DoD Plain Writing Act Compliance Report — April 12, 2019

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, Acting Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense, 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 2018.

DoD Agencies took many actions to implement plain language requirements in 2018:

- DoD

    o   Writing style guides and plain language resources on the DoD Plain Language Website are available to action officers who write policy documents.

    o   DoD Plain Language training is available on iCompass.

    o   The DoD Plain Language Committee met to share ideas and information.

- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)

    o   DCAA maintains current and regularly revised information and guidance for contractors and small businesses on its website (www.dcaa.mil).

    o   DCAA signed a memorandum of agreement with the Defense Media Activity and will migrate the current DCAA website (www.dcaa.mil) to Defense Media Activity hosting. Once complete (estimate summer 2019), the DCAA website will be similar to other DoD websites which, for regular users of DoD sites, will make locating documents more intuitive.

- Defense Intelligence Agency

    o   The Defense Intelligence Agency continues to use plain language in the layout and documents that are public on its website.

- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

    o   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.

- o The overall look and feel of the DTRA.mil website was enhanced to make finding key components and mission sets easier.

- **Department of the Army**

  - o The Army Publishing Directorate (APD) is developing a policy writing briefing incorporating the tenets of plain language to add to its publishing resources for customers visiting its website. The APD also plans to add a link to the DoD Plain Language website.

- **DoD Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO)**

  - o The DoD CIO Correspondence Control Office (CCO) 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.

  - o 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 CCO published over 12 new or revised DoD issuances in 2018 incorporating plain language.

  - o The CCO 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 CCO 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 Director of Administration, OCMO**

  - o 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 572 new or revised DoD issuances incorporating plain language in 2018.

  - o The standards and templates for DoD issuances were reviewed and updated as needed to encourage action officers to use plain language when writing issuances.

  - o The Directives Division conducted 5 classes on writing DoD issuances in 2018 that included basic principles of plain writing and referred class attendees to available plain writing training.

  - o The Directives Division maintains the DoD Plain Language Training Course online video on its website and provides links to schedule available in-person training. In 2018, the Directives Division also provided the video to iCompass for inclusion in the Washington Headquarters Services training database.

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 DoD Issuances website at http://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/. DoD Instruction 5025.13 was reviewed for accuracy and updated May 31, 2018.

- 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.

- DCAA

    - In 2018, the DCAA policy staff received hands-on plain language training to improve the readability of policy documents. To reinforce this training, the DCAA communication directorate reviews policy documents with the writer before publication.

    - DCAA provides plain language training to all new hires as part of its onboarding process. In 2018, DCAA provided training to over 500 new hires.

- Defense Technical Information Center

    - The Defense Technical Information Center provided plain language training through webinars and other online training.

- Department of the Army

  - The APD defers to internal and external writing style guides and the plain language resources on the DoD Plain Language Website to educate customers on preparing policy publications. Education and training on writing departmental publications is conducted face-to-face with writers and authors during quarterly training sessions.

- DTRA

  - DTRA provided in-house plain language training.

- Missile Defense Agency

  - The Missile Defense Agency provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.

- North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command

  - The North American Aerospace Defense Command and the United States Northern Command provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.

- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

  - The Joint Staff Training Program (JSTP) administers an effective writing program as a part of formal action officer and Division Chief introductory training. The effective writing point of contact also facilitated formal individual and group training for select Joint Staff personnel.

  - In 2018, a total of 347 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 existing JSTP. This instruction appropriately supports the mission of the Joint Staff and ensures Joint Staff receive the timely, accurate, decision products necessary to perform their advisory and leadership roles and responsibilities.

- DoD CIO

  - The CCO staff conduct bi-weekly meetings with administrative support staff and action officers, providing critiques and feed-back on written products routed for review, editing, and signature. Attendees are regularly referred to available training through the DoD Plain Language Website and other available 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. Additionally, the DoD CIO Plain Language Program Manager provides individual and group orientation and training to new or resident DoD CIO staff members.

- Office of the Director of Administration, OCMO

  - Plain language is emphasized in training classes offered to DoD action officers that cover the development of DoD issuances and the DoD issuances process.

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.