CARE Act Communications Toolkit

Website Guidance & Considerations

Overview

This guide includes best practices and resources to inform county CARE Act webpage development to support a website that is engaging and accessible by all.

- Website User Experience
- Accessibility Best Practices
- Site Map

- Page Content Considerations
- Search Engine Optimization

Website User Experience (UX)

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Functionality

What Works

» Clear navigation

» Clean organization

» Engaging photos with alt text

» Clear, simple explanation of site & purpose

» Concise layout appropriate for multiple devices/ screen sizes

» Concise copy that sub-links to long form copy

» Obvious calls to action

» Highlighting priority and timely information

» Keeping content current, especially on the home page

What Doesn't

» Complicated navigation with too many clicks

» High volume of text which may rely on the user to have interest and/or familiarity with content and site

» Images and/or video that don't clearly correlate to site content

» Mis-sized images, videos and embedded tools for the location and/or purpose, or that don't adapt to different device screen sizes.

» Images with heavy text

» Long form copy on the page

» Incorrect categorization of information

Navigation

» **Page consistency:** the overall look and feel of the site should be similar across as many sub pages as possible to support consistency and familiarity.

» **Main menu items:** keep items at a maximum of 8, for a cleaner appearance and easier direction for the user.

» **3–click rule:** users should be able to find their content with no more than three mouse clicks. Too many clicks can be frustrating for a user and increase your overall bounce rate.

Visual & Content Elements

» **White space:** also called negative space, gives website elements room to breathe visually. It ensures the website doesn't look overcrowded, so visitors stay on it for longer.

» **Colors:** use a maximum of five different colors.

» **Typography:** use a san serif font e.g. Open Sans, Segoe UI, Roboto, etc. Avoid using italics for accessibility. Hyperlink should be underlined vs. using color to denote URL or meaning.

» **Language accessibility:** use plain and cognitively accessible language. See the [Communications Toolkit Overview and Best Practices document](#) for more on plain language messaging.

Multiple Devices

» **Devices:** consider and test the various devices (desktop, tablet, mobile) with the design and content e.g. how your information flows left to right on desktop relates to how a user will scroll through the site on mobile.

» **Site speed:** upload compressed images to help with site speed. https://tinypng.com/ is a free tool. Embed YouTube or Vimeo videos vs. uploading videos directly to site to also help the site respond faster.

» **Above the Fold (what you see without scrolling):** include relevant information and user-actions above the fold to help keep users engaged from the start so they scroll further.

Accessibility Best Practices

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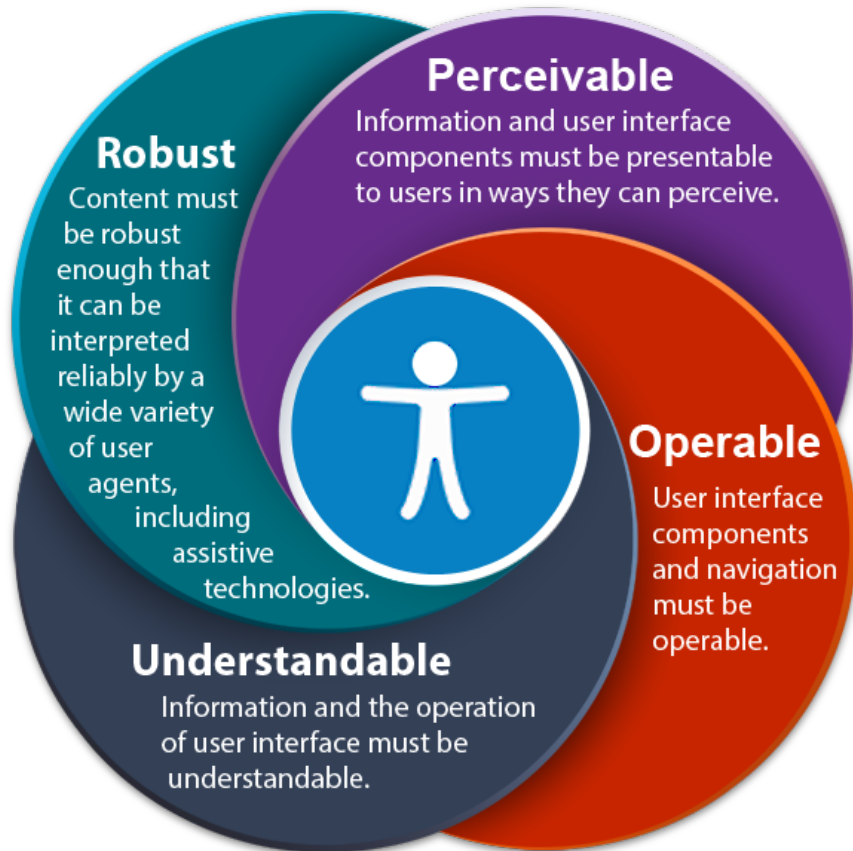
Guidelines

» **Purpose:** accessibility refers to the practice of making a website usable for everyone, regardless of the hardware, software, language, abilities, and location.

