Section 508 Compliance AIDS.gov Conference Call

Moderator: Miguel Gomez
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Miguel Gomez: Welcome to our first AIDS.gov Conference Call. I'm Miguel Gomez; I'm the Director of AIDS.gov .

In the AIDS.gov team, our role and responsibility is to work with our colleagues to ensure that Federal HIV information and resources are easy to find on the Web. And as we've done our work we've learned what many of you already know, that the materials that we place on the Web are not always accessible to all.

Here at HHS we are all working to change that. And as many of you know, HHS is committed to bringing all HHS Web sites and content into compliance as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. It's the right thing to do. But to make that happen we all need – all of us, not just us in HIV/AIDS but across HHS – to have some basic information and resources.
So today during our time together we're going to provide you with a brief overview of Section 508. What is it? Why is it important to our work? What can we do to respond and ultimately comply? And what HHS resources and plans are available for us?

After that brief overview we're going to provide what I think is most important, you're going to hear from two of your Federal colleagues here at HHS who had to change or modify documents to make sure that they were 508 compliant. We wanted to share with you the real deal and what it means to get the work done.

To start us off we're really excited about having Kristen Kayatta, she's one of the department's leading experts on 508 compliance. She'll be joined by Amanda Smith; Amanda's in the Secretary's Budget office. And Amanda will talk about her experience in making a key budget document 508 compliant.

Then also with us is Jeremy Vanderlan with our own AIDS.gov team. And he's going to talk about what we did at AIDS.gov to make some of our promotional materials and our Podcasts 508 compliant.

Importantly, twice during today's call you'll be able to ask questions. To get in the question queue all you have to do is hit the star key and 1. I also want to remind you all that this call is being recorded and that a transcript and an audio file will be available in the future. We'll send you details on that after the call along with a short evaluation form.

As I mentioned, HHS is making sure all our HHS Web sites and content are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. So let's learn more. And I'm going to turn to Kristen. But, Kristen, first could you let folks know what your role is here and then we'll talk about 508, ma'am?

Kristen Kayatta: Sure, thanks, Miguel. As he said my name is Kristen Kayatta and I work on the Web Communications Division for the department. I act as the Section 508 Manager and well as the Technical and Operations Manager on all the Web sites that are managed by the Web Communications Division. So that includes HHS.gov, Pandemicsflu.gov and several others.

Miguel Gomez: What is Section 508?

Kristen Kayatta: Okay, well, in legal terms in 1986 Congress added Section 508 to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. But so what does that mean to the Web? How

does this affect those of us who work on the Web? Generally it just requires that all Web site content be equally accessible to people with disabilities. So this applies to Web applications, Web files and all of those attachment files that are linked in from Web pages.

And it's important to remember that Section 508 affects intranet sites as well as public facing Web pages.

Miguel Gomez: Important so both our internal communication and what we're doing with the public. Can you tell us more about why this is so important?

Kristen Kayatta: Sure. Well Section 508 is important at it's – the most basic level just because it requires and ensures that all users have equal access to electronic documents. But for us this is generally broken up into three separate parts: the first part is the development of Web pages. This means that all files must be machine-readable. All audio files need to have accompanying text and video files need to be captioned.

Secondly, Section 508 applies to all electronic documents posted online. So not just the actual Web pages, but also those PDF files, those Word files and the PowerPoint files that can be downloaded from them.

Lastly, this affects not only files that are posted on our Web pages but also those that are shared through email, through Enterprise portals and that are saved on our share drives.

Miguel Gomez: Thank you. Understanding that most of us are short on time and resources, what are ways we can respond to and comply with Section 508?

Kristen Kayatta: Okay, well responding and complying we found is also broken down into three main sections: the first step is to make sure that all HTML pages are compliant. And the department can help out with this because we have an Enterprise license for an IBM Policy Tester. This was known before as Watch Fire, and that's how most of the Web team knows this application.

The Policy Tester can test 508 compliance and broken links on all Web pages. It's important to keep in mind that IBM manually enters the domains into the system so that they can be scanned so this isn't an automatic process with immediate results but it is something that can be done electronically.

Secondly all PDF files should be checked for compliance. Adobe 8 Professional has been researched and been confirmed to create and check the compliance of PDF files.

And lastly you want to ensure that you receive documents in a compliant format from your contractors. And you should do this by including Section 508 language in all of your contracts.

Miguel Gomez: Thank you. And you gave us a lot of information and for a lot of us this is just new. Where can we go to find resources?

Kristen Kayatta: Okay well the first resource I mentioned is IBM Policy Tester. And as I said that one is available Enterprise wide. We have also received great feedback on our Web page, which is www.hhs.gov/Web/508. On this site you'll find background on Section 508 and what it applies to; you'll find assistance in creating compliant documents and Web pages; you'll find standards and guidance.

You'll also find policies that pertain to Section 508, how to add that Section 508 contract language, and lastly, information on how to order Adobe 8 Professional.

Should anybody need additional support we're happy to help out. You just go ahead and send an email to webrequest@hhs.gov. This Web – email address is managed by the Web Communications Division and we can assist from there.

Miguel Gomez: Thank you. And, again, so everything you've already shared with us we can find at our HHS Web site. So thank you for that.

And as we move into the future there's a remediation plan for Section 508 for all of us who work here at HHS and in particular there's one for OS. Could you explain what's up with this?

Kristen Kayatta: Sure. The compliance remediation plan ended up being a framework that was developed to outline the course of actions that would bring all HHS Web pages into compliance over the next five years.

So the first step of this framework has been compiling a full inventory of all HHS Web sites and we're doing that through help with our operating divisions, our staffing divisions as well as that Policy Tester application I mentioned before.

What we're trying to do is break up these Web pages that we're finding into three basic priorities. And then we'll test the compliance as we can. So everything from now on that's uploaded to any HHS department Web site absolutely must be 508 compliant.

And then the second phase will be actually going through those Web pages that we found and we've identified not to be compliant and then making those either 508 compliant or go ahead and archiving or deleting them.

We expect, actually, the deletion of these files to be a major cornerstone in the remediation. And so we're developing Web records policies so that we know what we can delete and what we can't. And then we're also creating an archive Web site.

But as I mentioned throughout, the Web Communications Division will continue to develop guidance, standards and policies and we're trying to work on some training as well to help all of the Web content owners.

Miguel Gomez: Thank you, Kristen. And what I'd like to do is you gave us a lot of information. I'd like to see if folks who have called in and are listening, if they have any questions. And all folks have to do is hit the star key and then 1 to ask a question. And I'm going to ask if the operator has any questions for you.

Barry, are there any questions?

Coordinator: Yes, at this time we do have a question from Adrianna Debalo, your line is open.

Adrianna Debalo: Yes, I was trying to get that additional support e-mail address again. What is it?

Kristen Kayatta: It's WebRequest@hhs.gov.

Kristen Kayatta: Many people are familiar with that email address because that's how we manage all updates to content that we host at HHS.gov. But also it's an email address into the Web Communications technical team so we can help with 508 questions there as well.

Miguel Gomez: And what's your turnaround time usually?

Kristen Kayatta: Of course it depends on the request. Some things if it's as easy as just checking a document or for some guidance in how to check a document to make sure it's 508 compliant that, you know, normally that's within a couple of hours or days.

But then if we have to actually add a new site to Policy Tester we need to get the contract involved with that and so that can be more like a week or so turnaround.

Miguel Gomez: Thank you, ma'am. Is there another question?

Coordinator: Yes, your next question will come from Julio Decent; your line is open.

Julio Decent: Hi, good afternoon. I have a question and a request for clarification. The question is how does this regulation affect contractors, grantees and partners? And also, Miguel, you mentioned a remediation plan? I don't know what that means. If you could just explain what you meant by remediation plan.

Miguel Gomez: Sure, actually I'm going to turn to Kristen and I'll follow up. Thank you, sir, for your question.

Kristen Kayatta: Sure, well the remediation plan, what that means is how we're going to bring all of the HHS.gov and – well actually all of the department owned Web

pages – how we're going to bring all of those into compliance to ensure that by five years from now we can guarantee that everything that is up and live in one of our Web environments is 508 compliant. So that's what the remediation plan is.

In terms of contractors and grantees what we've done is created some contract language that you can find on that www.hhs.gov/Web Web site. And it's guidance on how to include language in your contracts to make sure that what we're receiving from contracts is 508 compliant.

Miguel Gomez: And, Julio, it's very clear language for when we're working with contracts or contractors. And soon they'll be developing language for our grants. And all of that – the specific language can be found on the Web page she referred to earlier. So, Julio, thank you for your question.

Do we have another question, Barry?

