

# Plain Writing Act Compliance Report — April 13, 2016

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 L. Rhodes, Director of Administration, Office of the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO) of the Department of Defense, is the DoD Senior Official for plain language. The Washington Headquarters Services, 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](mailto:whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil).

## II. Using Plain Language

DoD received no plain language amendment requests in 2015.

DoD agencies took many actions to implement plain language requirements in 2015.

- DoD
  - Writing style guides and plain language resources on the DoD Plain Language Website are available to action officers who write policy documents.
  - The DoD Plain Language Committee met to share ideas and information.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)
  - DCAA's plain writing focus is updating the Defense Contract Audit Institute's (DCAI) Audit Report Writing Course to include plain writing basics. The intent of the course is to provide students with the tools to create a clear and concise audit report that supports the audit opinion through the use of effective writing techniques. Poorly written audit reports may delay the acquisition process and make it more difficult for contracting officers and contractors to negotiate fair and reasonable prices.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
  - From a communication perspective, DFAS continues to have its Corporate Communications Office prepare or review all official customer communications for message clarity and ease of understanding. These include FaceBook posts, articles, videos, letter and email content for public release, and web content.
  - Additionally, the DFAS Publications Program initiated a total revamp of the Agency program, revising policy, streamlining process, and revising the eLibrary. The new eLibrary pages also link to the Department of Defense Plain Language Program website.
  - DFAS' Corporate Communications Office continues to consult with the 20 agency newsletter editors.
- Office of the Director of Administration, DCMO
  - 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 standards and templates for DoD issuances were evaluated and changed to improve use of plain language.

## 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.dtic.mil/whs/directives>.
- 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**

- DoD
  - DoD is developing an interactive plain language training course to replace the current static training available only to DoD employees with access to iCompass. Estimated completion and posting on the DoD Plain Language Website is August 2016.
  - DoD organizations that already have internal training available will incorporate plain language guidance in those programs.
  - DoD organizations that do not have internal training will use either the DoD plain language training (when available) or the resources available on the DoD Plain Language Website.
- Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)
  - DeCA identified employees who write policy or instructions and/or documents for external audiences and implemented online plain language training (developed by the National Institutes of Health) for 208 employees.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service
  - From a training perspective, DFAS expanded its writing curriculum, providing 29 related training course offerings (18 more than last year), which included key principles of the Plain Writing Program – Advanced Business Writing; Advanced Legal Research and Writing; Business Grammar: The Mechanics of Writing; Business Writing Basics for DFAS; Business Writing: Editing and Proofreading; Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely; Business Writing: Know Your Readers and Your Purpose; DFAS Correspondence Course; DFAS Writing Course; Business Writing Basics; First Year Writing Seminar II: Academic Research and Writing; First Year Writing Seminar I; First Year Writing Seminar I: Critical Reading, Writing, and Thinking Across Contexts; Professional Business Writing; Professional Writing; Professional Writing in the Disciplines; Professional Writing in the Disciplines: Business Communications; Professional Writing in the Disciplines: Business Communications; Professional Writing in the Disciplines: Business Communications; Research Writing Methods; Reviewing Other People's Writing; The Plain Writing Act; Writing Performance Work Statements; Writing a Business Case; Writing for Business; Writing for Technical Professionals: Effective Writing Techniques; Writing for Technical Professionals: Preparation and Planning; Writing under Pressure: Preparing for Success; and Writing under Pressure: The Writing Process. In 2015, DFAS employees successfully completed 1130 sessions of these courses.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)

- DCAI trained 119 DCAA employees in the principles of Plain Writing as part of the Effective Grammar and The Audit Report Course.
- DCAA will create a plain language course in the near future, which will be available for all DCAA employees on line through DCAI's web portal.
- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
  - The Joint Staff Training Program facilitated an active responsive writing program as a part of formal Action Officer and Division Chief introductory training. The responsive writing point of contact also facilitated formal individual and group training for select Joint Staff personnel.
  - During calendar year 2015 a total of 568 Joint Staff personnel received formal writing instruction.
  - Responsive writing instruction will continue to be an integral part of the existing Joint Staff Training Program. This instruction appropriately supports the mission of the Joint Staff and ensures the senior leaders of the Joint Staff receive the timely, accurate decision products necessary to perform their advisory and leadership roles and responsibilities.
- Office of the Director of Administration, DCMO
  - Plain language is emphasized in DoD issuance process training classes and Writing DoD Issuances classes offered to DoD action officers, in which plain writing is emphasized. In calendar year 2015, 75 individuals completed the training.
  - Offers to DoD personnel with access to iCompass online training two classes: “DoD Plain Language-based Training,” and “Plain Writing Act Completion”. In calendar year 2015, a total of 696 individuals completed training.
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
  - Over the past 12 months, Policy has conducted 10 plain language courses. These are generally made available to Policy personnel every other month, and the target audience is all new personnel and others who are encouraged to improve their plain language skills. In addition to training Policy action officers, Policy has also supported requests to train personnel on the Joint Staff and the DoD agencies and field activities under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.
- United States Transportation Command
  - United States Transportation Command offers a 30-minute plain language training brief as part of our Command's newcomer's orientation (currently scheduled in Action Officer Day 1 training). This training session covers the following items: introduction of the plain language program manager, objectives of the program requirements, familiarization with governance, detailed discussion of DoD Instruction 5025.13, purpose and concepts of the program, importance of preparation, review, and proofreading documents, and resources for the program. In addition, our Command offers the training as part of our localized TANDEM system, which offers an online course offering the same content as the in-person training session. Finally, as the Command's publications and forms manager, concepts associated with plain language program requirements are instituted into our publications to ensure ease of reading and understanding for our internal and external customers.

## **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.dtic.mil/whs/directives/plainlanguage.html>

Information about the Act and its requirements; implementation plans and compliance resources; and compliance reports may be found on the DoD Plain Language Website. The site also provides an easy way for the public to contact the DoD should they have questions or request the revision of documents that are not in plain language. Any input received through the site will be considered and identified documents will be reviewed and revised, if necessary.

## **VII. Customer Satisfaction**

We want your input. Feedback is critical to help us know whether or not 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](mailto:whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil).