# Accessibility

## What is it and why should it matter?

* Information should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to access it with the aid or service they use. Ensuring information is accessible isn’t just a responsibility by law, or a checklist to be marked off. It is the constant process of seeking to expand meaningful participation and equal access to information for ALL abilities.
* The Law:
* Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
* Increase in lawsuits filed under the American Disabilities Act (ADA) relating to lack of accessibility, specifically in relation to websites.
* The ADA requires State and local governments communicate as effectively with people who have vision, hearing or speech disabilities (“communication disabilities”) as someone without a disability.
* State and local governments must provide auxiliary aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.
* Assistive Technology (AT) = product, device, or equipment used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.
* Auxiliary aids and services = ways to communicate with people who have communication disabilities. Examples include large print materials, qualified sign language interpreters, note takers (can include AT).

## A few things to keep in mind while creating accessible content:

1. What are consumers using to access and interact with the information you’re sharing?
* Sensory = visual, auditory, tactile
* Tools = mouse, keyboard, mobile phones adaptive device software and hardware
1. Is your content easy to follow and understandable?
* Are you using jargon or acronyms that aren’t necessary?
* Does it have predictable flow with structure and headings
* Are you providing text alternatives for any visual content?
1. Have you provided specific contact information for consumers to request information in alternative formats?
* Should be easy to spot. *Can you read this?*
* Two methods of contact (phone and email).
1. Is it equally effective?

## Tips for making electronic communications accessible:

* Microsoft Word is what most of us use to create content, but that doesn’t mean a Microsoft Word document is necessarily the best way to share it. Plain text is the simplest, most accessible way to present information. If writing a brief piece of text, paste it in the body of the email instead of sending it out as an attachment. If you do have to attach something, consider a word doc. instead of a PDF.
* Do not use tab buttons or space bars for formatting. Screen readers see it as long blocks of blank space and users may think the document has ended and miss important information.
* If you do have a flyer or other PDF attachment, include the same information in the body of the text. That way your information is “accessible” in different ways.
* Use descriptive or alternative text when including visual information – again ensuring users can still access the information in different ways.
* Use high contrast colors (black on white) & San serif fonts (Arial and Calibri).
* Use built in formatting and software tools!

## Common mistakes in printed and electronic publications:

* Print that’s CAPITALIZED, *italicized,* highlighted or underlined to convey meaning.
* Print that’s too small
* Long pages of text with no formatting or meaningful headings.
* Non descriptive text for hyperlinks i.e., “click here”.
* Embedding non-accessible documents or relying on pictures, graphs or other visual content to convey meaning.

## Resources:

* [State of Nevada](ada.nv.gov)
* [Web Content Accessibility Guide](https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)
* [Inclusive Nevada Website](inclusivenevada.wordpress.com)



Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities

Kari Horn, Executive Director, khorn@dhhs.nv.gov 775-684-8620