

Hello from the [Rutgers Health Office of Disability Services!](#)

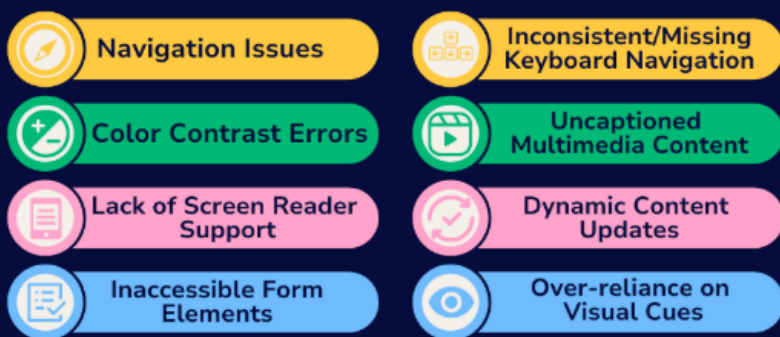


The RH (formerly RBHS) Office of Disability Services (RHODS) provides the necessary tools, resources and support for disabled students to become responsible decision-makers and self-advocates in charge of their own future.

Let us know if you would like additional information or a presentation in your course

[We invite your feedback](#)

Common Digital Accessibility Issues



1. Navigation Issues

Dive Into Web-Accessibility

ADA Title II regulation updates by Jenna Rose

The summer is a great time to head to the beach, hit the pool, or stay inside and enjoy air conditioning. During the summer fun, you can also do your future self a favor by updating and preparing online accessible course content for the Fall semester! On April 24, 2024, the Department of Justice published updated Title II regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act related to accessible digital technology. These updated regulations create a timeline for public entities, like Rutgers, to create and im-

plement a plan for ensuring all digital technology and content will be accessible. The updated regulations affect web accessibility, course accessibility, and procurement. These updates will work to create a more inclusive campus environment. Although the regulation is a civil rights law designed to create equal access for people with disabilities, most students can benefit from inclusive online content, such as captions on videos and text to speech technology.

Many departments at Rutgers have already begun sharing various tools and resources to better understand Title II updates and how to prepare. Rutgers Access and Disability Resources (RADR) released information on creating a [Course Accessibility Plan](#) and a [Digital Accessibility Plan](#). Each academic unit should develop a Course Accessibility Plan (CAP) using local structures and practices with support from university-wide tools and resources. The plans should address the processes and procedures related to a systematic course accessibility plan that includes goals, strategies, assessments and processes to ensure compliance with federal, state, and university policies. A Digital Accessibility Plan outlines how a university will ensure accessibility across various digital platforms, including websites, course materials, learning management systems, documents, software programs, mobile and web applications, social media and other digital technologies (e.g., kiosks, ATM's, digital information boards and screens etc.)

Resources currently available to faculty and staff include:

[Online Teaching Essentials](#) training offered by [University Online Education Services](#) (UOES)

Book an [Educational Technology Consultation](#) with UOES

Review the [Course Accessibility Checklist](#) and [Faculty Resource Page](#) from RADR

[Canvas Ally](#), which provides an accessibility score and steps on how to remediate documents with accessibility issues.

[Kaltura Reach](#) and [MediaSpace](#) can be used to create captioning for videos

[TidyUp](#) is a tool in Canvas that assists in archiving content and unpublished pages that are unused.

[SensusAccess](#) is a tool where you can request accessible versions of any document that is found to be inaccessible.

More information and training on best practices for online course content and Title II updates are forthcoming. However, there are plenty of action items faculty can take now to prepare and resources available.

Rutgers Health
Office of Disability Services



Providing Equal Access

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☎ 973.640.0058; 973.634.4823

[Bipartisan Support for The Veterans Accessibility Act](#)



The Veterans Accessibility Act would:

- Consist of 15 total voting members, representing veterans, accessibility experts, VA employees, and veterans service organizations;
- Regularly advise the VA on improving accessibility across information, services, benefits, and facilities;
- Review and provide recommendations on compliance with disability accessibility law; and
- Produce biennial reports on access barriers and progress in making services more accessible.

