

What to do with all your PDFs

Laws on PDF Accessibility

What do federal laws say state agencies need to do with all PDFs?

Updated by the U.S. Department of Justice, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the following.

- For state governments, all documents published after April 24, 2026 must be accessible (compliant with WCAG 2.1 Levels A & AA).
- Documents published before April 24, 2026 must be accessible (compliant with WCAG 2.1 Levels A & AA) **if they are used to "apply for, access, or participate in" state government services, programs or activities.**

Should Content Be a PDF or a Webpage?

The first focus should be on creating accessible, user-friendly HTML webpage content.

If a PDF is the only option, keep it short, well-structured and fully accessible to comply with legal requirements and best practices. PDFs should be used only for:

- Content that needs to be printed or mailed.
- Content that needs to be downloaded and used without internet access.

PDF Best Practices

To ensure the best usability and accessibility of our sites, follow these best practices for PDFs.

Existing PDFs

- Remove PDFs that do not need to be online.
- Remove duplicate PDFs.
- Convert PDFs to HTML.
- Make any PDF published before April 24, 2026 accessible if they are used to "apply for, access, or participate in" state government services, programs or activities.

New PDFs

- Publish new content as HTML webpages instead of PDF.
- Keep PDFs from between 5 to 15 pages, when possible. Shorter documents are easier to read and download faster.
- Make sure all PDFs published **after** April 24, 2026 are accessible.

Remember, PDFs are not searchable or responsive, they can be problematic for screen readers, and the content does not appear in search results.