



2015 Plain Writing Compliance Report

Office of the Executive Secretary

August 2015



Homeland
Security

Message from the Senior Official for Plain Writing

I am pleased to share with you the Department of Homeland Security's 2015 Compliance Report. This report summarizes many of the plain writing initiatives and activities in which the Department has engaged this year.

The Department of Homeland Security has a vital mission: to secure the nation from the many threats we face. With over 225,000 employees, the Department works closely with private sector and non-governmental stakeholders, Congress, and other government agencies every day. Most importantly, we interact directly with the general public on many topics—border security, airport security, disaster response and relief, maritime safety and security, immigration, counterterrorism—and so much more. In all these areas, the information or requirements we write about may be complex, so it is critical that our communications be clear and understandable.

Secretary Johnson is a proponent of plain writing and has directed senior leaders throughout the Department to ensure communications—with the public, with stakeholders, and within the Department—are written and presented clearly. With the Secretary's support, we created an Executive Correspondence Handbook with guidelines for preparing written materials, including an entire chapter dedicated to plain writing. In addition, plain writing representatives from every Component meet every month to promote the use of plain writing and share tips and best practices.

In this report you will find additional examples of training and initiatives focused on plain writing. We are striving to expand the use of plain writing in all our documents, websites and other forms of communication. We have made impressive strides and continue to strengthen our focus on clarity.

Our plain writing web page may be found at <http://www.dhs.gov/plain-writing-dhs>, which includes a link to send feedback and recommendations.



Dr. Kim O'Connor
Executive Secretary

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Department of Homeland Security

2015 Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

On October 13, 2010, President Obama signed the *Plain Writing Act of 2010* (the Act). The purpose of the Act is “to improve the effectiveness and accountability of federal agencies to the public by promoting clear Government communication that the public can understand and use.” This law changed how the Federal Government communicates with the public, and all government agencies are expected to adhere to the guidance as outlined in the Act.

Our Commitment

The Department of Homeland Security (Department) has a vast mission and a dedicated responsibility to secure the safety of the American people. In light of our responsibility to national priorities such as emergency preparedness, cyber security, immigration, travel, and international trade, it is paramount that the Department present information effectively and efficiently. Many aspects of the Department’s programs and operations have a direct effect on our stakeholders and the general public, and it is vital that we communicate with them clearly and reliably.

Our Accomplishments

The Department’s leadership is committed to the use of plain language and has expressed an expansive commitment to implementing plain writing principles in all written communications. In 2015, we increased the focus on plain writing and significantly bolstered our initiative. In addition to remaining in compliance with the tenets of the Executive Order, we have expanded the plain writing program Department-wide by holding monthly meetings with plain writing representatives from all Components within the Department. These regular meetings offer the Components an open forum to communicate:

- The importance of using plain language;
- Best practices and helpful tips;
- The leadership’s interest in and support of plain writing;
- Training opportunities (within and outside of the Department); and
- The Department’s expanding program and the Components’ responsibility to comply with and support the initiative.

We also have required that each Component initiate its own plain writing program and prepare a plain writing implementation plan. As this requirement is in support of our Department-wide efforts and not mandated by the Act, the Components have the option of posting the plan online. Components were also required to submit a brief summary of recent accomplishments, which we have consolidated and included as an appendix to this report.

Oversight

Designated Senior Official for Plain Writing:
Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary

Departmental Plain Writing Coordinator:
Associate Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary

The Executive Secretary within the Office of the Secretary of Homeland Security is the designated senior official for plain writing. Along with an identified plain writing coordinator, the Executive Secretary oversees all activities associated with the Department-wide plain writing initiative, including the preparation of the annual compliance report.

Implementation Plan

The Department's Plain Writing Implementation Plan is available on the Department's public-facing plain writing website (<http://www.dhs.gov/dhs-plan-implement-plain-writing-act-2010-requirements-summary>). A small group of agency representatives prepared this plan and submitted it to Department leadership as a proposal for Department-wide action. This plan details the responsibilities of the plain writing officials and points of contact, as well as our training plan and additional resources.

Compliance Report

The completion and publication of this report satisfies the requirement for an annual compliance report.

Mechanism for Public Feedback

The Department's plain writing officials created an email address that allows the public to communicate ideas or concerns with regard to the Department's communications and outreach efforts (DHSPainWriting@hq.dhs.gov). The Office of the Executive Secretary will immediately review and address inquiries submitted through this email.

Website Access

The Department has encouraged its Components to use plain writing for all materials. In support of this, the Department created a webpage devoted to plain writing (<http://www.dhs.gov/plain-writing-dhs>). This webpage lists links to the Department's Plain Writing Implementation Plan, the Department's plain writing leadership, and the avenue in which the general public can provide their feedback on plain writing at the Department. On the Department's internal webpage, the Office of the Executive Secretary posts plain writing tips, training links, and other plain writing tools.