» **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG):** developed by the Web Accessibility Initiative and the World Wide Web Consortium, set the guidelines for web accessibility.

Accessibility Plugin
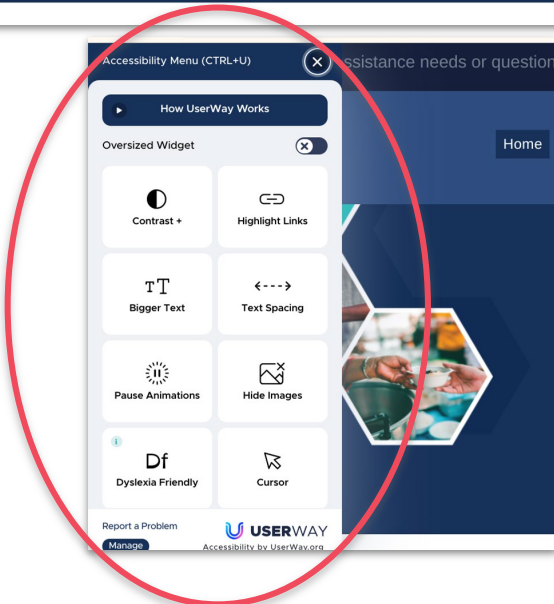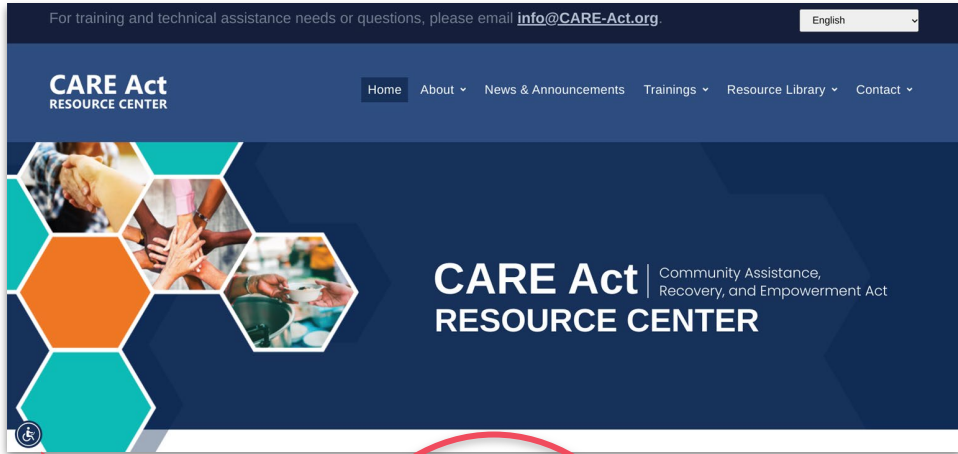
» **Userway plugin:** embed Userway to help ensure the site is ADA and WCAG 3 compliant.

- Most common accessibility tool

- Free (paid offers custom branding, testing and analytics)

- Simple steps to embed / manage

- Easy user experience and offers information in various languages

- Works across devices and can be used in conjunction with existing adaptive technologies

- See https://care-act.org/ for an example

Accessible Design

» **Alternative (alt) text:** add alt text to all images.

- Screen readers automatically announce an image as an image so no need to include "image of" in the title.

- When a screen reader comes across null alt text, it will completely skip over the image, without announcing its presence.

- According to WCAG, images of text are not allowed.

- The most popular screen readers cut off alt text at around 125 characters

» **Subtitles:** add subtitles or a transcript for audio and video to make it easier for individuals with visual and/or hearing impairments to consume your content.

» **Font:** consider font size 12+ pt for body text

Accessible Design

» **Links:** use descriptive language when directing to a hyperlink and/or encouraging a visitor to click on a button vs. "Click here" alone.

