Plain Writing Act Compliance Report — April 1, 2022

This report outlines the progress towards implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010 within the Department of Defense. Please check back for updates.

I. Senior Agency Official

Michael B. Donley is the Director of Administration and Management, and is the DoD Senior Official for plain language. The Washington Headquarters Services, Executive Services Directorate, Directives Division, oversees the implementation and administration of the DoD Plain Language Program through the plain language point of contact. The point of contact may be reached at whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil.

II. Using Plain Language

DoD received no plain language amendment requests in 2021.

DoD agencies took many actions to implement plain language requirements in 2021.

- Army Publishing Directorate (APD)
    - Emphasized the use of the DoD plain language website to produce better written publications on the APD website.
    - Promoted use of required style guides and DoD plain language resources to revise and develop publications and correspondence content.
    - Conducted virtual training for customers charged with writing and developing publications and forms. Plain language was always highlighted in the development of publications.
    - Enforced strict standards for maintaining metadata in the Department of the Army Publications Index, resulting in another year of improved searches on the APD website.
    - Ensured layout and design of web content was easy to access, read, and navigate (visitors to the APD website number in the millions and is not exclusive to Army soldiers and civilians).
    - Provided policy guidance, high-end design, management, and oversight of all departmental forms and forms collection instruction, as well as relayed DoD and Federal law superintendence.
    - Reviewed and edited all departmental administrative policy and procedural publications with emphasis on understandable and concise writing. Ongoing projects include publications accessibility for everyone.
    - Tasked skilled editors to stay on top of upgrades and updates to publishing software and tools that identify missing and inappropriate punctuation, misuse of acronyms, completeness of parts, and document structure and more.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)
    - In 2021, DCAA updated the small business section of its website to assist small businesses who desired to do business with the government. The page link is now in the top menu bar vice previous location under customers. Other updates included new information and links to seminars where DCAA personnel give presentations and answer questions.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
    - From a communications perspective, DFAS continued to have its Corporate Communications Office prepare and review all official customer communications for message clarity and ease of understanding. This included Facebook posts, articles, videos, letters, e-mail content for public release, and web content.

- From a training perspective, DFAS provided a related training course offering, providing key principles of the Plain Writing Program – Business Grammar: Business Writing for Executives. In 2021, 25 DFAS employees successfully complete that course.
- DFAS' Corporate Communications Office continued to provide plain language training for agency newsletter editors.

- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)
  - DLA has reviewed its chartering directive to improve the active voice, bottom line up front messaging, and readability for internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, DLA has revised its DLA instruction and manual for management of policies and procedures to update the policy statement and procedural steps for the standardization of workflow, in accordance with the agency's strategic operating plan.

- Defense Media Activity (DMA)
  - DMA's requirement to use plain language was included in the staffing process. Staffing guideline was posted to DMA's intranet site and was accessible by the DMA workforce.

- Department of Defense Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO)
  - DoD CIO Executive Staff reviewed all prepared correspondence, including internal and external addressed standard memorandums, letters to Congress and other senior government officials, strategy documents, directives, Facebook posts, articles, videos, letters and e-mail content for public release, ensuring message clarity and ease of understanding.
  - Being the DoD Agency Official for compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended), the Section 508 office ensured developed policies, procedures, and requirements related to achieving implementation of, compliance with, and institutionalization of Section 508; representation on Federal-wide boards and committees, ensuring DoD websites are accessible and random tests are conducted for accessibility. The testing results were provided to the Component Information Technology lead, ensuring websites were 508 compliant. Guidance was also given to DoD Components to review existing procurement and information technology policies and procedures, confirming that Section 508 standards were considered and clearly states when preparing requirements and solicitation documents.
  - Continued to maintain a current and extensive online real-time library of resource documents containing DoD and Federal Government references, standards, and templates for all forms of OSD and DoD correspondence and issuances, in the form of an DoD CIO action officer standard operating procedures reference library on the DoD CIO internal portal website. The references and documents were reviewed and updated as needed to encourage action officers to use plain language when writing correspondence and issuances.
  - Conducted bi-weekly meetings with administrative support staff and action officers, providing critiques and feedback on written products routed for review, editing, and signature. Attendees were regularly referred to available training through the DoD plain language website and other available sources, to include DoD action officers and other courses that cover the development of DoD issuances, the DoD issuance process, and standard practices and templates for staff actions and general correspondence. Additionally, the DoD CIO Plain Language Program Manager provided individual and group orientation training to new or resident DoD CIO staff members.
  - The DoD CIO Issuance Focal Point and staff analysts use plain language guidelines, distributed by the Secretary of Defense, when reviewing and revising publications that establish and implement DoD and DoD CIO policy. DoD CIO published five new or revised DoD issuances incorporating plain language in 2021.

- Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of Net Assessment (ONA)
  - ONA used the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command "Action Officer Staff Writing" course, which has been the basis for their training for two successive years. The undersigned as ONA Chief of Staff has made this document available to the entire team via Microsoft Teams and Sharepoint.

- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OSD Policy)
  - OSD Policy offered a monthly onboarding training which included training on writing fundamentals with plain language concepts. All new OSD Policy personnel attended the onboarding and it was open to existing personnel. In addition, OSD Policy offered an on-demand writing refresher course (3 hours) to all OSD Policy offices.
- Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA)
  - PFPA implemented a contractor statement in its contracting documents, ensuring contractors with technical writing in their scope of work are in plain language compliance. The statement that was added read, "The contractor must be well versed in word processing and presentations proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, and Project. The contractor shall be capable of converting complex technical discussions in to simplistic easy to read English."
  - Ensured that all new hires complete plain language training as they onboard with the agency.
- Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)
  - WHS oversees the DoD Plain Language and DoD Issuances programs. In 2021, the WHS Directives Division:
    - Performed 335 editorial reviews for issuances in progress and published 142 new and revised issuances. All reviews included evaluation for plain writing compliance.
    - Reviewed and updated DoD Instruction 5025.13.
    - Hosted the annual DoD Plain Language Committee meeting.
    - Maintained the DoD Plain Language Website, collecting plain language requests for resolution and posting the annual Plain Language Report.

III. Communication of Requirements

Communication about the Act's implementation, plain language guidelines, and compliance requirements is provided to the DoD workforce through:

- Publication of the DoD Plain Writing Act implementation plan, known as DoD Instruction 5025.13. It is available on the DoD Issuances website at http://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/.
- Distribution of memorandums from the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
- Meetings of the DoD Plain Language Committee, which consists of representatives from different organizations within the DoD.
- Training and helpful resources available on the DoD Plain Language Website and individual agency websites.
- Notices placed in various public forums such as:
  - DoD newspapers
  - DoD newsletters
  - Mass electronic information systems

IV. Training

- Army Publications Directorate (APD)
  - APD provided plain language training through webinars/online training.
- Cost Assessment Program and Evaluation
  - Cost Assessment Program and Evaluation provided webinars/online training for their plain language training.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)

- o DCAA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov, and webinars/online.
- Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA)
    - o DCMA provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
    - o DFAS provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Information System Agency (DISA)
    - o DISA provided plain language through in-house and www.plainlanguage.gov
- Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)
    - o DIA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov and webinars/online.
- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)
    - o DLA provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Media Agency (DMA)
    - o DMA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov
- Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency (DPAA)
    - o DPAA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov and webinars/online.
- Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)
    - o DSCA provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC)
    - o DTIC provided plain language training through webinars/online.
- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)
    - o DTRA provided plain language training through webinars/online.
- Department of Defense Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO)
    - o DoD CIO provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov
- Missile Defense Agency (MDA)
    - o MDA provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)
    - o NGA provided plain language training in-house, webinars/online, and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM)
    - o NORAD and USNORTHCOM provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov
- Office of the Secretary of Defense/Director, Operational Test and Evaluation (OSD/DOTE)
    - o OSD/DOTE provided in-house plain language training.
- Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of Net Assessment (OSD, ONA)
    - o OSD, ONA provided plain language training in-house.
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OSD Policy)
    - o OSD Policy provided plain language training in-house.
- Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA)
    - o PFPA provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)
    - o WHS provided plain language training on iCompass. It also maintains a plain language training video on the DoD Plain Language Website at https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/plainlanguage/.

V. Ongoing Compliance/Sustaining Change

The DoD is working towards full compliance with the Act and has fulfilled requirements such as:

- Publishing the DoD Plain Writing Act Implementation Plan, DoD Instruction 5025.13.
- Maintaining the DoD Plain Language Website.
- Designating a senior official for plain language.
- Encouraging feedback from the public and stakeholders to identify communications that require improvements.
- Publishing the annual compliance report on the DoD Plain Language Website.

VI. Website: https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/plainlanguage/

VII. Customer Satisfaction

We want your input. Feedback is critical to help us know whether we have been successful in providing information that is clear and well-organized for its intended audience.

Comments, questions, and concerns may be sent to whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil.