Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date:

From: Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology (005)

Subj: Section 508 Compliance Requirement for VA SharePoint sites

To: Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, other Key Officials, and Facility Directors

1.   Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, open new opportunities for people with disabilities, and encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals. The law applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Under this law, agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to access available to others.

2.   Over the last two years, the Section 508 Program Office has conducted an audit of nine SharePoint farms (approximately 25 percent of VA's SharePoint environment) and found numerous accessibility issues common to the SharePoint framework and site content. We must do better for our disabled employees and to meet the requirements of the law.

3.   SharePoint administrators and content providers can improve compliance by using software tools maintained by the Section 508 Program Office. <u>SharePoint farms must deploy the Section 508 Program Office tools by August 30, 2012</u>. These tools can automatically fix a majority of the SharePoint framework accessibility issues, and will keep the SharePoint framework and its contents accessible as pages are edited and added to a site to ensure that disabled VA employees and Veterans can easily use the sites information. The Section 508 Program Office is also providing training on making SharePoint framework and content accessible.

4.   Existing farms, farms migrating to SharePoint 2010, and any new deployments of SharePoint will be expected to meet VA's accessibility mandate. The VA Section 508 Program Office will continue to audit VA's SharePoint infrastructure for compliance and report its findings to the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology on a monthly basis.

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5. The VA Section 508 Program Office is prepared to provide assistance in identifying Section 508 violations, meeting compliance standards through its training office, providing access to Section 508 software tools, and providing technical support. For more information contact Patrick Sheehan, Director, Section 508 Program Office, at 202-461-5207 or pat.sheehan@va.gov.

Roger W. Baker