Department of Health and Human Services

Plain Writing Act Implementation Plan – Updated March 2012

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES
Demonstrate Commitment of HHS Leadership			
Responsibility for plain writing is clear at Senior level.	Identify a Senior Department Official to lead implementation of Plain Writing Act requirements.	July 13, 2011	1. Central responsibility establishes that plain writing is a Department priority and commitment. 2. Identifies the Department arbiter of plain writing issues and the central coordinator for plain writing activities.
Provide public access to the Department's plain writing initiatives and commitment to clear writing.	1. Establish a Department website devoted to plain writing and the Department's implementation of the Plain Writing Act. 2. Work with Agencies to establish Agency website counterparts devoted to plain writing and implementation of the Plain Writing Act or to link to the Department's plain writing website.	July 13, 2011 April 13, 2012	1. Communicates to the public the Department's commitment to plain writing. 2. Encourages public involvement and interaction with the Department in crafting plain writing documents. 3. Takes advantage of ideas from the public to increase plain writing activities.
Communicate Plain Writing Act requirements to leadership throughout the Department.	Send a memorandum from the Senior Official to all staff and operating division heads outlining the Plain Writing Act requirements.	July 13, 2011	1. Conveys a consistent message throughout the Department of what the Plain Writing Act requirements are. 2. Establishes the expectation for meeting those requirements.

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Responsibility for implementation is clear at the agency level.	Agencies each identify a senior level official within the agency for implementing the plain writing requirements.	October 13, 2011	1. Establishes the network of persons responsible for agency implementation. 2. Reinforces the priority and commitment to plain writing throughout the Department.
Senior leadership models clear writing and recognizes it in writing of others.	1. Make plain writing training mandatory for all leadership and staff of the Department Executive Secretariat. 2. Require plain writing training for all HHS staff offices responsible for drafting, editing, or commenting on documents. 3. Require plain writing training for all Agency Executive Secretariat Staff.	October 13, 2011 April 13, 2012 April 13, 2012	1. Conveys the commitment of leadership to the principles of plain writing. 2. Department communications become more consistent and clear.
Establish long-term training plan for plain writing throughout the Department.	1. Department and agency leads to work with web-designers at Department and agency levels to develop training plan that includes simple web-design and plain writing. 2. Recognize and incorporate agency differences in approach to plain writing implementation.	October 13, 2011 October 13, 2011	1. Communicates the Department's expectation that all employees use plain writing in communications. 2. Improves accessibility and communications of websites to the public at large.

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Increase Plain Writing Throughout the Department			
Beginning October 13, 2011, write all new or substantially revised covered documents in plain writing.	Require agency senior officials to reinforce the requirement to write documents in plain writing.	October 13, 2011	Compliance with the Plain Writing Act for new or substantially revised documents.
HHS employees who draft, edit, or comment on documents receive plain writing training.	Identify online training requirement for HHS employees with primary responsibility for writing, editing, or commenting on documents and require mandatory participation.	April 13, 2012	Employees improve their plain writing ability and develop confidence about how to write clearly.
Establish plain writing as an essential job skill within HHS for employees who draft, edit, or comment on any document.	Include plain writing ability in all new relevant job descriptions and performance plans and evaluations.	April 13, 2012	Employees know the plain writing expectations and that plain writing is part of the job.
Establish a consistent Department plain writing style.	Develop an HHS style plain writing guide and disseminate widely within the Department.	October 13, 2011	Increase consistency of style and usage throughout the Department.
Reduce resistance to plain writing.	1. Understand why people may resist plain writing, including submersion in technical program issues, inadequate prior training, and cultural differences. 2. Identify employees who might benefit from additional or advanced training in plain writing. 3. Communicate benefits and cost savings of using plain writing.	October 13, 2011	1. Employees become more comfortable using plain language. 2. Employees understand how using plain writing makes their job easier and better.

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Reward Use of Plain Writing			
Reward use of plain writing.	Establish an HHS awards program where agencies recognize those employees who consistently use plain writing.	April 13, 2012	1. Increase awareness of what good plain writing is among Department employees. 2. Provide incentives for employees to improve their writing consistent with the Plain Writing Act.
Recognize outstanding plain writing documents.	Nominate at least three documents for recognition as recipients of ClearMark Awards by the Center for Plain Language. Note – In 2011, several NIH Institutes and CDC received this award.	April 13, 2012	Provides public recognition of outstanding plain writing efforts within the Department.
Increase awareness of situations where use of confusing language continues.	Publish on the HHS website before and after examples showing how plain writing can make a document clearer.	April 13, 2012	1. Provides greater awareness of the difference between confusing and plain writing. 2. Communicates to the public the Department's efforts to improve written materials.
Review and Update Plan			
Demonstrate Department compliance with the Plain Writing Act.	Publish a report describing HHS compliance.	April 13, 2012, and annually thereafter	Compliance activities made public.