The Department's public webpage also links to a site devoted to "Open Government," outlining the Department's commitment to transparency and clear communication.

Training Tools

Components within the Department have held plain writing training for staff in Headquarters and, in the case of operational Components, in the field. This training is ongoing. Components generally organize their own training and often offer it to all employees.

Using the resources available through the Plain Language Action and Information Network's (PLAIN) website (plainlanguage.gov), the Department has promoted the benefits of plain writing to employees. Several Department representatives attended PLAIN's "Train the Trainer Bootcamp" and are available to train small groups upon request. Employees are encouraged to take advantage of free online training (e.g., the Federal Aviation Administration's Basic Plain Writing course).

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services also posted several short videos on YouTube using humor and imagination to educate employees and the general public about plain writing.

In addition to training, the Department promotes plain writing through the use of colorful posters throughout the offices and verbal reminders in regular meetings with representatives from all Components. The Office of the Executive Secretary has also dedicated a section to plain writing in its Executive Correspondence Handbook. This Handbook is used Department-wide and ensures that everyone preparing materials does so in a consistent, clearly formatted, and plainly written manner.

Moving Forward

In 2016, the Department will further its efforts to promote plain writing. The Office of the Executive Secretary has encouraged every Component to ensure that they are using plain writing in the preparation of all materials. We have also emphasized the importance of using plain writing in correspondence that is directed to Members of Congress, high-ranking officials, and citizens alike. We will continue to review and update public-facing documents and prepare materials appropriately, matching the tone and style to the intended audience.

As the standard-bearer for the Department's plain writing efforts, the Office of the Executive Secretary will continue to encourage and support efforts to establish robust and effective plain writing programs throughout the Department.

We will pursue further plain writing training opportunities and share them with all employees. In addition, we will require each Component to identify at least one representative to attend PLAIN's "Train the Trainer Bootcamp" to ensure that plain writing training is readily available to every Component.

We will continue to foster a cooperative working relationship with outside organizations such as PLAIN and the Center for Plain Language to ensure the Department's plain writing success and to achieve outstanding marks on the Federal Plain Language Report Card for years to come.

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Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

Component Mission

The Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman assists individuals and employers with problems with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) by providing individual case assistance and making recommendations to improve the administration of immigration benefits and services by USCIS.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:

Acting Deputy Director, Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

Plain Writing Coordinator:

Public Affairs Specialist, Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

The Acting Deputy Director, Public Affairs Specialist, and other Ombudsman's staff review all public-facing written materials to ensure they adhere to the standards of plain writing. This is especially important as many of those who seek assistance from the Ombudsman have limited English proficiency.

Accomplishments

- Initiated a draft plain writing checklist for all public-facing documents;
- Drafted a plain writing implementation plan;
- Participated in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings; and
- Incorporated plain writing guidelines in new employee orientation.

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Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Component Mission

The Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the Department's mission to secure the Nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
CRCL Executive Officer

Plain Writing Coordinator:
CRCL Communications Managers

These individuals lead the CRCL plain writing initiative by educating staff on the plain writing requirements, offering training opportunities, facilitating regular evaluation and testing of documents and materials, and tracking compliance with the implementation plan.

Embracing the fundamentals of plain writing has helped CRCL to better communicate with stakeholders. When developing written materials, we consider the audience first. We strive to make our materials easily understood by the reader. CRCL has developed a one-page style guide, providing our staff with resources for writing well.

CRCL regularly interfaces with the public, so it is imperative that our materials are clear, concise, and useful. We strive to meet these criteria with our written and online documents and materials, which include fact sheets, brochures, and training modules.

Accomplishments

- Participates in the Department's plain writing initiative, which includes regular attendance at monthly Department-wide meetings and fulfilling directives and required deliverables set forth by leadership;
- Developed a draft implementation plan which outlined our plain writing goals and steps to further integrate plain writing into current processes; and
- Initiated regular plain language reviews on documents and materials, for both internal and external audiences.

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Component Mission

To safeguard America's borders thereby protecting the public from dangerous people and materials while enhancing the Nation's global economic competitiveness by enabling legitimate trade and travel.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
Director, Office of the Executive Secretariat

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Office of the Executive Secretariat will identify additional points of contact from the communication groups in each CBP program office, as available, and will update this plan accordingly.

Plain writing is writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and consistent with other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. The CBP Office of the Executive Secretariat will lead the implementation of plain language across CBP and will promote the guidelines and best practices established by the Office of Management and Budget and DHS.

Accomplishments

- Compiled CBP's plain writing implementation plan; and
- Participated in Department-wide plain writing meetings.

