

DoD Plain Writing Act Compliance Report — April 13, 2020

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

I. Senior Agency Official

Lisa Hershman, Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense (CMO), is the DoD Senior Official for plain language. The Washington Headquarters Services, Executive Services Directorate, Directives Division, oversees 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 2019.

DoD agencies took many actions to implement plain language requirements in 2019:

- DoD
 - Writing style guides and plain language resources on the DoD Plain Language Website are available to action officers who write policy documents.
 - DoD Plain Language training is available on iCompass.
 - The DoD Plain Language Committee met to share ideas and information.
- Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)
 - DeCA added a plain language page to their intranet with information about the DoD Plain Language Program and links to free online training.
 - DeCA personnel used plain language principles to improve email communications.
- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)
 - DLA purchased editorial software to help personnel write in active voice. The software also flags jargon and unnecessary words.
- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)
 - DTRA's correspondence website is continually updated to reflect the latest administration changes and correspondence templates are revised accordingly. DTRA also uploaded a "10 Steps to Plain Writing" presentation on the correspondence website as a reminder for those writing and preparing documents.
 - DTRA is moving its online trainings, to include a plain language course, under the Defense Acquisition University training website to provide users with an enhanced and interactive experience.

- Department of the Army
 - The Army Publishing Directorate:
 - Used style guides and plain language resources to revise and develop publications.
 - Reviewed and edited Army policy and procedural publications with a focus on clear and concise writing.
 - Updated publishing tools and software to help edit documents for clarity.
 - Developed written text to accompany plain language training videos for Army customer use.

- Department of the Air Force
 - The Department of the Air Force incorporated plain language concepts in its guidance for writing Air Force publications.

- DoD Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO)
 - The DoD CIO Executive Secretariat (ExecSec) staff review all prepared correspondence, including but not limited to, internal and external memorandums, letters to Congress and other senior government officials, strategy documents, DoD issuances, Facebook posts, articles, videos, letters and email content for public release, and internal and public-facing web content, to ensure clarity, ease of understanding, and ease of electronic access.
 - The DoD CIO Policy and Issuances Focal Point and Staff Analyst uses plain language guidelines, as endorsed by the Secretary of Defense, when reviewing and revising publications that establish and implement DoD policy. The DoD CIO ExecSec published over 12 new or revised DoD issuances in 2019 incorporating plain language.
 - The DoD CIO ExecSec maintains an online resource library, the DoD CIO Action Officer Standard Operating Procedures Reference Library, on the DoD CIO internal webpage and portal. The library contains DoD and federal government references, standards, document templates, and forms for all types of OSD and DoD correspondence and issuances. The DoD CIO ExecSec reviews and updates these references and documents as needed to encourage action officers to use plain language when writing correspondence and issuances.

- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
 - The Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is in the process of developing an effective writing workshop. The workshop will provide new and seasoned Joint Staff personnel with an enhanced writing curriculum and practical exercises for understanding and applying plain language and proper grammatical standards.

- Office of the Director of Administration and Organizational Policy, Office of the CMO
 - Staff and issuance compliance analysts in the Directives Division use plain language guidelines when reviewing and revising publications that establish and implement DoD policy. The Division published 274 new or revised DoD issuances incorporating plain language in 2019.
 - The standards and templates for DoD issuances were reviewed and updated as needed to encourage action officers to use plain language when writing issuances.
 - The Directives Division conducted 5 classes on writing DoD issuances in 2019 that included basic principles of plain writing and referred class attendees to available plain writing training.
 - The Directives Division maintains the DoD Plain Language Training Course online video on its website and provides links to schedule available in-person training.

III. Communicating 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 Directives Division Website at <http://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/>. DoD Instruction 5025.13 was reviewed for accuracy and updated on January 23, 2020.
- Distribution of memorandums from the Office of Management and Budget and OSD.
- 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

- DoD
 - A plain language training course is available to all DoD personnel on the DoD Plain Language Website.
 - DoD organizations that already have internal training available have incorporated plain language guidance in those programs.

- DoD organizations that do not have internal training use the DoD plain language training and the other resources available on the DoD Plain Language Website.
- Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation
 - Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation provided online plain language training.
- DeCA
 - DeCA provided online plain language training.
- Defense Intelligence Agency
 - The Defense Intelligence Agency provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- Defense Technical Information Center
 - The Defense Technical Information Center provided online plain language training.
- Defense Technology Security Administration
 - The Defense Technology Security Administration provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- Department of the Army
 - The Department of the Army held two plain language workshops in 2019. Education and training on writing departmental publications is also conducted face-to-face with writers and authors quarterly.
- Department of the Air Force
 - The Department of the Air Force provided in-house plain language training.
- DLA
 - DLA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- DoD CIO
 - The DoD CIO ExecSec staff conduct bi-weekly meetings with administrative support staff and action officers, providing critiques and feedback on written products routed for review, editing, and signature. Attendees are regularly referred to available training through the DoD Plain Language Website and other sources, such as the DoD Action Officer course, that cover the development of DoD issuances, the DoD issuances process, and standard practices and templates for staff actions and general correspondence. The DoD CIO Plain Language Program Manager also provides individual and group orientation and training to new or resident DoD CIO staff members.

- DTRA
 - DTRA provided online plain language training.
- Missile Defense Agency
 - The Missile Defense Agency provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
 - The National-Geospatial Intelligence Agency provided plain language training in-house, online, and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- National Security Agency
 - The National Security Agency provided in-house plain language training.
- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
 - The Joint Staff Training Program (JSTP) administers an effective writing program for new Joint Staff personnel. The effective writing point of contact also facilitated formal individual and group training for select Joint Staff personnel.
 - In 2019, a total of 495 Joint Staff personnel received formal writing instruction through one of several training courses offered by the JSTP.
 - Effective writing instruction will continue to be an integral part of the JSTP. This instruction appropriately supports the mission of the Joint Staff and ensures Joint Staff personnel receive the timely, accurate, decision products necessary to perform their advisory and leadership roles and responsibilities.
- Office of the Director of Administration and Organizational Policy, Office of the CMO
 - Plain language is emphasized in training classes offered to DoD action officers that cover the development of DoD issuances and the DoD issuances process.
- Office of Economic Adjustment
 - The Office of Economic Adjustment provided in-house plain language training.
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Defense
 - The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Defense provided online plain language training.

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: <http://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.