

New York City Department of Veterans' Services

Five-Year Accessibility Plan

(In accordance with Local Law 12 of 2023)

Introduction

The New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) recognizes that accessibility is fundamental to equitable service delivery, meaningful community engagement, and full participation in public life. The Department serves a diverse Veteran community that includes individuals living with both visible and invisible disabilities, including mobility disabilities, sensory disabilities, chronic health conditions, mental health conditions, traumatic brain injuries, neurodivergence, and other cognitive or service-connected disabilities. DVS understands that accessibility extends beyond physical access and includes digital accessibility, effective communication, cognitive accessibility, workplace inclusion, and accessible participation in programs, services, events, and public spaces.

This Five-Year Accessibility Plan reflects DVS's ongoing commitment, in accordance with Local Law 12 of 2023, to creating inclusive, accessible, and responsive agency operations that support the diverse needs of Veterans, Service Members, caregivers, survivors, and family members across New York City.

Mission and Background

DVS is the nation's only stand-alone municipal agency dedicated exclusively to serving Veterans and their families. The Department works to connect Veterans to benefits and services, mobilize communities and partners, and empower Veterans to thrive in civilian life.

DVS delivers services through a combination of:

- Direct assistance provided by DVS staff
- Veteran Resource Centers located throughout the five boroughs
- Partnerships with City, State, federal, and community-based organizations
- Public outreach, events, and hybrid programming

Accessibility Statement

DVS is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have full and equal access to its facilities, programs, services, and activities. The Department does not discriminate on the basis of disability and provides reasonable accommodations to enable participation in agency services.

Language interpretation, captioning, assistive technologies, and other accommodations are available upon request.

Procurement and Vendor Accessibility Requirements

DVS will encourage consideration of accessibility standards when evaluating new digital tools, platforms, communications technologies, and externally provided services.

When feasible, vendors supporting public-facing services or digital content may be asked to demonstrate accessibility compliance or accessibility capabilities.

Accessibility Governance and Accountability

DVS recognizes that accessibility is a shared operational responsibility and not solely the responsibility of the Disability Services Facilitator (DSF). To support sustainable implementation of this Accessibility Plan, DVS will establish internal accountability structures to monitor progress, coordinate implementation efforts, and identify barriers to access.

The following roles and responsibilities support implementation of this Accessibility Plan:

Executive Leadership

DVS will conduct an annual internal accessibility review to evaluate progress on goals outlined in this plan. Findings, barriers, and planned corrective actions will be documented and reviewed by agency leadership.

Disability Services Facilitator (DSF)

The Department has designated a Disability Services Facilitator (DSF) responsible for agency-wide accessibility coordination, complaint tracking, implementation monitoring, and coordination of accessibility-related requests concerning agency programs, services, and digital content. The DSF will maintain a centralized log of accessibility concerns, accommodation requests related to programs and services, and identified barriers to access to help inform continuous improvement efforts.

The DSF also serves as the primary point of contact for accessibility feedback and coordination with the **Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities**.

Communications Team

The DVS Communications Team will be responsible for supporting communication accessibility planning and implementation for agency-hosted events, digital content, and public-facing communications. This includes coordination related to website accessibility remediation efforts and support for WCAG accessibility standards.

Accessible Event Operations Team

DVS staff responsible for planning events will ensure that a physical accessibility review is conducted as part of standard planning work and coordinate with onsite event staff to ensure accessibility for guests.

Program Accessibility

Each department head responsible for public-facing programmatic functions and services will integrate disability accessibility needs into standard operating procedures and planning processes. This will be conducted in coordination with the DSF to ensure compliance with NYC MOPD and Local Law 12.

HR / EEO Personnel

DVS Human Resources and Equal Employment Opportunity team members will ensure that all DVS personnel are trained on the proper processes to request and review workplace accommodation requests as well as ensure the onboarding process is fully accessible when requested.

Accessibility Plan

1. Physical Access

DVS's primary administrative office is located at **1 Centre Street, New York, NY 10007**, in a City-owned building managed by **New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services**. DCAS is responsible for building-wide physical infrastructure and accessibility compliance.

As a tenant agency, DVS coordinates with DCAS to identify and address accessibility needs to the extent feasible. DVS will conduct annual walkthroughs of its occupied and public-facing spaces and will document and communicate identified accessibility issues to DCAS.

DVS also operates **Veteran Resource Centers (VRCs)** throughout New York City. These centers are located within City, State, and federal facilities, including borough halls, City Council district offices, and Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers. Because these sites are owned and managed by partner entities, DVS works collaboratively with host facilities to support accessibility and adjusts service delivery methods when physical barriers are identified and immediate physical remediation is not feasible. Veterans and clients may request alternative service arrangements if a physical accessibility barrier is encountered.

2. Cognitive Accessibility and Neurodiversity

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DVS recognizes that accessibility includes the needs of individuals with cognitive disabilities, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, traumatic brain injuries, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, sensory sensitivities, and other neurodivergent experiences.

The Department will work to incorporate cognitive accessibility principles into programs, communications, events, and service delivery.

2a. Plain Language Standards: DVS will promote the use of plain language principles in public-facing materials whenever feasible to improve clarity, readability, and comprehension.

2b. Flexible Communication Methods: DVS will support multiple methods of communication and engagement, including written, verbal, virtual, and asynchronous options when feasible.

2c. Sensory Considerations: When planning public events or service environments, DVS will consider sensory impacts such as noise levels, lighting, crowding, and overstimulation.

2d. Staff Awareness: Staff participating in public-facing programs will be encouraged to complete disability awareness and neurodiversity-informed communication training.

3. Digital Access and Effective Communication

DVS is committed to ensuring that its digital content is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. DVS will work to improve accessibility of PDFs, forms, presentations, and other public-facing digital documents.

3a. Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Accessibility

DVS will work to support accessibility for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing through communication access practices that may include:

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation
- live captioning and CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) services
- captioned digital video content when feasible
- accessible virtual meeting platforms and hybrid participation options
- amplification and microphone usage during public meetings and events, when appropriate

3b. Blind and Low-Vision Accessibility

DVS will work to improve accessibility for individuals who are blind or low vision through practices that may include:

- screen reader-compatible digital content

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- accessible PDFs, forms, and electronic documents
- alternative text for images and graphics
- readable formatting and color contrast considerations
- verbal description of visual content during presentations and meetings, when feasible

3c. Alternate Formats and Accessible Materials

When feasible and appropriate, DVS may provide materials in alternative formats upon request, including large print materials, accessible electronic formats, and other communication accommodations consistent with operational capabilities and applicable accessibility requirements.

3d. Language Access and Accessible Communication

DVS recognizes that accessibility and language access may intersect for Veterans, Service Members, caregivers, survivors, and family members seeking services or information. The Department will work to support meaningful access to communications, programs, services, and public information for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals requiring communication accommodations.

When feasible and appropriate, DVS may coordinate language access services and communication accommodations, including interpretation, translation, accessible digital communications, captioning, and alternate formats, consistent with applicable laws, City policies, and operational capabilities.

DVS will work to ensure that accessibility considerations are incorporated into multilingual communications and public-facing informational materials whenever feasible.

3e. Digital Content Accessibility

DVS's digital content is **partially conformant with WCAG 2.1 Level AA**. Accessibility is assessed through **self-evaluation**, and feedback from the public is encouraged through the Website Accessibility Feedback Form.

DVS uses its website and social media platforms to communicate with Veterans and the public. Staff responsible for digital communications will be encouraged to follow accessibility best practices related to headings, color contrast, alt text, readable formatting, and captioning. Accessibility issues identified through public feedback or internal review will be tracked and prioritized for remediation when feasible.

The Disability Services Facilitator, Communications Team, program staff, and other relevant personnel will coordinate, as appropriate, to support communication accessibility needs

associated with agency-hosted events, public-facing materials, digital communications, and service delivery.

Website:

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/veterans/about/website-accessibility.page>

4. Accessible Meetings and Events

When feasible, DVS-hosted events will incorporate accessibility considerations related to event registration, venue accessibility, communication access, accessible seating, digital materials, lighting, amplification, sensory impacts, and accommodation request processes during event planning and implementation, including attendee communications.

4a. Hybrid Participation: Whenever feasible, DVS-hosted public meetings and trainings will include virtual participation options to improve accessibility for individuals unable to attend in person.

5. Programmatic Access

DVS delivers a significant portion of its direct services through **Veteran Resource Centers**, which function as satellite offices staffed by DVS employees. Walk-ins are welcome, and Veterans may also access services by phone, email, or alternative arrangements when accommodations are needed.

Services available at Veteran Resource Centers include:

- Disabilities support
- Education
- Employment
- Food assistance
- Income support
- Legal support
- LGBTQ+ Veteran services
- Money management
- Senior Veteran services
- Sports and recreation
- Social enrichment

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- Substance use support
- Transportation assistance
- Women Veteran services

DVS is committed to ensuring that Veterans with disabilities can access these services equitably. Programmatic accessibility considerations are incorporated when launching new initiatives, modifying service delivery, or hosting public events.

DVS recognizes that communication barriers may affect access to services and program participation. The Department will work to support accessible and inclusive service delivery practices for individuals requiring language access services, communication accommodations, or other accessibility-related supports.

When feasible and appropriate, DVS staff may coordinate interpretation services, accessible communication methods, and alternative service arrangements to support equitable participation in programs, services, outreach activities, and public engagements.

6. Workplace Inclusion

DVS is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible workplace for employees with disabilities. The Department will work within all applicable federal, state, and local laws, City policies, and applicable collective bargaining agreements and union guidelines when addressing workplace accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and inclusive employment practices for unionized and non-unionized employees.

DVS will coordinate with agency leadership, Equal Employment Opportunity personnel, Human Resources, labor relations representatives, and other relevant City partners, as appropriate, to support equitable access to workplace accommodations, accessibility resources, and inclusive workplace practices.

The Department recognizes that employees may experience disabilities differently, including visible and invisible disabilities, chronic health conditions, neurodivergence, mental health conditions, and temporary impairments, and will work to promote accessibility, dignity, and equitable participation in the workplace.

6a. Accessible Onboarding

DVS will work to ensure that onboarding materials, trainings, and workplace communications are accessible to employees with disabilities.

6b. Inclusive Meeting Practices

Staff will be encouraged to incorporate inclusive meeting practices, including use of captions when available, verbal identification during virtual meetings, accessible presentation formatting, and distribution of materials in advance when feasible.

6c. Neuroinclusive Workplace Practices

DVS recognizes that employees may experience disabilities differently and will promote workplace practices that support flexibility, communication clarity, and equitable participation.

6d. Remote Accessibility

The Department will work to ensure that remote and hybrid work environments remain accessible to employees with disabilities.

6e. Internal Accessibility Reporting

Employees may raise accessibility concerns related to workplace barriers without fear of retaliation through established agency channels.

7. Training

Training is an important component of advancing accessibility, inclusive service delivery, and workplace inclusion across DVS operations. The Department will work to incorporate accessibility awareness, communication access practices, and disability inclusion principles into staff development and operational guidance whenever feasible.

7a. Accessibility Awareness and Disability Etiquette

DVS will promote disability awareness and disability etiquette training for staff, including training opportunities offered by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and other City partners.

7b. Cognitive Accessibility and Neurodiversity-Informed Practices

Staff participating in public-facing services, outreach, communications, events, or workplace operations may be encouraged to participate in trainings related to cognitive accessibility, neurodiversity-informed communication practices, sensory considerations, and inclusive engagement strategies.

7c. Communication Accessibility Training

DVS will work to provide guidance and training related to accessible communication practices, which may include:

- accessible digital content practices,

- captioning and communication access considerations,
- plain language principles,
- accessible meeting practices,
- and awareness of language access and communication accommodation resources.

7d. Accessible Event and Service Delivery Practices

Staff responsible for planning public events, outreach activities, or public-facing programs may receive guidance related to accessible event planning, accommodation coordination, and inclusive participation practices.

7e. Workplace Inclusion and Accessibility

DVS will work to promote workplace accessibility awareness and inclusive workplace practices for supervisors and employees, including awareness of reasonable accommodation processes, accessible communication practices, and equitable participation in workplace activities.

7f. Continuous Learning and Improvement

Accessibility-related training needs, operational barriers, and feedback may be periodically reviewed to help inform future staff guidance, resources, and continuous improvement efforts.

8. Methodology and Assessment

This Five-Year Accessibility Plan was developed by DVS leadership in consultation with staff and informed by agency operations, service delivery models, and feedback mechanisms. DVS will use guidance from the **Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities** along with ongoing engagement with Veterans, employees, community partners, and individuals with disabilities to assess and help inform accessibility improvements and implementation efforts.

DVS may evaluate implementation efforts using indicators such as accessibility training participation, accessibility feedback received from the public, use of accessible event planning practices, remediation of identified digital accessibility barriers, and implementation progress associated with accessibility initiatives outlined in this plan.

The plan will be reviewed annually and updated as programs, technology, and community needs evolve. DVS may revise priorities, timelines, or implementation approaches based on operational needs, feedback, technological changes, or updated guidance. DVS welcomes feedback from Veterans and the public to inform continuous improvement.

9. Accessibility Implementation Action Plan

The following implementation priorities identify key accessibility initiatives DVS will work to advance over the course of this Five-Year Accessibility Plan.

Access Issue	Action Steps	Lead	Timeline
Inconsistent accessibility considerations across programs	Develop a programmatic accessibility checklist to be used when launching or modifying services	DSF and Program Leads	Year 1
Inconsistent accessibility practices at public events	Develop an Accessible Events Checklist and planning protocol for agency-hosted events	Event Lead, Comms, DSF	Year 1
Limited standardized guidance for outreach and events	Create accessibility language and templates for outreach materials and public events	Communications and DSF	Year 1
Accessibility varies across Veteran Resource Center locations	Establish a process for documenting accessibility concerns at VRC sites and coordinating with host facilities	Operations and DSF	Year 2
Need for increased training	Ensure staff participate in Disability Etiquette and Awareness Training offered by the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities.	DSF	Year 2
Need for expanded accessibility competency across agency operations	Develop or identify role-specific accessibility training resources for communications, events, service delivery, and workplace inclusion	HR, DSF, Program Leads	Year 2
Need for continuous improvement	Conduct periodic self-evaluations of programmatic access and incorporate Veteran feedback	Program Staff and DSF	Ongoing

DVS recognizes that accessibility is an ongoing process requiring continuous evaluation, collaboration, and improvement. The Department remains committed to advancing accessibility,



Yesenia Mata
COMMISSIONER

inclusion, and equitable participation for Veterans, Service Members, caregivers, survivors, family members, employees, and members of the public.

Agency Contact Information

Veterans seeking information about services or requesting accommodations may contact DVS at connect@veterans.nyc.gov or (212) 416-5250.

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