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Domestic Nuclear Detection Office

Component Mission

To prevent nuclear terrorism by continuously improving capabilities to deter, detect, respond to, and attribute attacks, in coordination with domestic and international partners.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:

Domestic Nuclear Detection Office's (DNDO) Executive Secretary

Materials requiring DNDO leadership review are routed through the Executive Secretary to ensure they adhere to the Department's guidelines and are prepared using plain language. DNDO works with a variety of entities to include academia, federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial stakeholders. Engaging with this broad diversity of stakeholders requires extra attention on plain writing to present information effectively.

Accomplishments

- Drafted and initiated DNDO's plain writing implementation plan in June 2015; and
- Participates in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/ Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Introduction/Briefing	Assistant Directors and Deputy Directors, in person.
Plain Language Introduction/Briefing	Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), in person.

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Office of the Executive Secretary

Component Mission

The Office of the Executive Secretary's (ESEC) mission is to provide outstanding support, analysis, communication services, and general assistance to the DHS Leadership. Given the sensitivity of homeland security issues, it is critical for the Department to articulate its policies and operations to target audiences effectively and efficiently. The audiences for materials ESEC produces include the White House, Members of Congress, intergovernmental officials, state and local officials, the private sector, foreign officials, and the American public.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
DHS Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary

ESEC is the DHS lead for the plain writing initiative. The results of the 2014 Federal Plain Language Report Card were widely heralded throughout the Department and generated renewed support for plain writing at DHS. The Secretary of Homeland Security is a dedicated proponent of plain writing and often references this important achievement, noting his personal interest in ensuring that DHS is communicating clearly, directly and effectively with the public and all stakeholders.

Accomplishments

- Led the revitalization for the DHS plain writing initiative in 2014;
- Arranges monthly meetings with DHS's 24 Component plain writing points of contact. Each meeting features a brief training session and encourages Component representation to share best practices, training opportunities, and helpful tips;
- Released DHS's first Executive Correspondence Handbook, featuring an entire section dedicated to the importance of plain writing, helpful hints, and plain writing resources;
- Communicated the importance of using plain language to DHS Component Executive Secretariats and additional Component staff through personalized, in-person briefings.
- Compiled DHS's 2015 Plain Writing Compliance Report;
- Maintained a collaborative relationship with the Center for Plain Language and contributed to productive conversations with regard to 2015 Federal Plain Language Report Card grading criteria;
- Attended and participated in meetings hosted by the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN); and
- Briefed the Council of Federal Executive Secretariats at monthly meetings regarding plain writing in general and ensured the Center for Plain Language's leadership was invited to brief the Council at its February meeting.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Writing 101	In person training provided to members of ESEC.
Writing Challenges and 3 Tips for Concision	Training provided via telecom to plain writing points of contact during regular meeting.
Creating a Plain Writing Program: Setting Goals and Highlighting Results	Training provided in person to plain writing points of contact during regular meeting.

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Federal Emergency Management Agency

Component Mission

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a Nation we work together to build, sustain and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
FEMA’s Director, Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Drafted an implementation plan that serves as an initial road map to compliance;
- Identified coordinators from major program offices to assist with and advise on implementation of the Act. The group first met on June 22, 2015 and plans to meet at least monthly;
- Highlighted the use of plain language through a National Incident Management System (NIMS) Alert: “NIMS and the Use of Plain Language;”
- Plain language is also emphasized in a DHS document for first responders, “Plain Language Guide: Making the Transition from Ten Codes to Plain Language” (DHS SAFECOM, Office of Emergency Communications, and Office of Interoperability and Compatibility brochure) which is available on the FEMA website;
- FEMA’s Office of the Chief Administrative Officer provides information on plain language on the intranet site. This site links to federal guidelines, plainlanguage.gov, and the President’s January 21, 2009 memorandum on Transparency and Open Government;
- FEMA’s Disaster Assistance Improvement Program uses plain language guidelines to create style and content standards as a part of the effort to focus DisasterAssistance.gov to the needs of disaster survivors; and
- Updated the directive guiding the development and implementation of FEMA policies, management directives, and doctrine, to include plain language.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Workshop February 24, 2015	On-site and Virtual Training Center open to all FEMA program offices and regions.
Business Writing March 18-19, 2015	DHS-funded on-site class in Chicago, Illinois The course objectives included plain writing principles.