The Veterans Accessibility Act would ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is in full compliance with federal disability laws and provides guidance on ways to make programs and facilities more accessible for veterans and people with disabilities. This bill would establish a 15-person Advisory Committee on Equal Access, which would consist of veterans with disabilities, disability experts, and representatives of advocacy organizations. The Committee would be responsible for evaluating and reporting on the VA's compliance with federal disability laws and would issue recommendations for how the VA can improve its accessibility across all facilities and platforms.

Senators Kirsten Gillibrand, and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran, and Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal, join Senator Scott to lead this effort in the Senate, while Congressman David Valadao is leading the companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

Organizations endorsing the legislation include: Paralyzed Veterans of America, Blinded Veterans Association, Disabled American Veterans, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, National Association of the Deaf, National Disability Rights Network, United Spinal Association/VetsFirst, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

[Rutgers Veterans Services](#) are here to support you; for example:

[In-House Resources](#) *The Veterans House has a rotating office operated by representatives from the University, providing on-site (when we return to campus) assistance to its military-affiliated students for its most requested services.*

[Applying to Rutgers](#) *Learn about the admission processes to programs at Rutgers New Brunswick, Camden, & Newark.*

[Education Benefits](#) *Learn about how to apply for educational benefits, how to use your benefits at Rutgers, myVetCert, the NJTEAM Act, & Rutgers Continuing Professional Education programs.*

[Green Zone Training](#) *Learn about military cultural competency training available for Rutgers faculty & staff.*

[FAQs](#)

Other Frequently Asked Questions [If You Are Activated](#)

Learn about how our office is committed to supporting our students, faculty, and staff that are called to active duty. [Military-Affiliated Student Organizations](#)

Learn about Rutgers military-affiliated clubs that welcome those who served, are currently serving, as well as their families and all supporters.

The Veterans House has a rotating office operated by representatives from the University, providing on-site assistance to its military-affiliated students for its most requested services. (See links on the right-side of the page for additional services & availability at other Rutgers locations.)

Rutgers Veterans House Address: 14 Lafayette Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

How can schools prepare for ADA digital accessibility requirements?

Kara Arundel, Published May 6, 2024

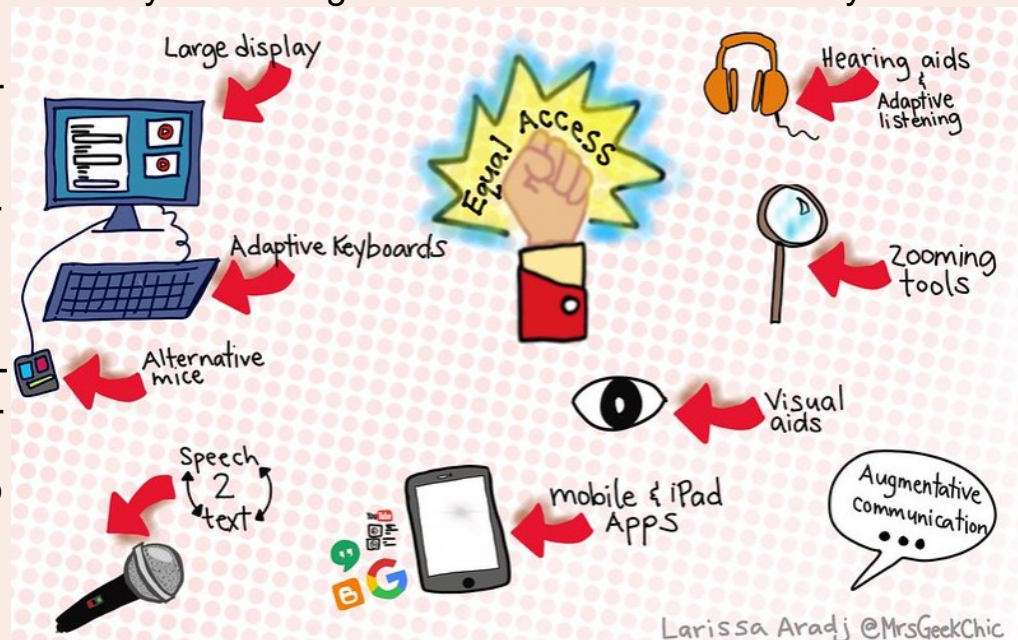
***Note: article has been shortened for space and relevance*

A new U.S. Department of Justice rule aims to ensure that state and local government web content and mobile apps are accessible for people with disabilities.

A newly issued federal rule to ensure web content and mobile apps are accessible for people with disabilities will require public K-12 and higher education institutions to do a thorough inventory of their digital materials to make sure they are in compliance, accessibility experts said.

The [update to regulations](#) for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, published April 24 [2024] by the U.S. Department of Justice, calls for all state and local governments to verify that their web content — including mobile apps and social media postings — is accessible for those with vision, hearing, cognitive and manual dexterity disabilities.

For example, students, staff and parents who are deaf currently may be unable to access information in web videos and other digital presentations lacking captions. People with low vision might not be able to read websites or mobile apps that do not allow text to be resized or provide enough contrast.



Additionally, individuals with limited manual dexterity or vision disabilities who use assistive technology can find it difficult to access sites that do not support keyboard alternatives for mouse commands.

“This final rule marks the Justice Department’s latest effort to ensure that no person is denied access to government services, programs, or activities because of a disability,” said U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, in a statement on April 8, the day Garland signed the rule.

Mary Rice, associate professor of literacy at the University of New Mexico, recommends that school districts prepare for compliance by doing an inventory of their digital materials.

Rice, who has spent the past 10 years conducting research on accessibility and online learning, also suggests that districts first consider who in their community has accessibility challenges, whether they are students, teachers, staff, families or guardians.

For public universities and colleges, Rice predicts that more collaboration will be needed between teaching faculty and instructional design staff who support course development so those materials come into compliance. Rice also said universities will need to figure out how to ensure that PDFs of academic journal articles assigned to students by professors are accessible.

“Spending your whole life advocating for yourself” to get accessible materials is “demoralizing and draining and inappropriate,” Rice said. The new regulations will “hopefully bring this to the attention of schools and school leaders, and we’ll make some headway.”

Disability rights advocacy groups have for some time been pressing the federal government to update accessibility standards. On April 12, Disability Rights Florida issued a statement calling the rule “historic and exciting.”

A joint May 2023 [Dear Colleague letter](#) from DOJ’s Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights said OCR had resolved and monitored more than 1,000 cases related to digital access in recent years. The cases were initiated by complaints of discrimination from the public. Earlier, in May 2022, OCR proactively opened 100 compliance reviews on digital accessibility at state departments of education, school districts, charter schools, public and private universities.

Disabled Disrupters founder honored at White House

Kira Tiller, a first-year Tar Heel diagnosed with epilepsy, fights for the rights of students with disabilities. By Caroline Daly, University Communications , Friday, November 1st, 2024

Carolina first-year student Kira Tiller founded [Disabled Disruptors](#) in high school. She's brought the organization to Carolina and was recognized by the White House in October. From elementary school through high school, Kira Tiller had to be her own advocate. Tiller, who was diagnosed with epilepsy at a young age, found the flashing lights used in school safety drills triggered her seizures. Oftentimes, she had to describe her medical condition to administrators and teachers.

"I realized that a lot of people didn't really talk about the intersectionality of other justice movements with disability justice," she said. "I sought out a disability political advocacy group for young people and students but didn't find one."

After sharing her struggles with her peers, Tiller founded Disabled Disrupters, a youth disability justice coalition, in high school.

"If you care about an issue and making your community a better place, it might take time, but you will find a community of people who share that same passion and who want to build a movement with you," she said.

Disabled Disrupters fights for disability rights through community organizing, educational efforts and direct public policy work with political advocacy. With members in high school, college and graduate school, the group has a diversity of student perspectives at each level of the educational journey.

Now the first-year student has brought Disabled Disrupters to Carolina. She hopes to grow the initiative beyond K-12 issues and help college students with disabilities, so they have more physical accessibility and emergency preparedness in classrooms, dorms and other community spaces on campus.

