Plain Writing Act Compliance Report — April 1, 2023

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 2022.

DoD agencies took many actions to implement plain language requirements in 2022.

- Army Publishing Directorate (APD)
  - Referred to the DoD Plain Language website as the source for clear and concise writing.
  - Encouraged the use of select publications, style guides, and DoD Plain Language resources to revise and develop publications and correspondence content.
  - Tasked skilled editors to stay relevant on upgrades and updates to publishing software and tools for missing and inappropriate punctuation, misuse of acronyms, completeness of document structure, and more.
  - Revised publishing reform initiatives for the purpose of improving customer wait time for publishing, while holding to plain language concepts.
  - Reviewed and edited all departmental administrative policy and procedural publications with emphasis on understandable and concise writing. Ongoing projects include the review and discussion of the Army's leading publishing policy, procedural publications, and the APD's website accessibility for everyone.
  - 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.
  - Followed the U.S. Web Design System guidance and standards.
  - Performed quarterly website reviews, validating the APD's website accessibility and easy navigation for roughly 6 million users.
  - Provided policy guidance, high-end design, management, and oversight of all departmental forms and forms collection instructions, as well as relaying of DoD and Federal law superintendence.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)
  - Developed several new courses including professional business writing and executive writing that incorporated plain language principles.
  - Refreshed the small business page, changing the navigation to the main title bar so that it was easier to locate and update materials. The small businesses who want to enter into contracts with DoD are a major consumer of DCAA information. The feedback received by the DCAA small business focal point has been positive.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
  - DFAS's Corporate Communications Office:

- Prepared and reviewed 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.
- Continued to provide plain language training for agency newsletter editors.
- DFAS provided a related training course offering, providing key principles of the Plain Writing Program – Business Grammar: Business Writing for Executives. In 2022, 25 DFAS employees successfully complete that course.
- Defense Media Activity (DMA)
  - DMA's requirement to use plain language was provided to policy writers responsible for writing policy for their programs and action officers writing correspondence. Templates and policy guidance was posted to DMA's intranet site and was accessible by the DMA workforce.
- Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)
  - WHS oversees the DoD Plain Language and DoD Issuances programs. In 2022, the WHS Directives Division:
    - Performed 367 editorial reviews for issuances in progress and published 184 new and revised issuances. All reviews included evaluation for plain writing compliance.
    - 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/. DoD Instruction 5025.13 was reviewed in 2022 and determined to be up to date.
- 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 DoD organizations.
- 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 (CAPE)
  - CAPE provided webinars/online training for their plain language training.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)
  - DCAA provided plain language training through webinars/online.
- Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA)
  - DCMA provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
  - DFAS provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Information System Agency (DISA)
  - DISA provided plain language through in-house and www.plainlanguage.gov
- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)
  - DLA provided plain language training in-house, through www.plainlanguage.gov, and webinars/online.
- Defense Media Agency (DMA)
  - DMA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency (DPAA)
  - DPAA provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov and webinars/online.
- Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC)
  - DTIC provided plain language training through webinars/online.
- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)
  - DTRA provided plain language training through webinars/online.
- Missile Defense Agency (MDA)
  - MDA provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM)
  - NORAD and USNORTHCOM provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA)
  - PFPA provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)
  - 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.