Department of Health and Human Services
2023 Plain Writing Act Compliance Report
Request for Information
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Background

On October 13, 2010, the Plain Writing Act (Act) was signed into law. The Act requires federal agencies to use "clear Government communication that the public can understand and use." Communications in plain language are especially important in the context of health care and human services. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recognizes that using plain language can help address the needs of those with limited literacy skills, as well as those with limited health literacy skills. Plain language helps people understand health information because the writing style is clear, concise, organized, and jargon-free. Documents   written in plain language are less complex and therefore easier for everyone to understand,   including people who have limited literacy skills, limited health literacy skills, or both.

In ongoing application and implementation, the Act requires agencies to "[w]rite annual compliance reports and post these reports on its plain language web page." You can find links to HHS's previous ten compliance reports here: http://www.hhs.gov/open/plain-writing/

The Department's Exec Sec is developing the 2023 compliance report to demonstrate our continued compliance with the requirements of the Act. The report includes sections on accomplishments, best practices, innovations, continuous improvements, equity, and HHS contacts overseeing implementation of plain writing requirements. This year, we are adding a new section to highlight how the Department is using plain writing to improve customer experience by enhancing transparency and accessibility of information and services. To help us develop the Report, please provide information from your division by responding to the questions on pages 2-5, below. Please submit your information to the Secretary's Policy System (SPS) by COB on Friday, March 3, 2023.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Ekaterini Malliou at Ekaterini.Malliou@hhs.gov or Ms. Norris Cox at Norris.Cox@hhs.gov.

<u>Accomplishments</u>

HHS seeks to reach all Americans with useful health information they can easily understand. To accomplish this goal, HHS regularly reviews new and existing reports, documents, and web content for plain writing to ensure the largest impact on the public.

From January 2022 through December 2022, please describe:

a. *The top three plain writing documents your agency published that had the largest impact on the public.*
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control [Still Going Strong](#) poster. This poster was part of a campaign that speaks directly to older adults, age 65 and older, and their caregivers. The campaign and the poster raise awareness about preventable injuries among older adults.
- National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities [COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness Messaging to Improve Communication to and Engagement of People with Intellectual Disabilities and Extreme Low Literacy](#) resources. These concise and easy-to-understand materials covered five basic COVID-19 prevention steps: getting the COVID-19 shot, washing your hands, getting a COVID-19 test, and wearing a mask and keeping a safe distance until you have gotten your shot.
- National Center for Zoonotic and Emerging Infectious Diseases [Dengue Vaccine](#) resources. This website provides separate resources, in English and Spanish, for healthcare providers and for parents of children who are eligible to get this new vaccine.

b. *The types of documents, and how many of each (estimate is acceptable, please specify) that your agency wrote in plain writing. Please also specify how many of each were new and how many were substantially revised.*
Our centers, institute, and offices (CIOs) reported **1,346** documents meeting plain language standards. Of those documents, **760** were new and **586** were substantially revised for plain language. Document types include:
- Adobe campaigns
- Articles
- Blogs
- Campaign messages
- Contract documents
- Correspondence
- Briefing documents
- Fact sheets
- Federal register notices
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Guidance documents

- Infographics
- Mobile apps
- Newsletters
- Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs)
- Posters
- PowerPoint presentations
- Press releases
- Reports
- Social media messages
- Training materials
- Website materials
- Web pages

c. *Examples of documents your agency improved through plain writing.*
- Pregnancy and Oral Health
- Swimming Hygiene
- Cronobacter Infection and Infants

d. *How your agency updated its website devoted to plain writing, if applicable.*
CDC updated its Plain Writing at CDC web page in June 2022. The web page describes what we do to use plain writing and provides links to
- The Plain Writing Act of 2010
- The federal plain language guidelines
- The federal plain language website
- The plain writing plan from the Department of Health and Human Services
- CDC's 2022 Plain Writing Act Compliance Report
- Everyday Words for Public Health Communication
- The CDC Clear Communication Index
- CDC's health literacy website

The web page also tells visitors how they can provide feedback on the use of plain language in our documents and materials. The page also provides examples of public-facing CDC materials that use plain language.

In addition, CDC's National Center for Environmental Health maintains a public-facing Clear Writing Hub.