Coordinator: Yes, your next question will come from Lakesha Smith; your line is open.

Lakesha Smith: Good afternoon. I have a quick question about this particular call. I've noticed the HIV/AIDS office is conducting the call but is this open HHS-wide in the sense of everybody's getting an idea of what the procedure in terms of 508 compliance is? Or is this just for a small subset of folks within the department?

Miguel Gomez: Thanks, Lakesha. The actions around 508 are department wide. Here at the office of HIV/AIDS policy and AIDS.gov, because this issue is so important we wanted to offer our Federal colleagues working on HIV/AIDS an opportunity to hear a snapshot of what's happening.

But this is an issue that is taking place across the entire department. I'm actually really excited, I believe there are about 40 people on today's call who are our Federal colleagues that actually don't work on HIV/AIDS but want to hear a snapshot. And there are trainings that are being made available for all of the (opt-ives) and the staff (divs). And so a lot of work is being done to make sure we're being more responsive and making our pages more accessible.

Lakesha Smith: Thank you.

Miguel Gomez: Do we have another question?

Coordinator: Certainly, your next question will come from Steven Davis; your line is open.

Steven Davis: Yes, thank you so much for the overview of 508 compliance. My question really was already answered. It was similar to Julio's about whether or not the compliance extends to our fiduciary awardees, and it does. But I was also wondering, to what extent would resources or technical assistance be available possibly from the department level to assist our partners with becoming 508 compliant in addition to the Web site and other information that was provided?

Miguel Gomez: Steven, thank you. And Kristen will you answer that but also talk about the fact that we realize this is going to take resources?

Kristen Kayatta: Sure, absolutely. We know, first hand, that this is very resource intensive. And while the Web Communications Division can't provide assistance to everyone within the department, we do have access to different tools and different contracts that we would be happy to work with you on – coming under those under an (MOU) or similar.

Steven Davis: Okay, thank you.

Miguel Gomez: Great. Is there another question?

Coordinator: Certainly, your next question will come from David Thompson; your line is open.

David Thompson: Good afternoon.

Miguel Gomez: Hello, sir.

David Thompson: The question is more on compliance than anything else. Is there one office in HHS responsible for compliance? And how far along is the department in meeting this incredible goal?

Kristen Kayatta: Well the Office on Disability is the lead on Section 508 and they're taking the lead certainly within the department in terms of programs that are added and regular day to day maintenance for the issue. But the Web Communications Division has taken the lead in terms of getting the whole department's Web presence so just the Web piece of this.

And in terms of how far along we are, we've already corrected thousands and thousands of errors. And we continue to make progress every day. We're in the infancy of this five year program, thankfully for us, so we're still getting used to and getting the resources that we need to in order to get our Web pages there. But we're well on our way certainly.

Miguel Gomez: And to give you a sense of the magnitude of the problem, here at HHS we have 1.6 million Web pages. And I believe, Kristen, that for each of our Web pages we have at least 14 challenges per page on average.

Kristen Kayatta: That's right so we have one Section 508 error on every other one of our pages. So we have almost 800,000 errors.

Miguel Gomez: And we've fixed about 10,000 of them already. It's a large problem but we're up to it.

And sort of responding to people making the change and making – taking corrective action, I'd like to actually – we'll take some more questions at the end of the call. I'd like to introduce Amanda Smith because she's from the HHS Budget Office.

And, Amanda, I want to thank you for joining us. Before you talk about what you did to make some of your key budget document 508, could you introduce yourself, ma'am?

Amanda Smith: Sure. Well thank you for having me, Miguel. I work in the HHS Budget Office. And I worked this past year to coordinate a document that came out with the release of the President's budget in February. And I am within the Budget and Performance Coordination branch within the Budget Office.

Miguel Gomez: And you had a key document that needed to be 508 compliant. And I also believe, Amanda, you had no experience in this area?

Amanda Smith: Yes, that's correct. The highlights document had to be posted on the Web by February 4. And a lot of the information that we received for the document

did not become final until a week or two beforehand. So it was a very, very tight process.

I knew what 508 was in very, very vague terms but I didn't really know what the process entailed to make something 508 compliant. So my colleagues and I, when we learned that this was something we had to undertake ourselves, we talked to the folks in the Web Communications team and also we talked to our contractors and we tried to figure out what this really meant for us.

Miguel Gomez: And what did you do?

