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School District ADA Compliance Planning from A-Z: Navigating the ADA Compliance Puzzle with Tips You Can Use Today

By not being compliant, school districts risk the negative PR of an OCR complaint, the perception of discrimination, expensive legal costs, and they make it difficult – or even impossible – for students and parents with disabilities to access their news and information.

Sorting out the website ADA compliance rules and requirements can be a daunting task for even the most seasoned school district communicators, but there are navigational steps to the ADA compliance puzzle. Whether or not your district has received a complaint, started an ADA content management plan, or done anything beyond image alt tags, there is help. Here are some basic steps you can follow to help ensure your district website is ADA compliant.

PHASE I Startup

1. Determine the project leadership. Do you have the capacity to manage this in-house? Do you need external support? Who will take the lead on the project and who else needs to be at the table?
2. Identify the project depth and scope. How big is your website? How often is content updated? How many people edit or have access to the website?
3. Determine school district project budget. Include staff time, costs for a ADA audit, and external vendors if needed.

PHASE II Develop and Review Project Plans

1. New content and old content planning. Who will be responsible for updating existing content? Who will ensure new content will be compliant. Who will monitor the website in an ongoing capacity? If there is an OCR complaint, you will need a resolution agreement for both old and new content.
2. Develop District Communications Plan. You will need to communicate both internally and externally. Internal staff will need to be aware of the new website content requirements and your external audience needs to know that changes are coming – especially if they involve significant changes to your overall website.
3. Develop a Corrective Action Plan (only if a complaint has been received).
4. Begin keeping a detailed record of all efforts.

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PHASE III Website Audit

1. Conduct a website audit to identify ADA compliance issues with the current website. This includes PDFs and other online documents, graphics, alt tags, closed caption videos, color contrast, etc. You will probably need to select website auditing provider like Siteimprove or WebAIM.
2. Work with your website vendor to correct identified ADA template limitations/challenges.
3. Determine who will make the corrections identified by the audit and ensure they are adequately trained.
4. Ongoing monitoring will need to take place after the initially defined threshold for accessibility issues is reached.

PHASE IV New Content Plan

1. Begin training website editors to ensure new content and page edits meet ADA standards.

PHASE V Documentation

1. Keep a detailed record of all your effort beginning from day one. This should include details on the issues resolved and any compliance exceptions with the reasoning behind it.

PHASE VI Old Content Plan

1. This step is necessary if you received an OCR complaint. Develop a Corrective Action Plan for old website content. Include:
 - a. *a plan for updating old content*
 - b. *a content migration option:*
 - I. *Archive old content (cheapest)*
 - II. *Update content on most visited pages only, archive other and older content (provide on request)*
 - III. *Reformat/update all old content (most expensive)*
 - c. *the staff responsible for migrating information*
 - d. *a timeline for completion*



Based in Minneapolis, MN, CEL has been a trusted Marketing, PR and Design partner for over 30 years. Consistently named a top PR Firm, CEL specializes in partnering with school districts across the country to provide a wide range of services, including website branding and design, ADA compliance, communications consulting and planning, crisis management, training, and more.

The CEL team can partner with your district to provide needed tools and resources to help you become ADA compliant efficiently. CEL offers a wide range of solutions, from developing the corrective action plans to providing required communications, access to legal counsel, website auditing, template development, and training options.