

Rachael Penfil, M.A., CPACC

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WORK EXPERIENCE

Ad Hoc

Design Lead, Accessibility SME

Chicago, IL (Remote)

October 2023–Present

- Lead a research and design team of 5 across 3 companies to digitize Veteran-facing forms on the Veterans Affairs website (VA.gov)
 - Coach and advise team on accessibility, design, and research best practices
- Develop strategic UX roadmap and collaborate with product, delivery, engineering, and stakeholder partners to ensure high-quality, prioritized delivery for 5 Veteran-facing forms
 - Proactively identify and mitigate risks to ensure project success and timely delivery
 - Identify areas for strategic impact within the delivery program and client programs
- Create and execute 6 stakeholder and user research studies to inform the digitization initiative and future state for 2 VA programs serving over 1 million Veterans and family members
 - Share research insights with 250+ UXers as well as engineers, stakeholders, and product partners to create impact across Ad Hoc and the VA
 - Create impact-effort matrices to prioritize design improvements considering impact to the user, engineering effort, and delivery timelines
 - Communicate research and resulting decisions on Github to ensure easy access for VA UX team

CVS Health

Sr. Accessibility Designer

Chicago, IL (Remote)

June 2022–August 2023

- Planned, designed, and executed more than 7 exploratory UX research projects with assistive technology users
 - Analyzed qualitative interviews to uncover actionable insight which improve the accessibility of CVS' web experiences
 - Established and created documentation for web accessibility and inclusion best practices beyond WCAG compliance, based on discovery efforts
 - Presented results of inclusive user research to design organization of 300+ individuals and leaders
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- Collaborated with 8 UX/UI and accessibility teams to intertwine inclusive design with product development and engineering, leading to risk reduction and a ~30% reduction in development costs
 - Advocated and built empathy for inclusive experiences for people with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, non-English speakers, low-income customers, uninsured patients, LGBTQIA+ patients, and other marginalized groups
 - Advised on best practices for web, iOS, and Android to build or iterate on ~15 end-to-end flows
 - Advocated for accessible and inclusive solutions across all levels of the design organization
- Produced updated operating model and prioritization matrix following company-wide reorganization

Sandstorm Design

UX Manager and Accessibility Team Lead

Chicago, IL (Remote)

January–June 2022

- Developed baseline accessibility compliance standards for UX/UI team implemented for 10+ clients
- Designed an inclusive participant survey leading to 25% increase in user research participation by people with disabilities
- Orchestrated cross-functional teams and stakeholders to discover and remediate all issues before website launch, leading to a 10%+ decrease in post-launch all bugs
- Established internal WCAG documenting successful all solutions in Drupal and WordPress leading to 20% reduction in hours
- Led over 100 hours of all training in 2021 for client content editors and internal stakeholders

UX Manager

January 2021–January 2022

- UX lead on 7 cross-functional website projects from kickoff through development, including all user research, UX design, and usability testing
- Directed UX research and design conducted by Jr. UX Researcher on all additional client projects
- Analyze all user and stakeholder research results and deliver actionable discovery reports
- Design new website information architecture and wireframes based on key findings from user and stakeholder research on 10+ projects

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP)
Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC)

Chicago, IL (Remote)
June 2021

University of Illinois at Chicago
PhD Candidate, Anthropology
M.A., Anthropology

Chicago, IL
May 2018–December 2020
May 2018

University of Pittsburgh
B.S., Psychology and Anthropology, summa cum laude

Pittsburgh, PA
April 2014

SKILLS & INTERESTS

Skills: Inclusive design research, accessible UX, participatory design, web and native best practices, W3C WCAG, a11y training and development, a11y design and creative reviews; wireframing, user flows, user journeys, information architecture

Interests: Knitting, houseplants, SCUBA diving, agility training with my pup Benji