<p>High-Octane Writing: Online course. Online Business Writing Courses/FEMA Continual Learning Program</p>	<p>FEMA has partnered with the George Mason University's Office of Continuing Professional Education (MASON-OCPE) to provide a customized online business writing course for employees in FEMA's Continual Learning program. Plain writing principles are incorporated into the course and seminars.</p>
<p>Professional Business Writing. Classroom/On-site Business Writing Seminars</p>	<p>Beginning February 2015, MASON-OCPE also became FEMA's on-site training partner for business writing seminars through our Leadership Development program. Plain writing is incorporated into the course and seminars.</p>
<p>Plain Language Overview March 24, 2015</p>	<p>Condensed on-site overview presented to Individual Community and Preparedness Division staff.</p>
<p>Literacy Training to complement Plain Language Training April 2015</p>	<p>FEMA employees, in person.</p>
<p>Communicating with Reporters May 21, 2015</p>	<p>Region II External Affairs Division provided on-site training to all Region II personnel on how to speak with and write to reporters with an emphasis on how to be factual, clear, explicit, and free of technical terms or jargon.</p>
<p>Writing Workshop June 17-18, 2015</p>	<p>On-site workshop sponsored by National Preparedness Directorate encouraging use of plain language and improving documents.</p>

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Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers

Component Mission

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) train those who protect the Nation.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
FLETC Protocol and Communication Office

The FLETC Protocol and Communication Office provides outstanding support, analysis, communication services, and general assistance to FLETC's Executive Leadership. Given the sensitivity of homeland security issues, it is critical for FLETC to articulate its policies and positions to target audiences effectively and efficiently. FLETC's audiences include staff, students, partner organizations, and the private sector.

Accomplishments

- Participated in meetings hosted by the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN);
- Participates in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings;
- Held and participated in FLETC plain writing meetings; and
- Compiled FLETC's plain writing implementation plan.

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Office of the General Counsel

Component Mission

The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) has final authority and responsibility for legal policy determinations within the Department and its components.

Oversight

Senior Official:
OGC Chief of Staff

Primary Point of Contact:
OGC Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Hosted a Legal Writing Workshop, open to all staff in OGC headquarters and Component legal offices;
- Developed repository of written work product to provide employees examples of well-written work product;
- Hosted DHS-wide practice group events for regulatory personnel within the Department (including attorneys, economists, and analysts) to discuss and share best practices related to the development of agency regulatory actions; and
- Participate in monthly meetings devoted to plain language.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Legal Writing Workshop	OGC Headquarters staff trained in person at four hour session.

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Office of Health Affairs

Component Mission

At the Office of Health Affairs (OHA), we strongly believe that our people and programs create a healthier, more secure, and resilient America, delivering innovative health solutions for the workforce and the Nation. OHA's mission is to advise, promote, integrate, and enable a safe and secure workforce and Nation in pursuit of national health security.

Oversight

Senior Official:

Director, Public Affairs and Policy Coordination Branch (PAPC)

Primary Point of Contact:

Deputy Director, PAPC

Accomplishments

- Communicated training opportunities available through the Department or other Components to staff through daily e-mail notifications;
- Conducted a plain language review on all communications intended for a public audience. This process is formalized as part of the internal official document clearance process;
- Participates in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings;
- Developed new, easy-to-understand display materials for use at external events and conferences. The updated materials include a trifold board with images and short descriptions that clearly communicate OHA's key priorities and structure; and
- Revised the OHA fact sheet template to focus on clear, short descriptions of program activities, important facts, and relevant images in this briefer, clearer format.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Component Mission

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) primary mission is to promote homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration.

This mission is executed through the enforcement of more than 400 federal statutes and focuses on smart immigration enforcement, preventing terrorism and combating the illegal movement of people and goods.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
Director, Office of the Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Attended monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings;
- The Office of the Executive Secretariat revised its style guide based on the DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook. The revised style guide also includes guidance on plain writing; and
- Posted information on plain language and the plain language initiative to the ICE intranet site with a link to www.plainlanguage.gov.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Responding to Congressional Questions for the Record (QFR) Refresher Training	In preparation for “QFR season,” on March 20, 2015, OES conducted in person refresher training for all ICE program offices responsible for responding to Congressional QFRs.
DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook Briefing	OES staff and ICE correspondence and tasking unit POCs attended in person briefing on the implementation and use of the DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook.
Plain Language Training (Given by USCIS)	In person plain language training for ICE Office of Public Affairs held a session for all of its headquarters and field employees. The training was presented by USCIS.

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Office of the Inspector General

Component Mission

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducts and supervises independent audits, investigations, and inspections of the programs and operations of DHS and recommends ways for DHS to carry out its responsibilities in the most effective, efficient, and economical manner possible. We also seek to deter, identify, and address fraud, abuse, mismanagement, and waste of taxpayer funds invested in Homeland Security.

Oversight

Senior Official:

Assistant Inspector General, Office of Integrity and Quality Oversight

Primary Point of Contact:

Director, Reports Quality Assurance, Office of Integrity and Quality Oversight

Accomplishments

- Updated the OIG’s Editorial Style Guide includes a section on plain writing with an accompanying link to the plain writing guidelines;
- Participated in plain writing meetings, and teleconferences; and
- Implemented OIG’s plain writing implementation plan.