"I chose Carolina because I knew there was a strong advocacy network," Tiller said. "I felt that I could get a diversity of perspectives and connect with a lot of people who are different from me."

Tiller's efforts got noticed on the national level when she was named a 2024 Girl Leading Change in celebration of International Day of the Girl (Oct. 11). Ten honorees received awards from the White House Gender Policy Council, spearheaded by first lady Jill Biden, at the White House in October.

During her White House visit, Tiller met first Lady Jill Biden and spoke with a group of girls from local middle schools.

The honorees met the 2023 winners along with a group of girls from local middle schools. After the ceremony, the middle schoolers had the chance to ask the honorees questions.

"They genuinely cared about creating change in their communities," Tiller said. "It just felt like such a full circle moment to see these younger girls, who are passionate about being changemakers, asking me for advice."

At Carolina, Tiller wants to continue assisting people with disabilities through Disabled Disrupters and getting more accommodations for those who need them. The group is currently working on an initiative to consider individualized accommodation plans during emergency situations at K-12 schools. Tiller is also looking forward to getting involved in other social justice organizations during her time on campus.

She hopes that Disabled Disrupters can help others find their voice in advocating for change.

"I hope the organization encourages other young disabled people to take pride in their identities and recognize they can create meaningful change in their communities," Tiller said.



New Jersey's "Paul's Law"

Paul's Law requires that all school personnel are trained in seizure recognition and first aid and that school districts have an individualized seizure action plan for each student who has epilepsy. [Epilepsy Services, New Jersey \(ESNJ\)](#) is working closely with [Paul Quinn St. Pierre, a 13 year old self-advocate](#) who is passionate about ensuring that school personnel and his peers are trained in seizure recognition and first aid.

Governor Murphy signed "Paul's Law" to aid students with seizure disorders, 1/09/2020

Paul Simon's search for hearing loss cure leads him to groundbreaking Stanford Medicine program and some hope

By Anthony Mason, Jennifer Earl, Rebecca Castagna

When legendary singer-songwriter [Paul Simon began to lose his hearing](#) nearly four years ago while working on his album, "Seven Psalms," he feared he wouldn't be able to perform again. "It was incredibly frustrating. I was very angry at first that this had happened," Si-mon told CBS News senior culture correspondent [Anthony Mason](#) in an interview for "CBS Mornings."

He admits one of his biggest fears was giving up what he loves: making music. "I guess what I'm most apprehensive about would be if I can't hear well enough to really enjoy the act of making music," Simon said.

Since then, he's had dramatic hearing loss, sharing that he now has about 6% hearing in his left ear. But he's learned to make adjustments. He's switched to larg-er speakers, placing them all around him when he's playing so he can hear better. He's also had to change how and what he plays.

"I'm going through my repertoire and reducing a lot of the choices that I make to acoustic versions. It's all much quieter. It's not 'You Can Call Me Al.' That's gone. I can't do that one," Simon said, chuckling.

Simon is still writing music and he returned to the stage in September for a rare, stripped-down performance at The Soho Sessions in New York.

"You know [Matisse](#), when he was suffering at the end of his life, when he was in bed, he envisioned all these cut-outs and had a great creative period," Simon said. "So I don't think creativity stops with disability. So far, I haven't experienced that. And I hope not to."

Paul Simon's search for answers

At first, doctors told Simon there was nothing they could do about his hearing loss. Then, he learned about the [Stanford Initiative to Cure Hearing Loss](#) (SICHL), which includes a team of nearly 100 scientists searching for ways to prevent, repair and replace damaged inner ear tissue.

That's promising news for Simon and millions like him. Hearing loss is on the rise, affecting nearly 1.5 billion people across the globe, according to Stanford Medicine.

Mason recently joined Simon during a visit to the program's facility in Palo Alto, California, sitting in on Simon's exam with Dr. Konstantina Stankovic.

"Hearing bones are the smallest bones in the body," Dr. Stankovic said. "And then they are connected to the inner ear, which is called the cochlea. And it looks like a snail."