As in previous years, CDC CIOs—including the Office of Communications (OC), Division of Communication Science and Services (DCSS)—launched and maintained their own intranet sites offering key writing resources; links to plain language tools, trainings, and promotional materials; and material-development resources.

e. *Other relevant accomplishments.*
Acknowledging the need to change, in April 2022, the CDC Director launched an independent review of the agency. CDC published the results of the independent

review, i.e., the CDC Moving Forward Summary Report, in September 2022. The report provided several recommendations, including some that focused on making CDC's science information and guidance easier for the public to understand. CDC formed priority action teams to create and carry out plans tied to the report's recommendations. One priority action team is already creating a course to help scientists communicate their work clearly and another course to train health communicators to develop materials for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. That same group is also working on a system to broaden CDC's existing programs to recognize plain language advocates.

Best Practices

HHS reinforces the plain writing requirements through best practices, such as senior officials promoting plain writing and programs for tracking and measuring plain writing effectiveness.

From January 2022 through December 2022, please describe:

a. *How senior officials in your agency reinforced the plain writing requirements through Plain Writing Act-related directives.*
CDC reinforces compliance with the Plain Writing Act through Office of the Director (OD)-level coordination of plain language activities and an agency operational policy. The Office of Communications (OC) is an OD office and coordinates plain language work for the agency. OC's Division of Communication Science and Services (DCSS) supports two positions in health literacy and plain language and leads the agency's Health Literacy Council. Members of the council periodically update CDC's Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy and serve as consultants on implementing the Plain Writing Act at CDC.

Senior agency officials reinforce plain writing by sponsoring and releasing staff for training, requesting briefings, inviting presentations at staff meetings, and reminding staff of the importance of plain language and complying with the law. CDC leadership continually reinforces the importance of complying with the Plain Writing Act through the CDC intranet, newsletters, and agency-wide announcements.

b. *How you tracked the conversion of existing documents into plain writing.*
CIOs use a variety of electronic systems to track and clear documents. These systems include
- eClearance
- Sharepoint
- OneDrive
- CDC ATSDR Policy System (CAPS)

CIOs use these systems to enter Clear Communication Index scores, provide descriptive notes about needed or completed plain writing revisions, and upload supporting documentation that reviewers can see as a deliverable progresses through the clearance process.

CIOs also used plain language assessment software, [VisibleThread,](#) to analyze text for adherence to several federal plain language guidelines. The software provides suggestions on how to clarify text. When the CIOs have revised the text, they run a follow-up assessment to determine if the plain language issues have been addressed.

c. *How you measured whether covered documents used plain writing.*
The OD offices and CIOs apply plain language criteria during the review and clearance process, which takes place before we release documents to the public. Each CIO has an associate director for communication science who is responsible for this review. The agency's Associate Director for Communication may also review sensitive, complex, or emergency response materials and apply plain language criteria.

CDC continued using the Clear Communication Index (the Index). This tool scores documents and other material on its use of characteristics that enhance and aid people's understanding of information. CDC developed the tool based on a review of the scientific literature in communication and related disciplines and field-tested the tool to ensure its validity. The Index includes criteria from the federal plain language guidelines. Staff use the Index to score documents on a scale of zero to 100. We track document scores and use them to identify steps we can take to increase clarity.

d. *How you measured (i) the effectiveness of the plain writing program for your office; and (ii) the effectiveness of your plain writing documents (i.e., whether the public can easily understand and use them.)*
We measure effectiveness of the plain writing program through data and feedback from the associate directors of communication science in the CIOs and from members of the CDC Health Literacy Council. We promote use of a flow chart that shows how our various plain language and clear communication resources can help at different stages of developing materials. When time and funds allow, we measure effectiveness of our documents through audience testing, such as
- focus groups
- interviews
- paraphrase testing
- usability testing

In addition, our website uses pop-up surveys based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index to solicit feedback from our visitors. We use standardized customer satisfaction measures to track user satisfaction with CDC web pages.

e. *The obstacles to measuring these aspects of your plain writing program.*
Given the large number of documents and other materials we produce, we would need a dedicated team to track the extensive review process and measure writing quality for all documents.

