

Scenarios for illustrating rule application

To help illustrate how the ADA title II rule requirements apply within educational settings, the series of practical scenarios below are available for PSUs to review.

These scenarios are designed to offer guidance and insights into real-world applications of ADA title II for digital content. However, they are for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.

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1. Online parent-teacher conference booking system

A middle school introduces an online system allowing parents to book slots for parent-teacher conferences. The system uses a calendar interface that is not keyboard navigable, making it inaccessible to parents who rely on keyboard-only navigation due to mobility impairments.

Explanation: This digital content must comply with the rule's technical standards because it provides access to an important aspect of a student's education, involving parent-teacher interaction. The lack of keyboard navigability excludes some parents from participating in the educational process, which is contrary to the ADA's goal of ensuring equal access to educational services and programs. There is no applicable exception for this scenario; the school must remediate the system to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards, including ensuring keyboard navigability.

2. Archived school board meeting minutes

A high school's website hosts PDFs of school board meeting minutes going back ten years. The PDFs from the first five years are scanned images without text recognition, making them inaccessible to screen reader users.

Explanation: This digital content may qualify for the "archived web content" exception if the school designates these documents as archived, which means they are not intended for active use, such as current decision-making. However, for transparency and equal access reasons, it would be best practice for the school to provide an accessible summary and offer to convert specific requested documents into an accessible format upon request.

3. Third-party educational videos without captions

A teacher uploads educational videos created by a third party to the school's online learning platform. These videos do not have captions, making them inaccessible to students with hearing impairments or other disabilities.

Explanation: Despite being third-party content, these videos do not meet an exception because they are used actively for teaching and are part of the school's educational program. Therefore, the school is responsible for ensuring this content complies with the rule's technical standards, including adding captions, to provide students with disabilities equal access to the educational content.

4. Mobile app for lunch menu and payment

A school district launches a mobile app that allows students to view lunch menus and make payments. The app does not provide text alternatives for images of menu items, making it difficult for students with visual impairments to know what is being offered or to make selections.

Explanation: This digital content must comply with the rule's technical standards because it pertains to a school activity and must be accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Failing to provide text alternatives for images does not meet any exceptions and excludes students with visual impairments from independently accessing the menus or making payments.

5. Digital library access

A public school district offers an online digital library platform allowing students to borrow e-books and access study materials. However, the platform's navigation menus don't work without a mouse, making it inaccessible to students who use keyboard navigation due to physical or other disabilities.

Explanation: The digital library content must comply with the rule's technical standards. Education resources, especially those that supplement or provide primary access to learning materials, are critical services. The inability to navigate the platform with a keyboard excludes students with certain disabilities from accessing the same educational resources as their peers. There is no exception applicable here; the platform must be updated to ensure keyboard navigability.

6. Teacher's educational blog

A high school science teacher maintains a blog hosted on the school's website, where they post supplementary educational content, experiments, and homework assignments. Some posts include complex diagrams without descriptive alt text or explanations, posing barriers for students who have visual impairments or other disabilities.

Explanation: This content does not fall under any exceptions and must comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards. The blog, serving as an extension of classroom instruction, is integral to the students' learning experience. Providing alt text for diagrams or alternative accessible content ensures that all students, regardless of disability, have equal access to the materials presented.

7. Online enrollment forms for extracurricular activities

A school district's website features online forms for students to enroll in extracurricular activities, including clubs and sports. However, these forms do not provide error

messages in a format accessible to screen readers, complicating the enrollment process for students with visual impairments or other disabilities.

Explanation: These online forms must comply with the technical standards set forth by the rule. Enrollment in extracurricular activities is part of the broader educational experiences schools offer. The lack of accessible error messages can prevent students with disabilities from participating in these activities. Remedying this by ensuring error messages are screen reader-friendly is necessary to meet ADA compliance.

8. Archived instructional videos

A district's online learning portal includes instructional videos from a curriculum implemented three years ago. These videos are kept for reference but are not part of the current curriculum. The videos lack captions and descriptive audio, making them inaccessible to students with hearing or visual impairments or other disabilities.

Explanation: If these videos are designated as archived and not used for current instructional purposes, they may fall under the "archived web content" exception. However, if students or educators frequently use them as learning resources, the school district should consider making them accessible. Best practice suggests providing captions and descriptive audio to ensure all students can access historical educational content when needed.

9. Third-party Scholarship Application Platform

A school district links to a third-party scholarship application platform from its website. This platform is not under the school district's control and is not accessible to students using assistive technology.

Explanation: While the third-party platform is responsible for its own ADA compliance, the school district has a duty to ensure that all external resources it directly promotes or recommends are accessible to students with disabilities. The district should encourage the third-party provider to meet accessibility standards or provide an accessible alternative way for students to access the scholarship information and application process.