Training

Training Offered	Who Will Be Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity	OIG Staff, in person.
Grammar Review 2: Beyond the Basics	OIG Staff, in person.
Friendly Feedback: Giving Effective Writing Critique to Others	OIG Staff, in person.

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Office of Intelligence and Analysis

Component Mission

The Office of Intelligence and Analysis' (I&A) mission is to equip the Homeland Security Enterprise with the timely intelligence and information it needs to keep the homeland safe, secure, and resilient. I&A's customers and partners include Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leadership and Components; the Intelligence Community; and our state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
Branch Chief, Executive Secretariat, I&A

Accomplishments

- Attended and participated in training hosted by the Center for Plain Language;
- Identified I&A plain language training requirements and provided necessary training and/or Departmental and interagency training course information to I&A personnel;
- Participates in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings;
- Reviewed documents to ensure compliance with plain language guidelines; and
- Communicated plain writing requirements to I&A personnel.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/ Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Writing (Monthly)	I&A Staff, in person and online (via HSIN-Intel).

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Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Component Mission

The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) promotes an integrated national approach to homeland security by coordinating and advancing federal interaction with state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments. IGA is responsible for opening the homeland security dialogue with executive-level partners at the SLTT levels, along with the national associations that represent them.

Oversight

Senior Official:
IGA Deputy Assistant Secretary

Primary Point of Contact:
IGA Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Participated in monthly plain writing meetings hosted by the DHS Executive Secretary; and
- Drafted IGA’s plain writing implementation plan to guide efforts to implement the principles of plain writing in all written materials.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Writing 101	Web Content Managers, in person.
Plain Writing 101	Executive Secretariat points of contact, in person.

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Office of Legislative Affairs

Component Mission

The Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) enhances the ability of the Department to prevent, protect against, and respond to threats and hazards to the Nation, as well as to ensure safe and secure borders, by providing timely information about Homeland Security and national security issues to Members of Congress, the White House, and Executive Branch, and to other federal agencies and governmental entities.

OLA serves as primary liaison to Members of Congress and their staff. The office responds to inquiries from Congress; notifies Congress about Department initiatives, policies, and programs; and keeps other governmental bodies informed concerning Homeland Security measures that affect their operations and Department actions in jointly undertaken security endeavors.

Oversight

Senior Official:
OLA Chief of Staff

Primary Point of Contact:
OLA Special Assistant

Accomplishments

- Drafted OLA’s plain writing implementation plan;
- Communicated plain writing requirement to staff via posted notices and information memo;
- Training opportunities communicated to staff; and
- Coordinator has participated in all DHS plain writing meetings.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Overview	OLA Special Assistant, in person.

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Management Directorate

Component Mission

To deliver quality administrative support services and provide leadership and oversight for all department management and operations functions.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
Executive Director of the Management Directorate’s Executive Secretariat
(ExecSec)

Accomplishments

- Participated in Department-wide plain language meetings;
- Participated in plain language conference calls;
- Reviewed documents to ensure compliance with plain language guidelines;
- Added plain language into the Management Directorate’s ExecSec’s performance work plan for each team member;
- Provided feedback and worked with the Office of Public Affairs to ensure the Management Directorate’s owned external webpages met departmental plain language guidance;
- Made significant suggestions on rewriting with the Office of Public Affairs on industry resources on DHS.gov, to help make information easily consumable for external public;
- Posted plain language guidance and helpful information to internal team site and communicated to employees through the internal newsletter; and
- Converted human resources jargon in job opportunity announcements into plain language to help applicants understand the hiring process.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Class	Line of business chiefs of staff, in person.
Plain Language Overview	The Management Directorate’s ExecSec provided an overview and handouts to all line of business deputy chiefs of staff, ExecSec teams and subject matter experts, in person.
Plain Language Writing Workshop for MGMT Communicators	Communications team attended along with several lines of business and other members of the Management Directorate’s leadership, in person.

Plain Language Class	The Management Directorate's ExecSec team members, in person.
Translating the Technical in Plain Language	The Management Directorate's ExecSec team members, webinar.
Writing Challenges and 3 Tips for Concision	Training provided via telecom to plain writing points, teleconference.
Plain Language 2: Revising and Clarity	The Management Directorate's ExecSec team members, in person.

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National Protection and Programs Directorate

Component Mission

The National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) leads the national effort to protect and enhance the resilience of the Nation's physical and cyber infrastructure.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:

National Protection and Programs Directorate Executive Secretariat

Effective communication of Directorate policies, procedures, programs and initiatives remains a vital element of NPPD's continuing commitment to constantly improve the security and resilience of the Nation's critical infrastructure in the face of increasingly complex and sophisticated cyber and physical attacks from those who seek to harm the United States and its citizens. The plain writing program plan will serve as another tool to facilitate this goal.

