reasonable Accommodation is about the individual and what he/she needs because of his/her disability. Reasonable accommodation removes workplace barriers for individuals with disabilities.

## Why does ICT have to be accessible?

Some people who access EPA's information and resources may have disabilities. EPA has employees with disabilities and any new employees could potentially have disabilities. A person can become disabled at any time either temporarily or permanently. EPA makes its ICT accessible so everybody can access EPA information, because it is the right thing to do, and because it is the law.



## What is ICT?

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is any equipment or system that EPA uses to create, convert, duplicate or access information and data.

Examples of ICT include, but are not limited to:

- Smart phones and mobile devices
- Internet and Intranet websites
- PDF documents
- Content on DVDs and CDs
- On-line training
- Webinars and teleconferencing
- Technical support call centers
- Remote access websites and tools
- Tablet, laptop, and desktop computers
- Software and operating systems
- User guides for software and tools
- Copiers, printers, and fax machines
- Lab equipment

## What does “Think 508 First” mean?

“Think 508 First!” when you **develop, procure, maintain, or use** ICT, and incorporate accessibility from the beginning and throughout the acquisition and life cycle of the services or products. When you “Think 508 First!”, you are helping to ensure accessibility for everyone and saving time and resources by taking care of the 508 requirements throughout the project.

- First, determine if your product or service is ICT, If it is ICT Section 508 applies.
- Decide what 508 standards may be applicable.
- Write specific 508 requirements in contracts and IT workplans.
- Test and verify compliance with 508 standards before accepting deliverables, purchasing products and services, or launching websites, applications, or trainings.
- Maintain a dialogue with developers, contractors, and project teams, throughout the acquisition and life cycle.

# *Understanding Disabilities*

Not all disabilities are obvious or easily identifiable. Many people tend to think of disabilities in absolutes: can see or can't, can hear or can't. However, disabilities take a variety of forms and may not always be readily apparent. Approximately 54 million Americans have some type of disability. Also, disabilities may not be permanent and can be temporary as a result of a medical condition, illness or surgery. Accessible ICT helps people with all kinds of disabilities. The important thing to remember is that disabilities are as unique as the individuals they affect.



**Visual** – Blind or low vision, which includes a person having dimness, haziness, color blindness, tunnel vision, cataracts or eyesight problems.

**Auditory** – A person who is deaf or hard of hearing can have a hearing loss ranging from mild to a total loss of hearing. A person might hear sounds but may have difficulty or is unable to comprehend spoken words.

**Speech** – Speech related disabilities may include difficulty with voice strength, fluency, aphasia, which may alter how words are articulated, or complete voicelessness.

**Dexterity** – Most individuals who have dexterity disabilities have limited or no use of their upper or lower extremities. Individuals can have difficulty with coordination and movement due to the effects of arthritis, stroke, carpal tunnel syndrome, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease, or accidents and injuries.



**Cognitive** – A cognitive disability is any disability that affects mental processes and covers a wide range of abilities.

**Mobility** – A person can have a motor impairment that limits his/her mobility or range of motion. A person may require the use of wheelchairs, canes, crutches, braces, or prostheses which can hinder access to ICT controls on kiosks or other closed products.

# *EPA Accessibility Programs and Contact Information*

## **Section 508 Program**

### **Section 508 Executive Council**

EPA's Section 508 Executive Council is responsible for guiding the Agency's Section 508 Program. The Executive Council includes senior leaders from the EPA program and regional offices and it is chaired by the Director of the Office of Enterprise and Information Programs (OEIP).

### **Section 508 Coordinators**

Section 508 Coordinators serve as the EPA's point of contact for Section 508 information. The 508 Coordinators work with the EPA offices to implement EPA's Section 508 program on behalf of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Section 508 Executive Council. The coordinators provide consultation and information about resources as needed.

Website: <http://intranet.epa.gov/accessibility>

E-mail: [section508@epa.gov](mailto:section508@epa.gov)

### **Assistive Technology Center**

The Assistive Technology Center (ATC) is a resource located at EPA Headquarters for using adaptive and assistive technology. Adaptive and assistive technology (AT) is used by people with disabilities in a way that best meets their individual needs. AT can include a variety of tools such as hardware and software, braille displays and note takers, larger monitors, volume handsets for phones, ergonomic keyboards, etc. EPA employees and system developers can test products, software applications, agency applications, websites and hardware with current versions of accessibility testing tools and assistive technology in the ATC to help ensure compliance with the Section 508 standards.

## **Reasonable Accommodation Program**

Reasonable accommodations are designed to remove workplace barriers for individuals with disabilities. The Office of Civil Rights coordinates the Reasonable Accommodation Program for EPA. In addition, there are Local Reasonable Accommodation Coordinators (LORACs) in EPA's ten regional offices, as well as in the Research Triangle Park (RTP) and Cincinnati labs, who can assist with implementing the program.

Website: <http://intranet.epa.gov/civilrights/reasonableaccommodation.htm>

## **Special Emphasis Program for Persons with Disabilities**

The Office of Civil Rights manages and administers the Agency's Special Emphasis Program for persons with disabilities. The National Program Manager provides policy guidance and technical assistance to EPA managers on the prevention and elimination of discrimination and harassment in the workforce for persons with disabilities.

Website: [http://intranet.epa.gov/civilrights/special\\_program.htm](http://intranet.epa.gov/civilrights/special_program.htm)

## **Additional Resources**

EPA Section 508 Website  
<http://intranet.epa.gov/accessibility/>

Federal Section 508 Website  
[www.section508.gov](http://www.section508.gov)

Section 508 Standards  
[www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-section-508-standards](http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-section-508-standards)

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