

Healthcare Website Accessibility Checklist

A Practical Guide to WCAG 2.1 AA Compliance

This checklist is designed to help healthcare organizations understand and manage website accessibility requirements under WCAG 2.1 Level AA, including recent HHS guidance related to Section 504.

Accessibility is not a one-time fix. Use this checklist to assess your current state, identify gaps, and establish an ongoing process.

1. Accessibility Foundations (Baseline Requirements)

Accessibility Statement Published

- A public accessibility statement is visible on the website
- Includes a commitment to accessibility
- Provides a contact method for accessibility-related issues

WCAG Standard Defined

- WCAG 2.1 Level AA is documented as the internal accessibility standard
- Responsibility for compliance is assigned (team or role)

2. Website Structure & Navigation

Keyboard Accessibility

- All menus, buttons, links, and forms are usable via keyboard alone
- No “keyboard traps” exist
- Visible focus indicators show where users are on the page

Logical Page Structure

- One clear H1 per page
- Headings follow proper hierarchy (H1 → H2 → H3)

- Page layout follows a logical reading order

Consistent Navigation

- Menus and navigation elements behave consistently across pages
- No unexpected changes in context when interacting with elements

3. Images, Media & Visual Content

Alternative Text for Images

- All meaningful images include descriptive alt text
- Decorative images are properly marked as decorative
- Icons and buttons with images have accessible label

Color & Contrast

- Text meets minimum contrast ratios
- Information is not conveyed by color alone
- Links are visually distinguishable from surrounding text

Video & Audio (If Applicable)

- Captions are provided for videos
- Transcripts are available for audio-only content
- Media controls are keyboard accessible

4. Forms & Interactive Elements

Form Labels & Instructions

- Every form field has a clear, programmatic label
- Required fields are clearly identified
- Instructions are available before form submission

Error Handling

- Error messages are descriptive and specific
- Errors are announced to screen readers

- Users can correct errors without losing progress

Buttons & Links

- Buttons describe their action clearly
- Link text is descriptive (not “click here”)
- Links opening new tabs/windows are identified

5. Documents & Downloads (High-Risk Area)

Accessible PDFs

- PDFs are tagged and structured for screen readers
- Headings and reading order are logical
- Images within PDFs have alt text

Document Strategy

- PDFs are avoided when HTML pages can be used instead
- New documents follow accessibility standards before publishing
- Legacy documents are reviewed or removed if not required

6. Third-Party Tools & Integrations

Embedded Tools Reviewed

- Appointment scheduling
- Bill pay portals
- Patient forms
- Chat tools
- Maps or location finders

Accessibility Confirmed

- Vendors provide accessibility documentation
- Accessibility limitations are documented
- Alternative access methods are available if needed

7. Accessibility Overlays & Widgets (If Used)

Overlay Is Not the Only Solution

- Overlay is used as a supplemental tool, not a replacement for remediation
- Core accessibility issues are addressed in site code and templates

Claims Evaluated Carefully

- No reliance on “guaranteed compliance” claims
- Overlay limitations are understood and documented

8. Content Governance & Ongoing Compliance

Staff Training

- Content editors understand:
 - alt text requirements
 - heading structure
 - link text best practices

Publishing Checklist

- Accessibility review is part of content publishing
- New pages and updates are reviewed before going live

Monitoring & Audits

- Automated scans run regularly
- Manual reviews conducted periodically
- Issues are documented and prioritized

9. Documentation & Risk Management

Audit Records Maintained

- Accessibility audits are documented

- Remediation actions are tracked
- Known limitations are recorded

Feedback Process

- Accessibility issues reported by users are tracked
- Issues are addressed within a defined timeframe

Final Reminder

WCAG compliance is an **ongoing process**, not a one-time project. Healthcare organizations that combine **technical remediation**, **content governance**, and **regular monitoring** are best positioned to meet federal expectations and reduce legal risk.