The cochlea is so small and fragile it's impossible to biopsy without causing deafness. It's hidden in the hardest bone in the body, located deep in the skull, Dr. Stankovic explained.

What can animals teach us about hearing loss?

Certain animals can recover from hearing loss because their hair cells regenerate. It's the hairs in the ear, called cilia, that transmit sound to the brain.

"We actually have the same genetic machinery, it's just turned off in people," Dr. Stankovic told Mason. "And the key question is how do you turn it on? And how do you turn it on safely, because cancer is regeneration gone awry."

In a lab at the Stanford Initiative to Cure Hearing Loss , geneticist Teresa Nicolson is studying zebrafish, which have similar inner ear structures to humans.

Nicolson said they've made a recent, exciting discovery. They were able to rescue hearing in zebrafish with hearing loss mutations using an FDA-approved drug. The hope is it could one day be used in humans.

Down the hall, biophysicist Tony Ricci is conducting an experiment focused on mice.

"So the hair bundle is the site where most damage happens. So with aging, with noise...we are trying to understand how the bundle – like it's a machine, right? So how this machine works normally," Ricci said.

"So then when we know what piece's parts are getting broken, we can figure out how do we fix it or how do we replace it," he added.

Surgeon and scientist Dr. Alan Cheng is using gene therapy to coax the damaged hair cells in mice to regenerate. He's also studying human cochlea samples from organ donors.

"We're the only place in the world that can do it, in fact," Dr. Cheng said. The team was surprised to find that damaged human hair cells do begin to regenerate on their own, but only partially. Now they need to find out whether the drug cocktail they've used in mice could work in humans.

For Dr. Cheng, this research is personal.

"My mom, who has hearing loss, she's been asking how can we regenerate cells for her," he said.

"That's what I've been asking ever since I met you guys," Simon added with a smile.

Dr. Cheng said simply: "We're working on it."



Paul Simon performs as U.S. President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his wife Yuko Kishida in the East Room of the White House on April 10, 2024 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images) Getty Images

Note: This article discusses medical approaches to addressing hearing loss. We recognize and deeply respect that for many individuals, Deafness is not a condition to be 'fixed' but a vital part of their cultural and linguistic identity. Our aim is not to diminish or challenge that perspective, but to provide information for those who seek or are interested in medical options."

RH Office of Disability Services

Mission

The Office of Disability Services is dedicated to the philosophy that all Rutgers University students are assured equal opportunity, access and participation in the University's courses, programs, activities, services and facilities. We recognize that diverse abilities are a source of strength, empowerment, and enrichment for the entire university community and we are committed to the elimination of physical, instructional, and attitudinal barriers by promoting awareness and understanding throughout the university community.

Our Vision

The Office of Disability Services at Rutgers Health strives to become a model program for students with disabilities in higher education. We are committed to developing a comprehensively accessible and universally designed University that nurtures the full participation and contribution of every individual. Our team strives to provide the necessary tools, resources and supports for individuals with disabilities to become responsible decision-makers and self-advocates in charge of their own future. We envision a campus community where all individuals are welcomed, valued, and encouraged to be contributing members.

Steps to Request Accommodations:

1. Complete and submit the Registration Form

Upon completion of this form, you will receive a confirmation email of your submission

2. Schedule an initial meeting:

Upon receipt of the registration form, a representative from ODS will contact you to schedule an intake meeting. This meeting can be conducted in person, by video call, or by phone.

3. Submit appropriate documentation:

On or before your intake meeting, please submit the [appropriate documentation](#) that meets ODS guidelines for your disability

4. Upon completion of your intake, ODS will review your documentation.

Students will receive a response in a timely manner with one of the following application statuses:

- A. Reasonable accommodation request approved
- B. More information needed
- C. Accommodation not approved and why

5. Once approved, you must request your Letters of Accommodations to alert your faculty or program of your accommodations.

Complete the [Letter of Accommodation Request Form](#)



Scan the QR code to learn more about registering for services with ODS, as well as information about documentation and, if approved, how to request.



Cindy Poore-Pariseau,
ODS Director

Jenna Rose,
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