Although testing documents with the intended audience and asking for customer feedback on our use of plain language are ideal ways to measure aspects of our plain

writing program, these activities are resource intensive. Individual programs often don't have enough resources to thoroughly audience-test all documents they produce.

    f.   *Other relevant best practices.*
        CDC translates many of its print and online resources into other languages so that people whose primary language is not English or people who use American Sign Language (ASL) can benefit from our messaging. See

- [CDC Resources in Languages Other than English](#)
- [ASL video series on COVID-19](#)

        DCSS regularly shares notices from other HHS divisions and CDC partners regarding upcoming webinars, conferences, and trainings on plain language or health literacy.

Innovations

In the past year, agencies across HHS implemented innovative strategies to promote plain writing, including web banners, webinars, external social media messages, awards, and plain writing skills in position descriptions.

From January 2022 through December 2022, please describe:

    a.   *Any innovative activities you implemented to promote plain writing.*
        The CDC Health Literacy Council, comprising representatives from across CDC and under the leadership of OC, met 3 times in 2022 to develop guidance to help CIOs comply with the Plain Writing Act and the CDC/ATSDR Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. The action plan supports the use of plain language.

        In 2022 we used the REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) system, referred to as the "Health Literacy Reporting System," to collect clear-communication data for a full year. This system standardizes data collection on plain language and health literacy initiatives across divisions and CIOs. Items in this system directly align with the goals and strategies outlined in the CDC/ATSDR Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. We compiled the data into an annual report card to assess progress implementing the CDC/ATSDR Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy, which includes activities promoting plain writing.

        Health Literacy Council members worked with their CIOs to create unique events for CDC colleagues and partners. These include the following:

- DCSS
  - During Health Literacy Month, DCSS hosted a Communicators' Network session titled, "Barriers to Clear Communication: Misinformation and Numbers." The speakers provided evidence-based strategies to help counter misinformation and limit its impact on beliefs and behaviors, shared tips on making numbers easier for our audiences to understand, and answered questions from the audience.

- DCSS hosted a Communicators' Network session titled, "A Helpful Tool for Plain Language: VisibleThread." The presenters discussed plain language principles, how to use plain language software to improve the clarity of our content, and shared VisibleThread success stories from a CDC health communication specialist. The presenters also answered questions from the audience.

- In October 2022, DCSS prepared five tweets to promote Health Literacy Month. The tweets received more than 550 likes and more than 200 retweets.

- The Office of Readiness and Response (ORR) hosted a presentation titled, "Towards the Integration of Health Equity Concepts and Language." The presenter, Dr. Susan Laird, DCSS's Training and Health Education Lead, emphasized the importance of ensuring communication products and interventions reflect the specific cultural, linguistic, environmental, and historical situation of the audience(s) of focus. ORR staff learned how to use Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication to improve communication with their key audiences and to develop multiple products. ORR also published a Public Health Matters blog post titled, "Improve Health Literacy Before an Emergency."

- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recognized Health Literacy Month by highlighting each aspect of the theme, "Barriers to Clear Communication: Misinformation and Numbers."

  - NIOSH kicked off the month with an all-NIOSH email from NIOSH Director, Dr. John Howard, supporting this important area of communication. The email included a calendar of events and an infographic on misinformation.
  - NIOSH hosted a webinar, "Communicating Numbers and Statistics Effectively," with Karen Hilyard, PhD, a specialist in applying behavioral science and plain language to public health campaigns, interventions, and policy initiatives.
  - NIOSH asked its communicators to share their favorite clear communication tips. Throughout October, NIOSH featured these tips in a weekly internal newsletter, NIOSH This Week.
  - NIOSH wrapped up the month with a virtual health literacy trivia game where attendees responded to questions on lessons learned from the infographic, webinar, and tips. These were interspersed with fun facts about plain language and health literacy.

b. *Incentives or rewards you provided to employees to encourage the use of plain writing.*
CDC offers a plain language award and an excellence in communication award in the annual agency awards program (CDC Honor Awards). Each CIO can nominate one employee or team for these awards.

Senior leadership and supervisors in several CIOs reward staff who demonstrate and promote effective, clear communication and health literacy skills through Performance Management Appraisal System ratings, public recognition in senior leadership meetings and All Hands meetings, time-off awards, and special CIO awards.

