

Adams County's Quarterly Report on Accessibility Compliance

Background:

Under the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act ("CADA"), it is unlawful for any person to discriminate against an individual with a disability. Colorado House Bill 21-1110 expands this prohibition by defining discrimination to include two standards:

1. It is discrimination to exclude an individual with a disability from participation in or being denied the benefits of services, programs, or activities provided by any Colorado government entity.
2. It is discrimination for any Colorado government entity to fail to develop an accessibility plan by July 1, 2022, and to fail to fully comply with accessibility standards developed by the Colorado Office of Information Technology ("OIT") by July 1, 2024.

The HB 21-1110 language specifically applies to accessibility of government information technology and expands the state's accessibility standards to include all individuals with disabilities, as defined by the ADA, instead of just people with vision problems.

House Bill 21-1110, as amended, makes it a state civil rights violation for a government agency to exclude people with disabilities from receiving services or benefits because of lack of accessibility.

Any Colorado government entity that doesn't meet OIT's web accessibility standards, discussed below, could be subject to injunctive relief, meaning a court order to fix the problem; actual monetary damages; or a fine of \$3,500 payable to the plaintiff.

In February 2024, pursuant to statutory requirements, the OIT adopted 8 CCR 1501-11, Rules Establishing Technology Accessibility Standards, ("OIT Rules") which define the accessibility standards and compliance parameters with which local governments like Adams County must apply. Broadly stated, the OIT Rules require that local governments upgrade their information and communications systems ("ICT"), to meet the WCAG 2.1 standard by July 1, 2024.

In spring 2024 House Bill 24-1454 was passed and it establishes a one-year grace period during which Colorado government entities may continue their work to comply with the OIT Rules. From July 1, 2024 through July 1, 2025, government entities will not be subject to liability for failure to comply with the OIT Rules as long as the government entity makes a good faith effort toward compliance by preparing and posting quarterly reports on the progress towards compliance on the governmental entity's website.

Adams County prepares this report to meet the quarterly report requirement in House Bill 24-1454; it will be updated each quarter to show the progress made.

Committed to Accessibility:

Adams County is committed to providing equitable access to all Coloradans. Our ongoing accessibility effort works towards the day when all Adams County services, programs, and activities are accessible, providing equal access to information and services to all Coloradans.

To that end, Adams County has a plan to prioritize, evaluate, remediate and continuously improve every digital touchpoint within our services, programs, and activities. Below, you'll find just some of the measures that Adams County is undertaking.

Accessibility Maturity

Adams County's is at the launch and integrate stages of accessibility maturity where we recognize the need to embrace accessibility organization-wide and have initiated planning and our planning and other activities are well organized. Adams County has also developed a roadmap and change management plan, including a timeline, and our overall organizational approach is defined and well organized.

Progress towards Compliance with OIT Rules and HB 24-1454:

- In January 2022 Adams County formed an interdepartmental committee to begin discussions on how to comply with HB 21-1110. The committee includes representatives from the Information Technology and Innovation ("ITi") department, the County Manager's Office, the ADA coordinator, the County Attorney's Office, and Communications. This committee was created to ensure a County-wide and comprehensive embrace of accessibility and to coordinate the efforts across the county to ensure the effective use of resources. The committee continues to meet once or twice monthly to further Adams County's journey towards compliance and ensuring accessibility for all Adams County citizens.
- A change management plan was developed by the committee listing roles and responsibilities for County-wide accessibility compliance.
- In 2022, and continuing to this day, Adams County began to inventory the ICT it has. Adams County created a list of all the internal and external software, applications, digital signs, kiosks, and social media and is continually updating this inventory.
- Adams County's focus up to the present has been on the external webpage and all external applications used by customers.
- In early 2023 Adams County began quarterly meetings with departments and elected officials to answer questions on accessibility and work through issues that arise.
- Adams County hired Nelnet to perform an audit of 40 of the external facing websites owned by the County. The results of this audit were then used to begin the proceed of updating the audited websites to comply with WCAG 2.1 to comply with the OIT Rules.
- ITi and Communications had one on one meetings with various departments to tidy up and streamline their webpages removing out of date information and updating for better communicating to the public.
- ITi sent a letter to each of Adams County's software or other ICT vendors in late 2023 and early 2024 asking about their compliance with the WCAG 2.1 and requesting a response by early spring 2024. Adams County is in the process of working with the vendors that are not WCAG 2.1 compliant to determine when compliance may be achieved, what reasonable accommodations are requires, and/or whether an exemption to the OIT Rules is applicable.
- In August of 2023 the Purchasing Division began to include language in the standard Professional Services Agreement used by Adams County to require compliance with WCAG 2.1. The requirement to comply with WCAG 2.1 is also included in the standard Request for Proposal

used by the County in its solicitations. Finally, for all new software and other ICT, Purchasing verifies that the vendor can meet the WCAG 2.1 standard during the contracting process.

- As of early 2024 Adams County's accessibility statement is posted here: <https://adcogov.org/americans-disabilities-act-ada>. This statement includes contact information for requests for accommodation as well as further information. The County will provide reasonable accommodation as noted on that webpage.
- Adams County has begun the process to revamp and update its main county website.