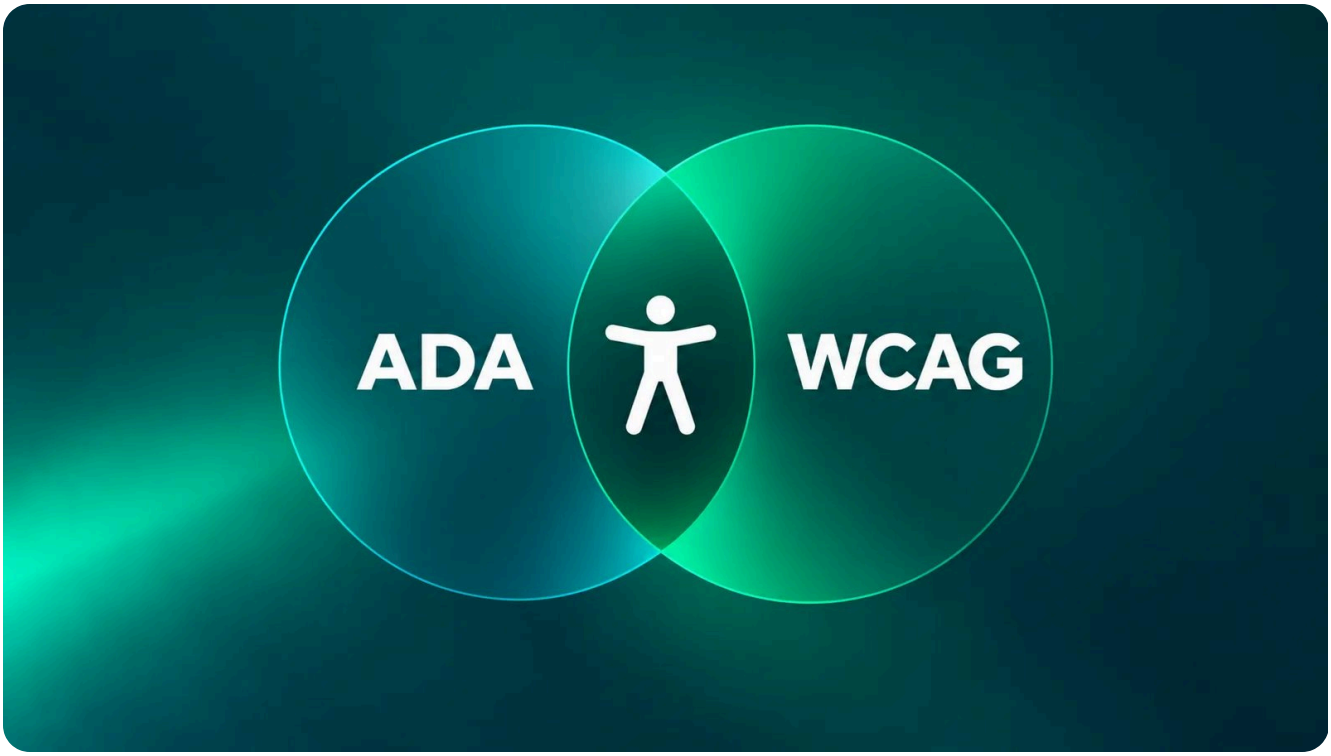
ADA and WCAG Compliance for High School Athletics Websites: A Practical Guide

By **Michael Mattia**



A high school athletics website may look polished, load quickly and provide everything families, alumni and community supporters need to follow their teams. But can every visitor actually use it?

For individuals with disabilities, unreadable game schedules, inaccessible registration forms or a photo without alternative text can create significant obstacles to participating in athletic programs. Those barriers can affect students and parents, as well as community members seeking to attend games, support local teams or participate in school events.

Digital accessibility is more than a website design consideration. For public schools, it’s also a legal responsibility governed by established accessibility requirements.

Understanding ADA Requirements and WCAG Standards

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** establishes accessibility obligations for public and many private schools. **Title II** requires public schools to provide individuals with disabilities equal access to their programs, services and activities. **Title III** imposes similar obligations on covered private schools. These legal requirements extend to digital experiences, including websites and mobile applications.

Under the **U.S. Department of Justice's Title II regulations**, covered public entities generally must ensure their web content and mobile applications conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA, subject to specified exceptions. However, this specific requirement doesn't automatically apply to private schools covered under Title III.

WCAG establishes measurable criteria for making digital content accessible, addressing considerations such as screen reader compatibility, keyboard navigation, readable content and captioned multimedia.

WCAG 2.2 builds on WCAG 2.1 by introducing additional criteria around keyboard focus, navigation and other user interactions. While WCAG 2.1 Level AA remains the technical standard specified in the federal Title II rule, evaluating against WCAG 2.2 can help schools identify additional barriers and improve accessibility.

Identifying Accessibility Barriers Across Athletic Platforms

Accessibility issues aren't always apparent to someone navigating a website with a mouse or touchscreen. Common accessibility concerns for athletics websites and digital platforms include:

- **Schedules and announcements:** Images or PDF documents that lack accessible text or meaningful descriptions.
- **Registration and eligibility forms:** Missing field labels, unclear instructions or interfaces that can't be completed using a keyboard.
- **Videos and multimedia:** Missing captions, audio descriptions or accessible playback controls that hinder users from fully accessing content.

Accessibility audits combine automated testing, manual evaluation and assistive technology testing where appropriate to identify barriers that may otherwise go unnoticed. Independent assessments can also reveal recurring design or functionality issues, helping schools prioritize improvements based on their impact on users.

Documenting Accessibility Gaps and Planning Remediation

Identifying accessibility barriers is only the beginning. Detailed findings reports and prioritized remediation roadmaps can help schools understand the impact of identified issues, determine corrective actions and document progress.

For certain digital products and services, an **Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR)** documents how a product conforms to applicable accessibility criteria, including areas where it may not fully meet those standards. ACRs are commonly prepared using the **Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT)**, which provides a standardized reporting format. An ACR shouldn't be confused with a blanket certification of ADA compliance.

Accessibility requires continued attention as new content and website updates can introduce additional barriers. Periodic reassessment and regression testing allow schools to evaluate whether improvements remain effective, while developer training and established accessibility practices can reduce the risk of recurring issues.

From Accessibility Findings to Meaningful Improvements

An accessibility audit is most valuable when its findings lead to meaningful improvements in how students, families and community members access digital information and services. By prioritizing and addressing identified barriers, schools can create more inclusive digital experiences that better serve their athletic communities.

Compliably provides independent website and mobile accessibility assessments, WCAG 2.2 conformance testing and prioritized remediation recommendations. Drawing on expertise in regulatory compliance, web development and assistive technology, our team translates complex technical insights into actionable guidance for schools.

Learn more about our digital accessibility and attestation services.

Read this article online at **compliably.com/resources/ada-wcag-compliance-high-school-athletics**