In October of 2022, DCSS solicited nominations from across the agency for its annual Health Literacy Hero awards. These awards recognize staff and teams who advance plain language. DCSS selected winners among the nominees based on established award criteria.

c. *Whether you included plain writing skills in relevant job descriptions (i.e., employees who draft, edit, or clear any document). Please provide specific examples.*
Yes, our CIOs include plain writing ability in relevant job descriptions and assess clear communication and health literacy skills of new federal employee hires and contract hires, who will be involved in drafting, editing, or clearing public health and safety information for the audiences CDC serves. Some CIOs ask job candidates to provide samples of plain language materials the candidates have produced.

d. *The documents your agency nominated for recognition as recipients of ClearMark Awards by the Center for Plain Language.*

- The National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities won the Shorter Brochures Award and the Grand ClearMark Award for its [COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness Messaging to Improve Communication to and Engagement of People with Intellectual Disabilities and Extreme Low Literacy](#) brochure and resources.
- The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control won the Poster, Charts, Fliers Award for its [Still Going Strong](#) poster.
- The National Center for Zoonotic and Emerging Infectious Diseases won the Spanish Language Award for its [Dengue Vaccine](#) poster.
- The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion received an Award of Distinction for its [Beneficios de comer saludable](#) infographics.

Continuous Improvement

HHS carries out a wide array of training activities to ensure that our employees fully understand the importance of plain writing and how to do it effectively. Many agencies encourage the use of plain language for both internal and external communication. Such agencies also developed trainings and materials to educate stakeholders and the general public on plain writing.

From January 2022 through December 2022, please describe:

a. *The specific number of your employees completing plain writing training.*
In 2022, CIOs identified **435** employees who completed plain language training.

b. *The feedback you received from those who already completed the training.*
DCSS conducted 7 Plain Language & Clear Communication Index trainings in 2022. Post-course evaluations revealed that on a 5-point scale, average perceived knowledge and skill scores increased from **3.1** before the training to **4.7** after the training.

c. *The plain writing training programs you used.*

Basic Plain Language Skill & Clear Communication Index Training- virtual training provided on the Zoom platform. https://lms.learning.hhs.gov/Saba/Web/Main/goto/GuestCourseDetailURL?otId=cours 000000000504439&callerPage=/learning/offeringTemplateDetails.xml

We referred staff who could not make it to the live virtual trainings to a recording of a 3.5-hour Zoom session titled, Basic Plain Language Skills and Clear Communication Index Training.

d. *Examples of trainings and materials you developed to educate stakeholders and the general public on plain writing.*

DCSS's health literacy staff conducts trainings on the federal plain language guidelines and the CDC Clear Communication Index with health communication specialists, subject matter experts, and decision makers. We also share relevant articles about clear communication with members of our Health Literacy Council and conduct monthly webinars on topics related to clear communication. In addition, we published 48 health literacy updates in 2022 that we emailed to over 28,000 subscribers across the United States and globally. Staff also present at a select number of professional conferences.

From January 2022 through December 2022, we continued to use the following:

- o Plain Language – Communication your audience understands the first time PDF training document
- o Message Testing web page
- o Guidelines, Laws & Standards web page
- o Plain Language Materials & Resources web page

- In February 2022, DCSS's Health Literacy Lead was the keynote health literacy speaker at the Health and Physical Literacy Summit. She presented, in person, "Reimagining Health Literacy: Keeping our Focus and Moving Forward." This interactive presentation covered how health literacy definitions have changed, how you can build a health-literate organization, and how different sectors can work together to meet the health literacy needs of different audiences. She also shared health literacy success stories and what we can do to keep moving forward.
- In November 2022, OC's health literacy staff presented on clear communication tools and resources during the Project Firstline national partner communication team meeting. Project Firstline partners develop trainings in infection control for frontline healthcare workers so that the workers minimize the risk of spreading infections from patients to themselves and from themselves to patients and coworkers.

