

Enhancing ADA Accessibility for Grand Jury Reports

A new federal rule will require California counties and courts to follow specific technical standards when they post documents on their websites to make it easier for people with disabilities to read them. The rule goes into effect in April 2026 in most counties, and in April 2027 for counties with populations under 50,000.

CGJA cannot give legal or technical advice about what any county or court may require under the rule with respect to grand jury reports posted on their websites. Juries should seek guidance from their legal advisors and court liaisons well in advance of issuing their reports.

Below are CGJA's best practices addressing some of the technical standards counties or courts might adopt under the rule. Your county or court may have other guidelines.

- Before starting to draft a report, find out what document processing program the county or court prefers for purposes of accessibility (such as Microsoft Word or Google Documents) and use that program for all reports.
- Set the document's language to English/US so that screen reading tools will know how to properly pronounce the words for users with visual impairments.
- Type the full, final title of each report, exactly as it appears on the title page, in the "Document Properties" section of the report's file menu.
- Use black type on a white background to maximize visual contrast. Use sans serif fonts like Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Tahoma, or Helvetica because these are easier to read for people with visual impairments. Avoid serif fonts like Times New Roman.
- Do not use colored text.
- In a chart or graph, avoid using different colors as the only way to differentiate data. Instead of or in addition to different colors, use text, patterns, or shading (like stripes or shapes) so users with colorblindness can understand the data.
- Use double spacing or 1.5 line spacing rather than single spacing. Leave a blank line between paragraphs. Keep margins consistent and align text to the left margin. Do not "justify" text on the right margin.
- Avoid complex text layouts like multiple columns of text. If a column format is the best way to present information, insert a simple table to present the columns, instead of creating columns out of text.

- If the report includes one or more links that users can click on to see another document, the text of the link should briefly describe what the reader will find when they click on it. For example, use a link that says “[Download the department brochure here](#)” rather than “[Click here](#)” or “<https://3456.brochure.archive>”
- When inserting a table, use a simple table format (basic rows and columns with clear headers and row labels) rather than a complex table format (such as tables with merged or split cells or columns, embedded data, or multiple headers).
- For every photo, chart, graph, or other image in the report, add “Alt Text,” a concise but informative description of the image that helps users who can’t see these images. This is an example of Alt Text for a bar graph: “Bar graph showing the growth in expenditures over the past year for Department X. The graph shows a steady increase in expenditures each quarter.”
- Some programs, such as Microsoft Word (for Word documents) and Adobe Acrobat Pro (for PDF documents) have built-in accessibility tools that you can run on your draft report to flag accessibility issues and fix them. For example, the Microsoft Word tool will open text boxes in which you can type Alt Text for the images in the report. These tools do not claim to ensure compliance with the new rule, and your county or court may have different technical requirements for accessibility. But these tools can be a useful starting point.