10. Online Field Trip Consent Forms

A district offers an online platform for parents to fill out and submit consent forms for field trips. This platform uses CAPTCHAs that are visually based without audio alternatives, making it inaccessible for parents who have visual impairments or other disabilities.

Explanation: This platform must comply with the rule's technical standards. The use of visually based CAPTCHAs without accessible alternatives (like audio CAPTCHAs or text-based verification questions) can prevent parents with certain disabilities from completing necessary consent forms, potentially limiting students' participation in field trips. The district needs to ensure that all elements of the platform, including CAPTCHAs, are accessible.

11. Virtual Classroom Platforms

For remote or virtual learning environments, a school district adopts a third-party virtual classroom platform that lacks compatibility with screen readers, making it difficult for students with visual impairments to participate in live classes and access course materials.

Explanation: Despite being a third-party platform, the school district's use of this tool for essential educational activities means it must meet ADA compliance. There's no applicable exception for educational services critical to student learning. The district is responsible for ensuring the platform is accessible.

12. Interactive Online Math Tutorials

A middle school math department develops an interactive online tutorial system that uses drag-and-drop features for solving algebra problems. The interface cannot be navigated using keyboard commands alone, excluding students with certain physical or other disabilities.

Explanation: This digital content, serving as a direct learning tool, needs to comply with the technical standards. Interactive educational tools like these tutorials must be designed to be fully accessible, including keyboard navigability, to ensure all students can benefit from the educational content.

13. Teacher Uploaded Documents on School Website

Teachers upload various documents to the school's website for students and parents, including course information, assignments, and permission slips. Some documents are uploaded as scanned images in PDF format, which are not accessible to users of screen reading software.

Explanation: These documents must comply with ADA technical standards because they are actively used for current educational activities and communication with parents. Scanned PDFs that are not OCR (Optical Character Recognition) processed to allow text recognition do not provide equal access to users with visual impairments or other disabilities. Teachers should ensure documents are accessible, which may involve OCR processing or providing documents in an alternative accessible format.

14. School Sports Team and Event Schedules

A high school's athletics department maintains a section of the school's website for posting team rosters, game schedules, and event locations. The scheduling tool used is not compatible with mobile screen readers, limiting access for students and parents who rely on these technologies.

Explanation: The athletics section of the school's website must be accessible under the rule's technical standards. Extracurricular activities, including sports, play a significant role in the school experience. Ensuring that schedules and event information are accessible allows all students and parents, regardless of disability, to participate and support school events. The school must update or replace the scheduling tool to ensure it is accessible on both desktop and mobile devices.

15. Parent-Teacher Communication Portal

A portal used by teachers and parents for messaging, scheduling meetings, and sharing student progress reports does not provide alternative text for buttons and images, rendering navigation and functionality unusable for some users.

Explanation: This digital content, facilitating essential communication between teachers and parents, must meet the rule's technical standards. The lack of alternative text for interactive elements and images on the portal excludes parents who are blind or have low vision from participating fully in their child's education. The school district must ensure all navigational elements and images have descriptive alt text to comply with accessibility standards.

16. Online Standardized Test Preparation

An online platform provided by the school district for standardized test preparation features practice tests and study materials. However, some practice tests use color alone to convey correct or incorrect answers, which is not perceivable to color-blind students.

Explanation: The test preparation content needs to comply with the technical standards of accessibility. Using color alone to indicate test results is inaccessible to students with color vision deficiencies. The platform must provide additional indicators, such as text or symbols, to ensure that all students can understand their practice test outcomes.

17. School District Mobile App for Bus Tracking

The school district launches a mobile app allowing parents and students to track school bus locations in real-time. The app does not support voice-over features, making it inaccessible for users who are blind or have low vision.

Explanation: This mobile app must comply with the rule's technical standards, as it provides a critical service related to school attendance. The lack of voice-over support prevents equitable access for students and parents with visual impairments and other disabilities. The district must ensure the app is compatible with screen readers and voice-over technology to facilitate independent use by all community members.

18. Digital Student Art Gallery

A high school art department creates a digital gallery on the school website to showcase student artwork. The gallery is designed with a mouse-dependent interface for navigation and lacks keyboard navigation options, excluding students and visitors who cannot use a mouse due to physical disabilities.

Explanation: While the digital art gallery may seem ancillary to educational programs, it represents an important aspect of student life and achievements. This digital content must be accessible, including offering keyboard navigation alternatives, to ensure all students and the broader school community can access and appreciate the student artwork. The school must modify the digital gallery to be navigable via keyboard commands in addition to mouse controls.

Some content was drafted using ChatGPT.