- The Office of Readiness and Response conducted Presentations Primer training for staff. This included plain language principles and presentation best practices so that authors could improve their use of plain language and presentation skills when discussing their work or research with external audiences.
- The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) communications team presents annually on CDC's Digital First guidelines, HHS Plain Writing requirements, and CDC's Clear Communication Index. NCCDPHP includes these requirements in all contract statements of work and emphasize plain writing standards for all contractors. They also host training workshops and webinars for grantees. Program staff ensure that communication specialists are well-trained and highly experienced in clear communication theory and practice, and that their expertise is shared with team members and funded partners on a regular basis.
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) included links to different CDC clear communication materials or resources in their monthly eNewsletter. The newsletter has approximately 50,000 recipients, most of whom are external to CDC. The NIOSH Office of Extramural Programs shared health literacy information with grantees via webinars and emails.
- The National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases developed user-centered, plain-language web and social media templates that make enteric (i.e., intestinal) disease outbreak information accessible and equitable.

e. *Ways in which you improved or focused your plain writing efforts.*
- From January through May 2022, DCSS used VisibleThread plain language assessment software to review at least 30 webpages per month (at least 3 per month for 10 CIOs) for use of plain language guidelines. When DCSS identified areas where the use of plain language could be improved, DCSS provided that feedback to the CIOs that managed those web pages. This resulted in 56 web pages being revised to better incorporate federal plain language guidelines. After May, DCSS provided a contract mechanism that expanded the use of VisibleThread to 35 users across 8 CIOs. This allowed these CIOs to conduct their own plain language reviews.
- In February 2022, CDC's Health Literacy Council issued guidance for each CIO and OD office to develop their own health literacy or plain language goal for the year to promote an aspect of equity, accessibility, diversity, and/or inclusion or to choose a goal from the CDC Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. Twelve out of 15 CIO or OD offices met or partially met their goal. *Partially met* means the CIO or OD office submitted more than one goal or submitted a multi-part goal and did not meet all goals or all parts of a multi-part goal. This goal-setting effort is continuing in 2023, with goals aligning with the CDC Moving Forward recommendation for the agency to communicate science and guidance in plain language.
- We continue to standardize the application of plain language guidelines and the Clear Communication Index via our trainings.
- We emphasize the need for ongoing and refresher training in plain language. We ask CIOs to identify employees in specific roles who would benefit from advanced

or refresher trainings.
We recognize staff and programs for effective plain language use. In addition to an agency plain language award, many CIOs offer their own plain language and clear communication awards. Finally, staff skills in plain language are recognized through the ClearMark competition.

- CIOs also report doing the following to improve agency plain writing efforts:
  - Editing high-profile web pages for plain language
  - Reviewing documents for plain language and providing feedback to authors inside and outside of eClearance.
  - Providing technical assistance for grantees including plain language training
  - Encouraging project leads and subject matter experts to work with communication staff to develop and review public-facing content for plain language concepts.

Equity

The President issued Executive Order (EO)13985 on *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government* on January 20, 2021.

The term "equity" provided in EO 13985 means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. EO 13985 further provides that the term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity."

Promoting equity is essential to the Department's mission of protecting the health of Americans and providing essential human services.

From January 2022 through December 2022, please describe:

- a. *How your agency used plain writing to promote equity in your agency's policies, programs, and activities.*
  - DCSS added a page on using inclusive images to CDC's Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication (HEGP). We promote use of all HEGP pages agency wide.

  - DCSS updated the Plain Language Materials & Resources web page of our health literacy website to add a section on plain language examples, 4 of which won ClearMark Awards in 2022. We updated the Culture and Language web page to include descriptions of and links to success stories in which culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging and other health literacy best practices contributed

to increased COVID-19 vaccine rates among the White Earth Nation in Minnesota and enhanced COVID-19 educational efforts in multiple countries.

- DCSS's Inclusive Communication and Training Team conducted 8 trainings and 30 presentations on HEGP, plain language, and/or accessible communication, reaching a total of 4,595 attendees; produced 6 ASL videos and 12 easy-to-read materials; provided 12 ASL video interpretations; and during 9 events, provided simultaneous/live ASL interpretations.

- DCSS staff remind customers and audiences that health literacy best practices advance health equity. When conducting trainings or leading meetings, they model accessible and inclusive introductions by describing what they look like so that people who are blind or have low vision can picture the speaker(s). They include their pronouns when introducing themselves so that members of the audience know that they're in a safe space and that DCSS values people of all gender identities. DCSS recognizes that a healing response to racism and wounds of the past requires honesty, empathy, and action, so they open many meetings with an Indigenous land and enslaved people's acknowledgment.