» **Color contrast:** use a light background with dark lettering for high contrast (a minimum of 70% contrast) for the bulk of the content on the page

» **Helpful do's and don'ts for accessible designs:** https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/
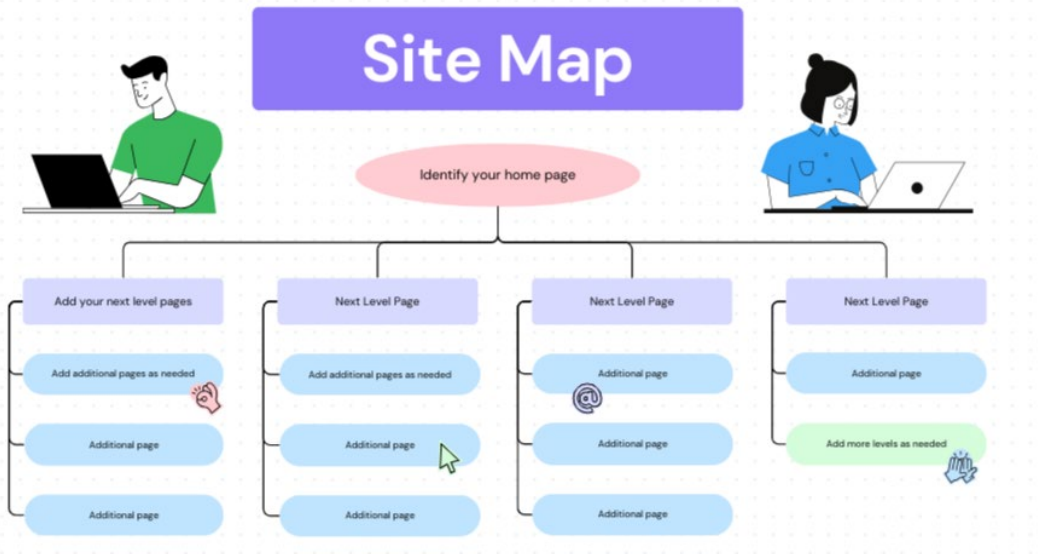
Site Map

Site Map

» **What is it?** It's like an organizational chart for your website! A site map is a centralized planning tool that can help organize and clarify the pages and content that need to be on the site, as well as help you eliminate unnecessary pages. A site map can help you clarify what the site's goals are before building.

» **Build one:** [Canva](#) offers free sitemap building tools.

Layout Best Practices

» **Organization & duplication:** identify opportunities to cross-link to information vs. duplicating pages and content. This saves on time and resources for updates.

» **Streamline a user's steps to get to information:** you want the minimum number of steps from point A to point B on a website user's journey. The more steps, the more chance a user has to leave the site. Use the sitemap to identify what the necessary steps are, and to combine steps where possible. This is especially beneficial for mobile experience.

» **Consider page quantity for navigation:** building an excess number of pages can impede a user's experience with the site making it difficult for them to easily find information. Too many pages can also make future updates and maintenance to the website daunting. Think simple vs. complex, adding links to resources vs. creating new pages for them, etc.

» **Pick easy to grasp page names for navigation:** consider the user experience when determining the names of pages. Will the user be able to easily understand what will be available on that page and/or if it relates to them?

Page Content Considerations

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Page Content Considerations

Whether you are building a full CARE Act website or a CARE Act webpage on your county's existing website, the following are content sections to consider:

» **Header image:** use the [Communications Toolkit – Webpage Header template](#) and/or contact your liaison for access to available stock imagery

» **High-level information about the CARE Act:** see the [Communications Toolkit – Talking Points](#) for copy to use

» **Buttons /sections of key areas of information:** this could be broken out by audience such as Family/Caregivers, Behavioral Health Providers, etc.

Page Content Considerations

» **Resources:** promote available local and statewide resources such as: <u>Self-Help Centers</u>, <u>National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) California CARE Act</u>, etc.

» **3-5 featured FAQs:** see the <u>Communications Toolkit - Talking Points</u> for copy to use

» **Share the latest:** County-specific news updates / blog features

» **Contact call to action:** feedback form, telephone number, email, etc.

» **Accessibility plugin:** such as <u>UserWay</u> (cross site)

» **Translation plugin:** such as <u>Google Translate</u> (cross site)

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County Directory Examples
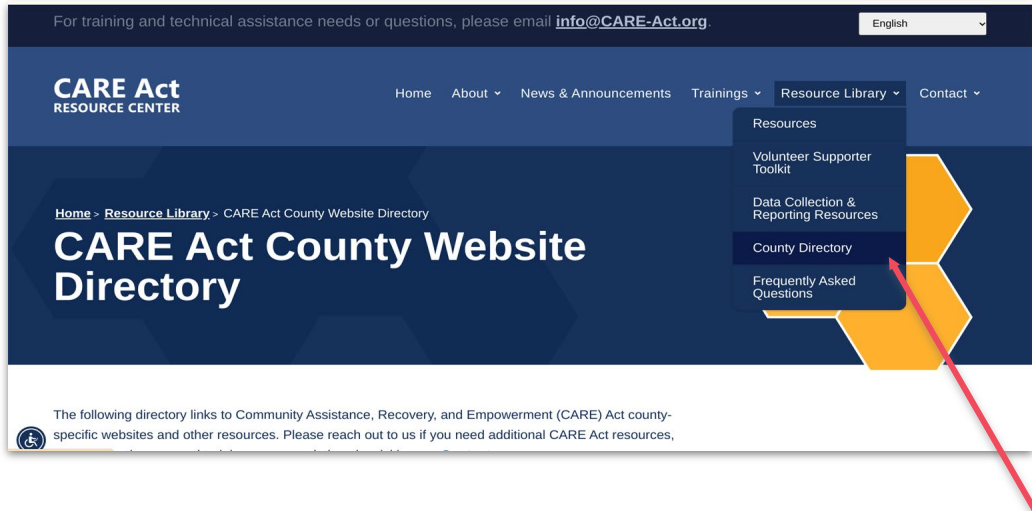
» View the County Website Directory on the CARE Act Resource Center website to see examples of how other counties have build CARE Act webpages for their communities.

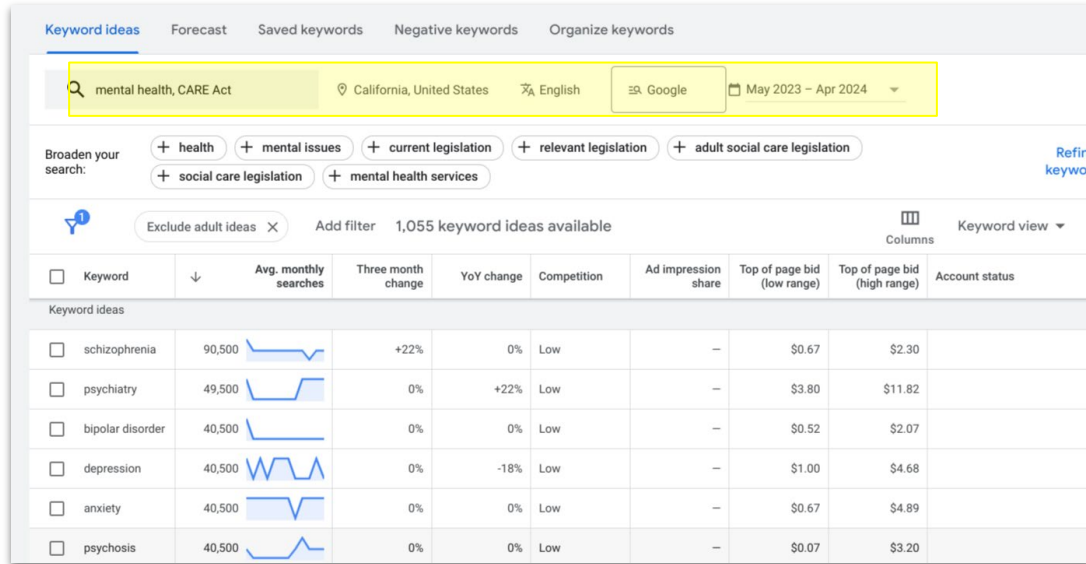» Contact your liaison to have your website added to the directory when complete!

SEO Overview

» **Definition:** SEO stands for "search engine optimization" which means the process of improving your site to increase its visibility when people search for services related to your work in Google, Bing, and other search engines.

» **Keywords:** words across your website that act as clues for Google. Remember to keep the focus on the user – use the words they use when they search.

  • Include your keywords in the page title, first paragraph and meta description (if platform allows)

» **Image titles:** prior to uploading images to your site, be sure to name them to help your SEO such as "Mental health therapist talking to individual" vs. "image 2".

SEO Tips

» **Boost:** you can help to boost your SEO ranking with things like embedding an active social media platform into the site, site speed, cross-links (backlink) with other partners websites, content updates, etc.

» **Tools:** there are a number of tools to help you plan, build and monitor your SEO efforts.

- Google Keyword Planner and Google Trends to get a sense of what people are searching for related to your work.
- Google Search Console to measure your site's Search traffic and performance.

» **Takes time:** building SEO into your website takes time so consider when/if you have the resources to include it as part of your work. It will likely take 3-6 months to build SEO ranking, so be patient.

Questions?

Please reach out to your county liaison for questions and/or technical assistance to help support your CARE Act communication efforts.