



**Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Use of the HHS Usability Lab

Project:

HHS Web Management Policy

Document Number:

HHS-WEB-2005-05

Table of Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Background	3
3. Scope.....	3
4. Policy	4
5. Roles and Responsibilities	5
5.1. HHS Web Management Team Co-Managers	5
5.2. HHS Usability Lab Manager(s)	5
5.2. Usability Lab User(s).....	5
6. Rules of the Usability Lab	5
7. Requesting Use of the Usability Lab	5
8. Effective Date/Implementation.....	6
9. Approved	6

1. Purpose

This document establishes the policies and responsibilities for use of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Usability Lab by HHS Staff Divisions (STAFFDIVs), HHS Operating Divisions (OPDIVs), Federal agencies, and HHS partners.

2. Background

Ensuring that HHS Web sites and other forms of communications are citizen-centric and performance-based are key requirements of the 2002 E-Government Act and the President's Management Agenda. To assist HHS in complying with this direction, the HHS Web Management Team (WMT) has established a Usability Lab on the 6th floor of the Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Washington, DC. The Lab consists of a usability testing room and an observation room. The Lab is a service of the HHS WMT. Its primary function is to evaluate HHS Web sites and other communication systems with a variety of HHS constituencies to ensure they are easy-to-use and useful. Evaluation methods include usability testing, card sorting, focus groups, interviews, and other techniques.

The Usability Lab is funded by the HHS Service and Supply Fund. The Usability Lab contains equipment to help evaluate HHS products. This equipment is expensive and complex and can be overwhelming for people to use; therefore, it is important that only trained personnel handle it. Training will be provided on an as-needed basis.

The Usability Lab's equipment has the following capabilities:

- Video recording:
The Lab equipment can record a user's interactions with a Web site or other communication system in two ways:
 1. Video recording a user's computer screen and the camera image of the user's face in a picture in picture (PIP) with audio.
 2. Recording the screen, camera image and audio using a software package called Morae that records the session to a computer hard drive. With Morae the files will need to be moved onto a blank CD (one CD per 60-minute session) and editing of these files will have to be done using the Morae editor/manager.
- Video displaying:
The Lab equipment can also display a user's interactions with a Web site or other communication system in the observation room. In this room, the user's computer screen can be displayed on a large projection screen in high resolution. The camera image, computer display, combination of computer screen and camera image, or Morae remote viewer can be displayed on the large plasma display. Audio from the testing room can be heard in the observation room as well.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all parties interested in using the HHS Usability Testing Lab. It reflects both use of the HHS Usability Lab as well as the extent of support the HHS WMT will provide in using the facility.

4. Policy

4.1. Acceptable Use

Acceptable use of the Usability Lab includes:

- Usability testing
- Card sorting
- Focus groups
- User interviews
- Pre- and post-session meetings to discuss usability issues and/or findings

All requests to use the Usability Lab should be submitted via the HHS Web Request system (see 7 below) for review. Due to the level of complexity and value of the equipment used in the Lab, requests to use the Lab for other purposes will not be accepted.

4.2. Priorities

The priorities for the use of the Usability Lab are as follows:

1. Emergency response and monitoring of threats to public safety
2. Evaluating the Secretary's Web sites and special initiatives
3. Evaluating STAFFDIV and OPDIV Web sites and projects (priority will be given to STAFFDIV and OPDIV main Web sites over subsites)
4. Evaluating other Federal agencies' Web sites and projects
5. Pre- and post-session evaluation meetings

4.3 Conflicts

When conflicts in the scheduling of the rooms arise, the Lab Manager will negotiate a scheduling change that will accommodate both parties. If a solution cannot be worked out, then the HHS Web Team Co-Managers will resolve the conflict based on the priorities listed above in 4.2.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. HHS Web Management Team Co-Managers

The HHS WMT Co-Managers will provide general oversight of the Usability Lab under this policy and resolve any scheduling and resource conflicts that may arise with regard to its use.

5.2 HHS Usability Lab Manager(s)

The HHS Usability Lab Manager(s) will receive and review all requests to use the Usability Lab. The Lab Manager will decide if the request fits within the guidelines of this policy and can be accommodated in the schedule. If a conflict arises, the Lab Manager will involve the HHS WMT Co-Managers to resolve the issue. The Lab Manager will also be responsible for ensuring that appropriate training and use of the Lab occurs.

Additionally, the Lab Manager will determine what type of support the requestor will need from the HHS WMT, such as a usability test facilitator, notetaker(s) and recruitment of users for testing. The level of support available will depend on the HHS WMT's current and future priorities, and those requesting use of the Lab may fulfill any of these roles using federal staff or contractors as well.

The Lab Manager is responsible for the Testing Room and the Observation Room and does not have the authority to acquire other rooms for use during testing at the Lab.

5.2. Usability Lab User(s)

The Usability Lab user(s) must be trained and adhere to the rules of the Lab, listed in 6 below, to ensure the safe operation of the equipment. The user requesting the Lab must be a federal employee and submit the request via HHS Web Request system (see 7 below). A contractor may use the Usability Lab for a federal agency; however, the request must originate from a federal employee and a federal employee must supervise Lab use.

6. Rules of the Usability Lab

1. Users of the Lab must be trained to use the equipment prior to use
2. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday; the Lab is closed during federal holidays and when the Office of Personnel Management announces Early Dismissal or an operating status of Unscheduled Leave for the Washington, D.C. area.
3. User is responsible for providing recording media (DV, VHS or CD for Morae recording)
4. Rooms must be kept neat and clean
5. No food or drink is allowed in the rooms

7. Requesting Use of the Usability Lab

To request use of the Lab, a federal employee should submit an electronic request via the HHS Web Request system at <http://webrequests.hhs.gov>. In the request, the requestor should state the agency, purpose, days and times desired, and type of support needed from the HHS WMT.

8. Effective Date/Implementation

The effective date of this policy is the date the policy is approved.

9. Approved

Suzy DeFrancis
Assistant Secretary for
Public Affairs

DATE