Amanda Smith: Well we learned that for each graphic in the document after it went – after the document went into Adobe Acrobat 8, we had to create tags. And this was basically choosing an option in Adobe that opened a window and within that window we had to write a visual description of what that graphic was.

So if there was a picture we just had to write a couple of sentences describing what the picture was. If we had a graphic we had to say that in 2002 the result was X, in 2003 the result was Y, etcetera. And this was pretty easy for us to figure out where we had to create tags for all the graphics but we did run into problems knowing where we had to do it for other little things that weren't so obvious.

There were a lot of table headings and things of that sort that you don't really think of as graphics. So when ASPA ran the document through this software that they have to check 508 compliance, these details came up as un compliant, and the document at the time was not compliant.

So they provided a lot of assistance, showed us what we actually had to correct. And we were able to get the document online by our deadline and

make it 508 compliant but it was very, very tight. And we were scared at times that we wouldn't make it.

Miguel Gomez: What recommendations would you have to your colleagues who are going to have to – who are in the same position you are where they weren't familiar with doing this and they're going to have to in the future?

Amanda Smith: I would, as soon as you have your document layout solidified, if you're know you're going to have tables, if you know you're going to have a graphic, I would share a draft of the document with your Web Communications contacts and colleagues and ask them what you will have to make compliant, get advice from them.

And there is also a guide that came out actually after I did this work that laid out some guidelines that I wish – actually wish I had had during this process.

I think some of the tougher issues would be creating tables; I think there might be some ways that you can create them that Adobe will – may convert them automatically and there are other ways that make it a little bit more difficult. Try to get advice up front rather than waiting for when the document is finalized.

Another thing that we did is we created an Excel spreadsheet of all of our tags as we were going along. So as soon as we inserted a graphic we wrote out the description of what that was. So when we got to the final PDF version of the document we just had to piece everything in; we didn't have to sit there and then try to think of descriptions for those graphics.

Miguel Gomez: Sure, well thank you, ma'am.

Amanda Smith: You're welcome.

Miguel Gomez: As I mentioned earlier we also have Jeremy from the AIDS.gov team on the call. Jeremy, could you also let folks know what your role is on AIDS.gov?

Jeremy Vanderlan: Yeah, thanks Miguel. I'm happy to participate in the conversation today. I'm a Federal contractor working as the lead Web developer for the AIDS.gov Web site, which is the AIDS.gov is the federal gateway site for all HIV/AIDS resources, research and information.

Miguel Gomez: And, sir, given your role and responsibility you had to make some of our products 508 compliant that weren't. What happened? What did you do?

Jeremy Vanderlan: Yeah it's true. There were several challenges we encountered for 508 compliance as we were working on the AIDS.gov site enhancement. I want to highlight two of those. The first was with some PDF documents that we had on the Web site that were promotional materials.

We were in the process of testing the PDFs for 508 compliance. As Kristen mentioned earlier in the call, we were using Adobe 8 Professional to use a screen reader function within Adobe 8 Professional that allows you to read through the document and listen to the screen reader as someone who is using a screen reader would hear it.

And we noticed that for every time the screen reader went over a dot gov Web site it would pronounce the dot gov as dot governor using the gov abbreviation and inserting its own wording on top of it. So what we had to do was go through each of the documents and, as you can imagine if these are promotional documents for dot gov Web sites there were quite a few references to this error.

And as Amanda mentioned too, Adobe has the feature of adding tags to these various locations within the PDF. So we went through each one and created a tag that would read the dot gov as dot gov and we did that by having it spell out dot gov rather than having the period gov there.

Miguel Gomez: And, Jeremy, before asking for another example, for many of us this tagging is new, can you explain why tagging is important and for someone when they're trying to interface with our information what their challenge is and how this helps?

Jeremy Vanderlan: Yeah, tagging is just a simple way to alert the program that these people are using that there is some additional information there. So what you would do is go into the program that you're using, in this case it would Adobe 8 Professional, be able to use a drop down menu to create a tag for this specific point or particular problem that you see.

As I think Amanda mentioned too, that you could use these tags also for tables and other documents.

Miguel Gomez: Thank you, sir. We also have some challenges with our Podcasts. What happened there?

Jeremy Vanderlan: Well yeah, the Podcasts are one of the parts of the site that we really highlight. And the issue that we had there is that most of the Podcasts are video Podcasts and they weren't closed-captioned. We did have transcripts for each of the Podcasts. For the audio files that was okay but for the video files we needed to make sure that they were closed-captioned.

