

ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (EIT)

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This directive establishes policy and assigns administrative responsibility to the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology (CIO) to ensure that VA's electronic and information technology (EIT) is accessible by VA employees and members of the public with disabilities. This directive implements Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Public Law 105-220.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This directive is being reissued to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and updates the previous version.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology (005), Enterprise Architecture Management (005E), Records Management Service (005E3) is responsible for the material contained in this directive.
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK:** VA Handbook 6221, Accessible Electronic and Information Technology
- 5. RESCISSION:** VA Directive 6221, Accessible Electronic and Information Technology, dated February 6, 2003.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/

Robert N. McFarland
Assistant Secretary
for Information and Technology

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/

Robert N. McFarland
Assistant Secretary
for Information and Technology

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ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. This directive provides VA-wide policy to ensure that VA employees and members of the general public with disabilities have access to and use of VA's electronic and information technology (EIT) comparable to that provided to non-disabled persons. This is in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220).

b. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that all EIT developed, procured, maintained or used by Federal agencies on or after June 21, 2001, must meet EIT accessibility standards developed by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board), as set forth at 36 CFR Part 1194. The law also requires Federal agencies to ensure that individuals with disabilities who are Federal employees or members of the public seeking information or services from a Federal agency, have access to and use of information and data comparable to that provided to Federal employees or members of the public who are not individuals with disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency.

c. This policy supports one of the goals of VA's Strategic Plan: "To create an environment that fosters the delivery of One-VA world class service to VA employees, veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources."

2. POLICY

a. VA will ensure that all employees and members of the public with disabilities have access to and use of information and data consistent with requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

b. VA will meet EIT accessibility standards developed by the Access Board.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **The Secretary of Veterans Affairs.** The Secretary has designated the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, as VA's Chief Information Officer (CIO), as the senior agency official responsible for VA's information technology (IT) programs.

b. The Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology. The Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, as the VA CIO shall:

(1) Develop internal policies and procedures to provide accessible EIT resources, data and computer support to employees with disabilities.

(2) Ensure the One-VA Enterprise Architecture Framework encompasses a process for testing and evaluating VA systems and applications to ensure they meet the Access Board's accessibility standards and are in compliance with legislative requirements of Section 508.

(3) Review and evaluate EIT requests for approvals to ensure compliance with Section 508 and Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Exhibit 300 legislative requirements.

(4) Append to IT managers' performance elements a statement ensuring awareness of and compliance with VA Directive 6221.

(5) Apply existing automated EIT to practical applications for employees and veterans with disabilities and keep abreast of sophisticated technologies useful to individuals with disabilities.

(6) Provide technical support and assistance to employees with disabilities, their managers and computer support personnel; and assist in interfacing accommodations with VA's Enterprise Architecture infrastructure through our Section 508 Accessibility Testing and Training Center. In addition, establish a hotline to serve disabled veterans, and employees with disabilities and their managers regarding Section 508 accommodations and general access concerns, including how to obtain reasonable accommodations.

(7) Assist managers of employees with disabilities in acquiring guidance on appropriate agency EIT resources, computer accommodations, and adaptive and non-adaptive systems training.

(8) Maintain VA Directive 6221, and related handbooks and/or associated documents.

(9) Designate the Department's Section 508 Coordinator to attend General Services Administration's (GSA) Center for IT Accommodations interagency meetings, Section 508 workgroup meetings, and other related conferences and forums on IT accessibility.

(10) Respond to the Department of Justice Attorney General's semi-annual report to the President on the Section 508 survey regarding accessibility of Federal EIT.

(11) Ensure that this directive is provided in accessible formats on, VA's accessibility website at www.va.gov/accessible

(12) Establish a Section 508 Advisory Board with members from VA's administrations and Staff Offices to address the six functional areas outlined under the Access Board's accessibility standards. The Board shall:

(a) Make recommendations, and develop policies and procedures to implement requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended;

(b) Provide recommendations on how to fully integrate Section 508 accessibility requirements into VA's Strategic and IT Investment Management Plans and acquisition processes;

(c) Provide recommendations, and conduct training and awareness seminars regarding Section 508 requirements; and

(d) Identify current needs in response to accessibility issues, and make recommendations on solutions to EIT deficiencies that impact persons with disabilities.

c. The Assistant Secretary for Management. The Assistant Secretary for Management shall designate the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Material Management responsibility for developing policy and procedures that ensure VA's EIT procurements comply with Section 508 requirements.

d. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials will:

(1) Procure EIT that best meets accessibility standards developed by the Access Board.

(2) Include funds in their IT budgets (OMB Exhibit 300) to support procurement, development and maintenance of EIT in compliance with Section 508 requirements.

(3) Ensure that all systems and applications developed, procured, maintained or used by VA have been tested and evaluated for conformance with the legislative requirements of Section 508, including those which have been updated or modified after June 21, 2001.

(4) Provide documentation, including Statements of Work (SOW), with relevant Section 508 language which verifies that all systems fully meet Section 508 legislation, as amended, and the One-VA Enterprise Architecture Framework requirements.

(5) Update their annual Strategic Plan to include strategies to develop concept studies, or prepare requirement initiatives and functional performance requirements for employees with disabilities.

(6) Consult with employees with disabilities, their managers, and appropriate VA technical support staff to determine specific computer accommodations or electronic office equipment solutions necessary to meet employees' assistive technology needs.

(7) Consider providing disabled employees with assistive technologies through VA's partnerships with the Department of Defense Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) and other appropriate resources.

4. REFERENCES

- a. Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996.
- b. Federal Acquisition Regulation – Final FAR Ruling 48 CFR Parts 2, 7, 10, 11, 12, and 39 (FAC 97-27; FAR Case 1999-607).
- c. Public Law 105-220, Amendment to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 794d).
- d. Public Law 106-246, Amendment to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (FY 2001 Appropriation for Military Construction).
- e. 36 CFR Part 1194, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) Standards.

5. DEFINITIONS

a. **Computer Accommodation.** This is the acquisition or modification of workstations, software, or electronic office equipment to reasonably accommodate the known physical or cognitive limitations of employees with disabilities to provide access to VA EIT resources, unless VA can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the program.

b. **Electronic and Information Technology (EIT).** This includes, but is not limited to, telecommunications products (such as telephones); information kiosks and transaction machines; Web sites; multimedia products; office equipment such as copiers and fax machines; computers; ancillary equipment; software; firmware; and similar products, services (including support services), and related resources.

c. **Employee with Disabilities.** A person who has a physical or cognitive impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment. In general, this includes individuals with significant vision, hearing, dexterity, cognitive, or mobility impairment.