



# 2017 Accessibility Refresh Fact Sheet

## The 2017 Refresh

Jan. 18, 2017, the Access Board published a **final rule** updating accessibility requirements for information and communication technology covered by **The Rehabilitation Act of 1973**. The rule updates and reorganizes standards and guidelines in response to market trends and innovations. The goals of the refresh include:

- Enhancing accessibility for those with disabilities
- Making requirements and standards easier to understand and follow
- Updating requirements and standards to keep up with changing technology
- Harmonizing requirements with other standards in the U.S. and abroad

## Major Changes

The 2017 refresh revises requirements to aid accessibility, facilitate compliance, and make documents easier to use.

Major changes include:

- Restructuring communication technology requirements by functionality instead of product type, to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities and keep pace with advances in technology. The regulations have been consolidated into a single part: **36 CFR Part 1194**.
- Incorporation of **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG 2.0) developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international community that creates web standards. New refresh requirements use WCAG 2.0 to adapt existing 508 and 255 standards to reflect newer technologies in smartphones and related software. (**Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act**, which took effect in 1996, requires telecommunications products and services to be accessible to people with disabilities.)
- Revision of 508 standards specify all public-facing official agency business content, as well as categories of non-public-facing content, have to be accessible, including all forms of electronic information and data.
- Clarification of how software, operating systems, software development toolkits, and software

applications should interact with assistive technology.

- Incorporation of international standards like WCAG 2.0 and European Commission ICT Standards to create a larger marketplace of accessibility solutions.

## Compliance and Next Steps

Federal agencies and contractors must comply with the updated 508 standards beginning on Jan. 18, 2018. The original 508 standards remain in place until the updated standards take effect. Compliance with the updated Section 255 guidelines is not required until the guidelines are adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which is the federal agency tasked with implementation and enforcement of Section 255. Any FCC rulemaking, when completed, will specify the effective date for its updated accessibility requirements under Section 255.

## Procurement Policy and Next Steps

The Rehabilitation Act refresh gives the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council (FAR Council) and Federal agencies up to six months to incorporate the updated 508 standards into their acquisition procurement policies. The FAR Council will establish a date by which new and existing procurements must meet the updated 508 standards.

## Helpful Links

- **Section508.gov** can help you find guidance, tools, and resources for Section 508 procurements helping ensure equal participation for people with disabilities.
- **The Section 508 Standards Refresh Toolkit** provides tools and guidance to help agencies transition to the new standards.
- **The Access Board website** promotes equality for people with disabilities through leadership in accessible design and development of accessibility guidelines and standards. Contact the Access Board via email: **508@access-board.gov** or phone Bruce Bailey at (202) 272-0024 (v), (202) 272-0070 (TTY)