Accomplishments

- Participated in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings and conference calls;
- Communicates plain writing tips through Directorate newsletter; and
- Drafted the Directorate's plain writing initiative implementation plan.

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Office of Operations Coordination

Component Mission

The Office of Operations Coordination’s (OPS) mission is to provide operations coordination, information sharing, situational awareness, the common operating picture, and Department continuity, enabling execution of the Secretary of Homeland Security’s responsibilities across the homeland security enterprise. It is impossible to execute this mission without clear, concise, and consistent communication internally and to our stakeholders.

Oversight

Senior Official:
OPS Chief of Staff

Primary Point of Contact:
OPS Advisor

Accomplishments

- Developed OPS’ plain writing implementation plan;
- Created an “upcoming training” section in the OPS bi-weekly newsletter, the OPServer, that highlights available free training, including writing training;
- Instituted a “Tips for Plain Writing” segment in the newsletter;
- Circulated writing training opportunities through multiple media;
- Implemented new guidance in, and ensured compliance with, the Executive Correspondence Handbook created by the Office of the Executive Secretary (ESEC);
- Collaborated with ESEC to arrange training on the correspondence handbook; and
- Attended all monthly ESEC-sponsored Component plain writing meetings.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/ Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Business Writing	OPS staff, in person.
In Plain English: Government Writing and Plain Language Made Easy	OPS staff, in person.
S&T Plain Language – “What’s Plain Language”	OPS staff, in person.
Executive Summaries/Talking Points	OPS staff, in person.

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Office of Policy

Component Mission

The Office of Policy (PLCY) is the coordination center for the Department, responsible for developing DHS-wide policies, programs, and planning to promote and ensure quality, consistency, and integration across all homeland security missions. We provide thought leadership and analysis to the Secretary and other Departmental leaders to facilitate decision-making.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
DHS Lexicographer

Accomplishments

- Completed and submitted the Office of Policy’s plain writing implementation plan;
- Communicated the importance of using plain language in Component communications and materials to PLCY staff;
- Attended and participated in monthly DHS plain writing meetings; and
- Notifies all PLCY staff of all plain writing training opportunities as soon as available.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Charts, Graphs...and Words: Designing and Explaining Your Visuals	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Intro and Overview	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel Webinar.
Executive Summaries and Abstracts	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Friendly Feedback: Giving Effective Writing Critique to Others	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Grammar 1: A Whirlwind Review	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Grammar 2: Beyond the Basics	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Multi-Author Documents: Revising, Editing, and Unifying	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.

Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Plain Language: Intro--What Is Plain Language?	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Plain Language: Structure and Org	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Plain Language: Word Choice--Using or Abusing?	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
So What? Writing for Impact	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
SOPs and Policies: Writing and Revising	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Storytelling: Giving Your Facts a Heart	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Talking Points, Read Aheads, and Writing for the Boss	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Technical Writing 2: Definition, Description, Process and Procedure	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.
Translating the Technical: Making Specialized Info Readable for Everyone Else	Training session made available to all PLCY personnel In Person and Webinar.

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Privacy Office

Component Mission

The mission of the Privacy Office is to protect all individuals by embedding and enforcing privacy protections and transparency in all DHS activities.

Oversight

Senior Official:
Deputy Chief Privacy Officer

Primary Point of Contact:
Associate Director of Communications

Accomplishments

- Created a more user-friendly Privacy Impact Assessment template;
- Enhanced the Privacy Office webpage on DHS.gov;
- Participates in monthly Department-wide plain writing meetings; and
- Updated the Privacy Office Style Guide to comport with the latest revisions to the Congressional Report Style Guide.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Writing Best Practices	Privacy Office staff, 3-hour in person training.

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Office of Public Affairs

Component Mission

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) is responsible for oversight and management of all external and internal communications for the Department of Homeland Security. It comprises ten functional areas: Finance and Administration; Incident Communications; Intelligence and Analysis Communications; Internal Communications; Multimedia Liaison; Office of the Press Secretary; Speechwriting; Strategic Communications; Technical Planning and Operations; and Web Communications.

Oversight

Senior Official:
Director of Web Operations and Communications

Primary Point of Contact:
Web Content Manager

Accomplishments

- Communicated the plain writing requirements to employees;
- Instructed employees to take advantage of plain writing training offered online and in person (from sources internal and external to DHS);
- Compiled a plain writing implementation plan;
- Put specific focus on the DHS.gov public website. OPA is currently reviewing each web page on DHS.gov and applying plain language practices as necessary; and
- Created an in-depth roll out plan for updating the DHS.gov site and implementing plain language throughout.