Miguel Gomez: And it was an easy fix. Sir, thank you. And I want to thank all three of our presenters. But I also want to make sure we want to allow the folks on the line to ask more questions. So please if you have a question hit star then 1. And as people do that I just want to remind folks that if you didn't register for this call you can send an email to contact@AIDS.gov and we'll send you details on where to find a transcript of this call and an evaluation and some additional resources.

Are there more questions?

Coordinator: Absolutely. And as a reminder to participants if you do have a question please press star 1 on your touchtone phone. Your first question will come from Tammy Stuart Prather; your line is open.

Tammy Stuart Prather: Thank you. I just wanted to know to what level of difficulty have some of the speakers talked about when it concerns tables. I work for a statistical organization and so far we have not had 100% success in making some of our detailed, complex tables read correctly in some accessibility technology readers.

Miguel Gomez: Kristen?

Kristen Kayatta: Sure. Also I wanted to quickly correct something that I misspoke before the 800,000 error that I mentioned was actually for broken links. Our Section 508 errors are more like 24 million. So there's a big difference so I wanted to make sure to get that corrected.

In terms of the complex tables we are aware of some tools that you can use to add on to Adobe 8 Professional, which makes the tagging process for those tables a bit easier. And I'd be happy to get with you on that specifically if

you'd like to send an email to the webrequest@hhs.gov email address; we'd be happy to help you through that.

Miguel Gomez: Great. Thank you. Do we have another question?

Coordinator: Certainly, your next question will come from Jamar Hawkins; your line is open.

Jamar Hawkins: Hi, thanks, yes. I work in the Office of the Secretary and we use a Web-based application to manage a lot of the documents the Secretary receives. And I was just curious to know how that comes into play with 508 compliance?

Miguel Gomez: I'm going to turn it back to your Kristen.

Kristen Kayatta: Okay. Documents that are available to just a small group of people that are drafts have a separate process to go through. But if these are going to go out and they're going to be stored for mass use and that everyone in the department, for example, has availability to them or at least a large subset then they do definitely need to be 508 compliant.

Again, I'm not sure exactly which tool you're using or what kind of documents are being stored there. But if you have specific questions we'd be happy to help you through it.

Miguel Gomez: And it's also important to double check to make sure. So thank you for your question. Do we have another question?

Coordinator: Certainly. And as a reminder to the participants if you wish to ask a question please press star 1 on your touchtone phone. And your next question will come from Michael LaFlamm; your line is open.

Michael LaFlamm: Yes, hi. My question is that we at CDC are going to be exploring having presence on other sites like virtual reality sites like Second Life and also looking at viral marketing on FaceBook and MySpace. And I'm wondering if we have presences on other sites that may not be 508 compliant is that going to be a compliance issue?

Miguel Gomez: Kristen, would you like to answer? I can follow up.

Kristen Kayatta: Sure, I'd be happy to. Generally the answer is yes. If it's a Web site that's funded and sponsored by the – by HHS then 508 content needs to be available. There are some ways to work through this in terms of having secondary material that is the same – the content is the same, it might be presented in a different way. And as Miguel said, we'd be happy to follow up with you on your specific cases.

Miguel Gomez: And what's, Michael, what's also important is if it is our Web site it is not negotiable, it has to be – all material going up has to be 508. HHS and its Web Council hasn't addressed issues related to social networking sites for example and other localities.

When we – to date, when our material is placed on sites that we do not own then it is not our responsibility to make it 508.

And, Kristen is there anything else you wanted to add to that?

Kristen Kayatta: Nope, that's generally it.

Miguel Gomez: Great. Other questions?

Coordinator: I show no further questions at this time.

Miguel Gomez: Well that's terrific because it is 2:31 meaning we are running one minute over our allotted time. And I really, again, just want to thank all of our guests for presenting and sharing their resources and knowledge. I want to remind folks anytime that they need help to please reach out to he HHS Web team; they have a lot of resources.

By going to the HHS Web page with information you can find out information from 508 to archiving to a multitude of issues that can help us meet the goal, doing the right thing in making our materials compliant.

And again I also just want to encourage anyone who actually wants to learn more about these topics or how to use new media in the fight against AIDS to please visit the AIDS.gov site and also our Blog. And I'd like to again say thank you and good afternoon and good-bye. Take care.

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