- OC and CDC's National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention hosted an event titled, "[Recognition, Remembrance, and Reflection: The Syphilis Study at Tuskegee and Macon County, AL](#)," to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the end of the United States Public Health Service Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male at Tuskegee and Macon County, Alabama, 1932 -1972. The event created a space for authentic, accurate storytelling and discussion about current and future opportunities for public health leaders at CDC and beyond to move from trust to trustworthiness. The program examined what happened, how and why it happened, lessons learned, the palpable effects still felt today, and CDC's ongoing role in addressing health equity. Participants included experts in the fields of public health, ethics, history, and journalism. In addition to our speakers, this hybrid event—available both virtually and in-person—featured moderated panel discussions.

- DCSS's health literacy lead participated in a Twitter chat titled, "[Addressing Health Literacy in Rural America](#)," hosted by the Rural Health Information Hub. DCSS also published 5 [Vital Signs](#) (reports that cover an important health threat and what can be done to address it), all of which include a section titled, "To Advance Health Equity." CDC's Health Literacy Council, which is led by DCSS, issued guidance encouraging all CIOs to tie their annual health literacy goals to an aspect of equity, diversity, inclusion, or accessibility or to choose a goal from the CDC/ATSDR Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. DCSS's Multilingual Translation Service completed 1,882 jobs, including 1,567 jobs for Spanish translations, 315 jobs for translations into other languages, 214 jobs for mpox, and 746 jobs for COVID-19.

- DCSS hosted a Communicators' Network session titled, "Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication." The presenters discussed how collaboration, strategy, and persistence are the critical elements to bring the Latino population to the forefront of CDC's media outreach efforts during a health crisis. They also covered the importance of conducting formative communication research with the intended

audiences and how data obtained through this formative work can be used to develop targeted, relevant, and effective resources.

- DCSS hosted a Communicators' Network session titled, "Latino Outreach in Times of Crisis: It is Part of Our Mission." The presenter discussed the background, development, and need for outreach to Latino populations, why this implementing this outreach is important, and what those who create and review communication products can do to help apply this outreach across their public health communication work. The presenter also answered questions from the audience.

- The Office of Readiness and Response (ORR)partnered with other CIOs, including the Office of Health Equity, on a public-facing #PrepYourHealth social media toolkit. The content of the toolkit, titled "Meet People Where They Are," considers the impacts of social determinants of health on personal health preparedness and on response to public health emergencies. ORR developed the content using plain language principles.

- The Health Equity Task Force within the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) developed the Health Equity Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Checklist to help advance health equity by ensuring that NOFOs promote interventions at the population-level and generate data that can address the broader structural factors affecting health.

- NCCDPHP supports using plain language to promote both equity and health equity through their Tobacco Use Frameworks project. Since 2018, CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) has supported a Cooperative Agreement with ChangeLab Solutions and FrameWorks Institute to increase understanding of the big-picture drivers of tobacco-related inequities to shift thinking and build support for evidence-based approaches to eliminating them. During these meetings, the parties discuss how they are incorporating these best practices into their work (i.e., updating web content to reflect the principles of the project). Additionally, the *Tips From Former Smokers® (Tips®) campaign* features a variety of ad participants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds such as Black, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander persons, other persons of color, the LGTBQ community, and persons with disabilities. Their messages also speak to tobacco-related issues among (but not limited to) populations disproportionately affected by inequities. The ads reach these populations of focus with information about accessing free resources to help them quit smoking. These resources are available to everyone, no matter where they live and no matter their race, ethnicity, or gender identity. NCCDPHP also holds regularly scheduled health equity meetings to ensure their work uses the most appropriate to frame key messages for different groups, including racial and ethnic populations. When NCCDPHP creates new materials, NCCDPHP tests the concept and the actual material with the intended audience to ensure the language and visuals are culturally appropriate. Senior staff engage in conversations with organizations that represent groups most affected by inequity so that staff are aware of key concerns in those communities.

- NCCDPHP's Division of Cancer Prevention launched a new Health Equity in Cancer website.

- NCCDPHP hosted the Young Professionals Network Symposium on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEIAB), a 2-day training specific to DEIAB work.

- The Alcohol Program in NCCDPHP incorporated elements to address health equity in its Notice of Funding Opportunity DP21-2105, Promoting Population Health through Capacity in Alcohol Epidemiology & the Prevention of Excessive Alcohol Use. The center also edited the [Alcohol website and fact sheets](#) to use more inclusive imagery and iconography.