Training

Training Received	Who Was Trained/ Mode (in person, online, etc.)
DHS Web Operations and Communications Support:	Web Operations and Communications Team members, detailees, and interns. Online.
Drupal Content Management System Training and Tips	Web Operations and Communications Team members, detailees, and interns. Online.
NIH Plain Language Training	Web Operations and Communications Team members, detailees, and interns. Online.
Plain Language.gov – Planning a Plain Language Web Site	Web Operations and Communications Team members, detailees, and interns. Online.

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Science and Technology Directorate

Component Mission

The Science and Technology Directorate's (S&T) mission is to deliver effective and innovative insight, methods, and solutions for the critical needs of the Homeland Security Enterprise.

Oversight

Senior Official:
Acting Human Capital Officer

Primary Point of Contact:
Senior Writing Consultant

S&T has made plain writing a high priority since 2011 when the internal training program began offering regular writing workshops. At that time we also made available individual writing coaching on documents ranging from reports to performance appraisals to emails. This program has eventually developed into over 35 different workshop topics, with the option for employees to earn a writing certificate.

Accomplishments

- S&T has been hosting writing workshops to DHS employees since 2011;
- S&T promoted plain language in public speaking skills with a new initiative called "Fed Talks." We offered a concentrated series of presentation skills workshops and had one of our trainers available for individual coaching;
- Updated the structure of our website's project site to make the information more accessible and easier to read;
- The Administrative Services Division created a more customer-friendly and accessible home page and "portal" for employees to better access support services;
- S&T drafted and submitted a detailed implementation plan for the coming year; and
- Hosted a workshop on effective writing of Executive Core Qualifications the employee group Women Executives at DHS (WE@DHS).

Training

The table below lists communication training (writing and speaking) provided by DHS S&T in 2015. Classes were interactive workshops 90-120 minutes long.

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Preparing the 5-Minute Brief: Focus and Organization	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Preparing the 5-Minute Brief: Focus and Organization	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Delivering a 5-Minute Brief: Visuals, Voice, Pace, Presence	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Intro and Overview	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Plain Language 1: Intro - What's Plain Language?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Technical Writing 1: Translating for Audience – Best Practices for Making Your Work Accessible to Non-Specialists	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Technical Writing 2: Definitions and Process Descriptions	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
“So What?” – Writing for Impact	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Federal Resumes – Drafting, Updating, Revising	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Grammar 1: A Whirlwind Review	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Before You Hit SEND: Effective Email	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person & Webinar.
So What? - Writing for Impact	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Plain Language 1: Intro--What's Plain Language?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.

Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Intro and Overview	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Plain Language 1: Intro--What's Plain Language?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Writing and Refining	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Executive Summaries and Talking Points for the Boss	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Grammar 2: Beyond the Basics	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Technical Writing: Charts, Graphs, and Words: Designing and Explaining Your Visuals	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
PowerPoint: Friend or Foe?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Academic Writing versus Workplace Writing	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Multi-author Documents: Revising, Editing, and Unifying	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Technical Writing: Charts, Graphs, and Words: Designing and Explaining Your Visuals	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
SOPs and Policies: Writing and Revising	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Responding to Congress	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Technical Writing: Charts, Graphs, and Words: Designing and Explaining Your Visuals	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.

PowerPoint: Friend or Foe?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Plain Language: Word Choice--Using or Abusing?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Preparing a 5-Minute Brief: Focus and Organization	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Preparing a 5-Minute Brief: Focus and Organization	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Federal Resumes: Drafting, Updating, Revising	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Preparing a 5-Minute Brief: Focus and Organization	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Preparing a 5-Minute Brief: Focus and Organization	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Intro and Overview	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Plain Language Intro - What Is Plain Language?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Storytelling: Giving Your Facts a Heart	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Writing for Work vs. Writing for School	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Executive Summaries and Talking Points for the Boss	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS

	Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Grammar 1: A Whirlwind Review	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Technical Writing: Translating for Audience – Best Practices for Making Your Work Accessible to Non-Specialists	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
SOPs and Policies: Writing and Revising	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Storytelling: Giving Your Facts a Heart	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Multi-Author Documents: Revising, Editing, and Unifying	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Grammar 2: Beyond the Basics	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.

