

Mass Workforce Issuance

Workforce Issuance No. 07-17

Policy Information

To: Chief Elected Officials
Workforce Investment Board Chairs
Workforce Investment Board Directors
Title I Administrators
Career Center Directors
Title I Fiscal Officers
DCS Associate Directors
DCS Field Managers

cc: WIA State Partners

From: Susan V. Lawler, Director
Division of Career Services

Date: April 3, 2007

Subject: **Rehabilitation Act Standards for Web/Information Accessibility**

Purpose: To provide guidance to Local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Center Operators, and other local workforce development partners regarding accessibility requirements delineated in Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act with respect to web sites and web applications.

Background: Sections 504 and 508 refer to the 1998 amendment to the Rehabilitation Act that requires Federal agencies to ensure that information technology is accessible to persons with disabilities. These requirements also cover any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. This includes operations of a department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or of a local government or the entity of such a State or local government that distributes such assistance and each such department or agency (and each other State or local government entity) to which the assistance is extended (see Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 42 U.S.C. §2000d).

In carrying out their responsibilities and functions with respect to the Workforce Investment Act, local boards and One-Stop Career Centers are subject to the requirements of Sections 504 and 508.

Section 508 covers software applications and operating systems, Internet websites, telecommunication products, videos, multimedia, laptops, desktops – everywhere you find technology. It is a consideration for all agencies developing, procuring, maintaining, or using electronic and information technology. *Agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others.*

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has chosen to base its web accessibility standards on the standards included in Section 508. These standards were developed and issued by the state's Information Technology Division (ITD). They are intended for use by all state agencies and their contractors to address accessibility issues in web page design and application development.

ITD is conducting an audit of all Executive Departments' web sites and web applications to be completed by the end of March 2007. Additionally, each Department must develop a remediation plan to bring its web sites and applications into compliance with the standards.

One-Stop Career Centers, local Workforce Investment Boards and other local partner agencies and organizations that maintain web sites and web applications that are accessible by the public or by its employees are subject to the provisions of Section 508 and Section 504. *These sites are not included in ITD's current web technology audit.*

In order to assist One-Stop Career Centers and local partners with regard to Section 508 standards, DCS is developing a *Reference Guide to Web Accessibility* that will be available in April. The *Guide* will be helpful to website administrators, content providers and document creators. For more information on web accessibility standards, go to ITD's website at <http://www.mass.gov/Accessibility> and the Federal government's website at <http://www.section508.gov/>. Other helpful Internet sites are included in an attachment.

Attachment A lists additional resources to assist local boards and One-Stop Career Center operators in complying with the accessibility requirements of Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Action

Required: Local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Center Operators, and other local workforce development partners should provide this information to appropriate staff and, where applicable, to contractors or consultants who develop or maintain web sites or web applications on their behalf that are accessible to the public or to staff to assure compliance with accessibility requirements of the Act.

Effective: Immediately.

Reference: Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, 42 U.S.C. §2000d)

Inquiries: Any questions related to this correspondence should be directed to Marilyn Boyle at mboyle@detma.org.