- The Healthy Tribes Program uses plain language to promote health equity by:
  - Using the Tribal Practices for Wellness in Indian Country funding to reflect strategies and language identified by tribal leaders that would resonate with their communities
  - Providing funding support to recipients to develop public health communication materials tailored for their constituents
  - Developing culturally tailored webpages on the Division of Population Health's website
  - Using photos and digital stories to communicate program successes and accomplishments
  - Developing culturally tailored programs activities, partnerships, and communications
  - Educating other areas of CDC on cultural practices, policies, and communication
  - Designating 1 staff member as an unofficial plain language subject matter expert who reviews emails, guidance documents, and other written forms of communication

- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) health communicators and writer/editors have received training in health literacy and health equity. NIOSH hosted a brainstorming session on health equity products that the division can develop and talked about health equity planning for communication products during the Division of Safety Research's Health Communication Retreat 2022. NIOSH created a diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility (DEIA) program called Blueprint in Action that seeks to increase diversity and inclusion in their research programs and in divisional staffing. They have three committees that meet monthly to implement their DEIA plan and continually assess their progress in meeting the plan's goals.

- As part of the NIOSH's commitment to develop a national strategy for equitable PPE protections for all United States workers, the NIOSH Personal Protective Technology Core and Specialty Program hosted a two-day virtual workshop on November 8 and 9, 2022, to highlight ongoing activities that address issues pertinent to underserved PPE user groups and that are related to equitable PPE use, availability, accessibility, acceptability, or knowledge.

- The Office of Health Equity developed the [What Is Health Equity?](#) web page and the [Cultural Humility](#) training for CDC deployers.

- The National Center for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Public Health Infrastructure and Workforce hosted a virtual event titled "[Connecting the Dots for Inclusive Communication: Health Literacy, Health Equity, and Accessibility](#)," open to all CDC/ASTSDR staff. Dr. Betsy Mitchell, Director of the Division of Communication Science and Services (DCSS), Office of Communications, shared best practices, tools, and resources to advance organizational health literacy, health equity, and accessibility.

Transparency and Accessibility

On December 13, 2021, the President signed Executive Order 14058 on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government (attached). Sec. 7(f) asks agencies to "identify means by which their respective agencies can improve transparency and accessibility through their compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-274) and related requirements and guidance."

This directive seeks to improve the overall customer experience with the federal government by enhancing the transparency and accessibility of services and information. The Department will satisfy this directive by asking divisions to report on their assessments and actions to improve transparency and accessibility during this Exec Sec data call for contributions to the 2023 HHS Plain Writing Compliance Report.

From January 2022 through December 2022, please describe:

    a. How your agency used plain writing in your policies, programs, and activities to enhance transparency and accessibility of services and information that improved customer experience.

- DCSS hosted a Communicators' Network session titled, "Why Accessibility?" The presenters discussed how providing accessible digital communication on a variety of channels allows more people to get the information they need. The presenters demonstrated how accessibility, usability, and plain language overlap and identified who at CDC is responsible for accessibility. The presenters also answered questions from the audience.

- At all monthly Communicators' Network meetings, DCSS provides an American Sign Language interpreter and captioning so that people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or listening from a noisy environment can follow the presentations and discussions.

- DCSS's Inclusive Communication and Training Team Lead presented to the General Services Administration (GSA) government-wide IT Accessibility Program Manager's "Be the Change in Accessibility" meeting on December 6, 2022, hosted by GSA's Government-wide IT Accessibility Program, in coordination with the [Chief Information Officers Council](#) Accessibility Community of Practice's Education Sub-Committee. Her

presentation, "CDC's Accessible Communication Activities: We Are ALL Learning to Be Accessible Superheroes," covered CDC's current work and planning around accessible communication that is plain, clear, and inclusive. As follow-up from the meeting, she shared some questions raised on disabilities research with the Associate Director for Communication in the Division of Human Development and Disability in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities for discussion at an upcoming meeting about collecting disability data.

Contacts

The Act requires each department to designate one or more senior officials to oversee implementation of plain writing requirements. A list of such HHS agency officials can be found on the HHS website here: https://www.hhs.gov/open/plain-writing/

Please confirm the senior official in your Operating or Staff Division responsible for plain writing.
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Note: We will include this information on the Department's plain writing webpage.