Plain Language: Word Choice--Using or Abusing?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Technical Writing 2: Definition, Description, Process and Procedure	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Federal Resumes: Writing and Revising	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Intro and Overview	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
So What? Writing for Impact	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Translating the Technical: Making Specialized Info Readable for Everyone Else	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Grammar 1: A Whirlwind Review	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Charts, Graphs...and Words: Designing and Explaining Your Visuals	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard.	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Plain Language: Intro--What Is Plain Language?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Executive Summaries and Abstracts	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Talking Points, Read Aheads, and Writing for the Boss	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS

	Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Plain Language: Coherence, Organization, and Document Design.	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
SOPs and Policies	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Grammar Review 2: Beyond the Basics	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. In person and Webinar.
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard.	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
SOPs and Policies	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
PowerPoint: Friend or Foe?	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Presentations	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Executive Summaries and Abstracts	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.
Friendly Feedback: Giving Effective Writing Critique to Others.	Personnel trained include S&T federal employees, contractors, and other DHS Component employees. Webinar.

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Transportation Security Administration

Component Mission

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) protects the Nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce.

Oversight

Senior Official:
Director, Executive Secretariat

Primary Point of Contact:
Supervisory Program Manager, Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Received two Awards of Distinction from the Center for Plain Language. These were for the TSA website and the TSA mobile application;
- In mid-2015, TSA finished drafting an aggressive plain writing implementation plan.
- Revised the widely used Notification of Baggage Inspection, as well as the TSA Style Guide and TSA Correspondence Manual;
- Participates on the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN), as well as all the DHS plain writing meetings;
- We are looking into the usefulness of various software packages to help TSA personnel write in plain language;
- In early 2015, our plain language POC served as a judge for the Center for Plain Language's ClearMark Awards in the nonprofit category; and
- In June 2015, our plain language POC was elected to the Board of Directors for the Center for Plain Language.

Training

While we have offered plain language training in the past, we have not had training yet this year. However, for the remainder of this year and the beginning of next year, we are arranging external training through PLAIN for TSA's Office of the Executive Secretariat, Office of Chief Counsel, Office of Strategic Communications, and Public Affairs.

After this training is complete, we will identify 4 to 6 TSA staff members to be in-house plain language trainers. We will arrange train-the-trainer instruction for them through PLAIN.

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Component Mission

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will secure America’s promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
Chief, Plain Language and Content Division, Office of Communications

Accomplishments

- Received award of distinction at the 2015 ClearMark Awards in the best revised document category;
- Expanded the USCIS plain language program by increasing its committee members and training new instructors;
- Held the 2015 USCIS Spring Cleaning Challenge, a competition in which employees submitted documents they revised. A panel composed of four plain language specialists judged the submissions and awarded two winners;
- Created a one-page handout that provides plain language techniques;
- Published a new plain writing tip once or twice a month in USCIS’ email newsletter;
- Reviewed thousands of pages of web content including responses to the new virtual assistant (“Ask Emma”) rolling out this fall;
- Participated in monthly PLAIN meetings; and
- Began preparing for the seventh annual USCIS Excellence in Plain Language Awards, a celebration and awards program for employees who write documents that help customers find, understand, and use the information.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Training	DHS employees, in person.
	USCIS field office staff, online.
	USCIS field office staff, in person.
	DHS Headquarters employees, in person.
	ICE employees, in person.
	FEMA employees, in person.

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United States Coast Guard

Component Mission

The United States Coast Guard safeguards our Nation’s maritime interests in the heartland, in the ports, at sea, and around the globe. We protect the maritime economy and the environment, we defend our maritime borders, and we save those in peril. By law, the Coast Guard has 11 missions: ports, waterways, and coastal security, drug interdiction, aids to navigation, search and rescue, living marine resources, marine safety, defense readiness, migrant interdiction, marine environmental protection, ice operations, and other law enforcement.

Oversight

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact:
Director, Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Participated in plain writing meetings;
- Disseminated resources available online; and
- Prepared and provided plain writing training in person and online.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Language Basic Course	USCG staff, online.
Plain Language Basic Class for Coast Guard	USCG staff, in person.

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United States Secret Service

Component Mission

The United States Secret Service (USSS) uses plain language in correspondence with the general public and our federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement partners. Plain language is also used on signs and instructions for the general public, and in internal policy documents.

Oversight

Senior Official:

Chief Knowledge Officer/Chief Learning Officer, James J. Rowley Training Center (RTC)

Primary Point of Contact:

Lead Management and Program, Management & Organization Division (MNO)

Accomplishments

- Examined the USSS plain writing guidelines and correspondence directives to determine necessary revisions;
- Developed USSS’s plain writing implementation plan. The plan includes specific action items to be completed;
- Revised the “Operation Safe Kids” form as an example of how the USSS uses plain language to communicate with the public; and
- Revised and sent the official message “Plain Writing Act Regulations in the Secret Service” to all USSS employees. The official message explains the law, identifies the types of documents covered, describes training requirements, and provides USSS plain writing points of contact.

Training

Training Offered	Who Was Trained/Mode (in person, online, etc.)
Plain Writing Act	Newly hired Instructional Systems Specialists (ISS) completed the online plain writing training course.