

Accessibility of Advanced Communications Services and Equipment

Advanced communications services and equipment, such as email, text messages, computers, tablets, and mobile phones, are required to be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA). FCC rules implementing this requirement apply to advanced communications services and equipment introduced into the marketplace or updated on or after October 8, 2013.

To be *accessible*, the main functions of a product or service must be locatable, identifiable, and operable by individuals with varying abilities, and all information necessary to operate and use the product or service must have an accessible output or display.

To be *usable*, individuals with disabilities must be able to learn about and operate the product or service's features and must be able to access information and documentation for the product or service, including instructions and user guides. In addition, companies must provide access to support services, such as technical support hotlines, call centers, service centers, repair services, and billing services.

What are advanced communications services?

Advanced communications services include:

- Interconnected voice over internet protocol service, such as home phone service provided by an internet service provider
- Non-interconnected VoIP service, such as using a computer to engage in voice communication over the internet
- Electronic messaging service, such as text messaging, instant messaging, or e-mail
- Interoperable video conferencing services, such as video meetings for work and video chat
- Audio or video communications services used by inmates to communicate with people outside the correctional institution (for more information, visit: [the FCC's Consumer Guide on Communications Services for Incarcerated People with Disabilities](#))

What equipment is used for advanced communications services? What are the obligations for manufacturers of equipment and service providers?

- If achievable, manufacturers must make sure that people with disabilities have access to the hardware and software components they provide, such as the operating system, applications, and internet browsers. The obligations apply also to any updates made to advanced communications services.
- Providers are responsible for making their advanced communications services accessible, including the hardware or software applications they provide.
- Manufacturers and service providers may build accessibility into their products and services or rely on other solutions, so long as they make them available to consumers at a nominal cost.
- When accessibility is not achievable, manufacturers and providers must make their equipment and services compatible with commonly used accessibility devices or specialized equipment, such as refreshable braille displays, visual signaling devices, and magnifiers, unless such compatibility is also not achievable.
- Manufacturers and providers are not required to make every feature and function of every device or service accessible for every disability. They may offer products and services with varied functions, features, and prices that are accessible to the full range of consumers with varying types of disabilities.
- Providers must not remove or hinder the transmission of accessibility information or data, such as tags and navigational controls for screen reader technologies that have been built into content.

What are the accessibility requirements for internet browsers?

Internet browsers installed by manufacturers on mobile phones used for advanced communications services must be accessible and usable by individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment, unless doing so is not achievable. Advanced communications service providers have this same obligation if they provide or require the installation and use of an internet browser as an underlying component of their service.

What are the exceptions to these accessibility rules?

Equipment used for advanced communications services that is customized for the unique needs of a particular business, and that is not offered directly to the public, is exempt from the FCC's accessibility requirements.

The FCC may waive the accessibility requirements for equipment or services that are designed for multiple purposes but are primarily designed for purposes other than using advanced communications services. Under this provision, the FCC granted a waiver for video game software until January 2017. In addition, the FCC waived the advanced communications accessibility requirements for basic e-readers.

Are advanced communications services devices subject to other accessibility requirements?

Yes. Equipment used for advanced communication services must follow other accessibility requirements as well, including the following:

- **Telecommunications Access.** FCC rules addressing accessibility requirements for telecommunications products, services and relevant equipment can be found in the [Telecommunications Access for People with Disabilities](#) consumer guide.
- **Internet Browsers.** Internet browsers on the mobile phones must be accessible to and usable by individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- **Closed Captioning.** Equipment that receives, plays back, or records video programming, including mobile devices, must be capable of displaying closed captions. The FCC's [Closed Captioning Display Requirements for Equipment](#) consumer guide has information about these requirements.

What can you do if you are concerned about the accessibility of an advanced communications product or service?

First, you can contact the equipment manufacturer or service provider to let them know about your accessibility concerns. You can [find company contact information on the FCC's website](#), by sending an e-mail to dro@fcc.gov, or by calling 202-418-2517 (voice), or 844-432-2275 (videophone).

Whether or not you decide to first contact a company, you can request assistance from the FCC's Disability Rights Office (DRO) to resolve an accessibility problem by submitting a Request for Dispute Assistance (RDA). RDAs can be filed at fcc.gov/rdaform for any accessibility problem with advanced communications services and equipment, telephone services and equipment, and for internet browsers built into

mobile phones. During an RDA, the FCC will work with you and the company to resolve the accessibility problem.

Your request for dispute assistance should include the following:

- Your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address
- If communication by telephone or e-mail is not accessible to you, your preferred method of communication
- The name of the manufacturer or service provider
- The type of device, model number, and any software involved
- When you purchased, acquired, or used (or tried to purchase, acquire, or use) the service or equipment
- When you became aware of the accessibility problem
- How or why the service or equipment is not accessible to or usable by you
- If you contacted the company about your accessibility problem, how the company responded
- What you want the company to do to resolve your accessibility problem
- Any other information or documentation you think may help describe or resolve your accessibility problem

Your request for dispute assistance will be assigned a case number. If your accessibility problem is not resolved in 30 days, you will have two choices:

- Request an additional 30 days for DRO to work with you and the company to try to resolve your accessibility problem
- File an informal complaint about the accessibility problem with the FCC's Enforcement Bureau.

To request an additional 30 days or file an informal complaint, contact DRO at 202-418-2517 (voice), or 844-432-2275 (videophone), by e-mail to dro@fcc.gov, or by mail to the address above. You will need to provide your last name, zip code, and your case number. If you take no action for 60 days after the 30-day time period ends, your case will be closed.

For more information about RDAs, visit: [the FCC's RDA Consumer Guide](#).

For more information about FCC programs to promote accessibility for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's [Disability Rights Office website](#).

FCC's Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at fcc.gov/consumers.

Alternative formats

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