

Department of Homeland Security Plain Writing Compliance Report 2016-2017

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 was signed into law on October 13, 2010. 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 and all government agencies are expected to adhere to the guidance as outlined in the Plain Writing Act of 2010.

Our Commitment

The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) responsibility for national priorities such as emergency preparedness, cyber security, immigration, travel, and international trade underscore the importance of accurate, efficient, and effective information. 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

DHS leadership is committed to the use of plain writing in all written communications. In the beginning of 2017, DHS welcomed new leadership and our plain writing program was energized by the designation of a new Senior Official for Plain Writing and Plain Writing Coordinator.

During this time of transition, the DHS Office of the Executive Secretary has worked to ensure that the momentum we have gained through the plain writing initiative is maintained by:

- Communicating the importance of this initiative to incoming leadership;
- Ensuring DHS Components maintain their individual programs and contribute to the DHS Compliance Report (see appendix);
- Updating the internal DHS website to include the most up to date plain writing information;
- Updating the Department’s public plain writing webpage;
- Monitoring the Department’s public plain writing email address (DHSPlainWriting@hq.dhs.gov) and preparing timely responses when appropriate; and
- Emphasizing the importance and benefits of plain writing both internally and externally.

Additionally, we hold regular meetings with the Department’s Executive Secretaries and plain writing representatives to discuss plain writing initiatives. These forums offer an open and collaborative environment to communicate:

- The importance of using plain writing;
- DHS leadership’s interest in and support of plain writing;
- The Department’s expanding program;
- Best practices, specific challenges, and helpful tips; and
- Training opportunities (within and outside of the Department).

Oversight

Designated Senior Official for Plain Writing:

Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary

Departmental Plain Writing Coordinator:

Special Projects Coordinator, Office of the Executive Secretary

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 required compliance report.

Implementation Plan

The DHS Plain Writing Implementation Plan is available on the Department's public-facing plain writing website. A small group of agency representatives prepared this plan and submitted it to Department leadership as a proposal for DHS-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 compliance report requirement.

Mechanism for Public Feedback

The DHS plain writing webpage provides an email address that allows the public to communicate ideas or concerns with regard to DHS's plain writing efforts (DHSPlainWriting@hq.dhs.gov). Communication submitted to this address is immediately reviewed and considered.

Website Access

DHS has encouraged its Components to use plain writing for all prepared materials. In support of this, DHS created a webpage devoted to plain writing (www.dhs.gov/plain-writing-dhs). This webpage includes a link to the DHS Plain Writing Implementation Plan, the DHS plain writing leadership, and the avenue in which the general public can provide their feedback on plain writing at DHS. Internally, the Office of the Executive Secretary posts plain writing tips, training opportunities, and other plain writing tools on its internal webpage for DHS-wide use.

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

Training Tools

DHS employees are encouraged to take advantage of free online training (e.g., the Federal Aviation Administration's Basic Plain Writing course). Additionally, several groups within DHS offer plain writing training to DHS employees and can tailor the sessions to a particular audience, ranging from concise webinar overviews to longer personalized and more intensive sessions. While not every position within DHS is writing intensive, every employee is encouraged to have a basic understanding of plain language and its benefits. DHS Components generally organize their own training with guidance from DHS Headquarters, and often offer it to all DHS employees.

We also utilize the resources available through the Plain Language Action and Information Network's (PLAIN) website (plainlanguage.gov). Several DHS representatives attended PLAIN's "Train the Trainer Bootcamp" and are available to train small groups upon request.

Additionally, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' plain writing program is lauded throughout the Federal Government and provides exceptional classroom training to DHS and other executive agencies, which can be customized for each audience.

In addition to training, DHS promotes plain writing through the use of colorful posters throughout the offices and verbal reminders in regular meetings with representatives from all DHS Components. The Office of the Executive Secretary has also dedicated a section to plain writing in its Executive Correspondence Handbook.

Moving Forward

As the lead for the Department's plain writing efforts, the Office of the Executive Secretary will continue to further its efforts to promote plain writing within the Department through:

- **Communication.**
Updates to our internal plain writing webpage will offer additional plain writing resources to all DHS employees.
- **Employee education.**
As new employees join DHS, we educate them on the importance of the plain writing initiative and ensure they are aware of training opportunities. Additionally, we have encouraged all DHS Components to ensure that they are using plain writing in the preparation of their on-boarding materials.
- **Collaboration.**
In addition to furthering efforts within DHS, we will continue to build partnerships with plain writing organizations such as PLAIN and the Center for Plain Language.

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DOMESTIC NUCLEAR DETECTION OFFICE

Component Mission

The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office's (DNDO) mission is to prevent nuclear terrorism by continuously improving capabilities to deter, detect, respond to, and attribute attacks, in coordination with domestic and international partners. As a support office, DNDO helps to advance the Nation's nuclear detection and forensics capabilities.

Plain Writing Leadership

The DNDO Plain Language Coordinator leads DNDO's plain writing programs. The Coordinator is responsible for:

- Ensuring Front Office personnel are knowledgeable about plain writing policies;
- Instituting processes so that all forms of public communication undergo plain writing review before they are formally published;
- Making information about plain writing and resources available and accessible to staff; and
- Identifying training opportunities to advance knowledge and proficiency in plain writing.

Accomplishments

- Designated the DNDO Plain Language Coordinator;
- Developed the DNDO Plain Writing Implementation Plan (Dated June 2015);
- Participated in and continue to support quarterly in-person DHS Plain Writing meetings led by DHS ESEC; and
- Identified plain writing resources for staff to enhance knowledge in this area.

Training

Training Offered: Plain Language

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person training offered to DNDO employees.

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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. ICE executes its mission through enforcement of more than 400 Federal statutes and focuses on smart immigration enforcement, preventing terrorism, and combating the illegal movement of people and goods.

Plain Writing Leadership

The ICE Executive Secretary is the designated senior official for plain writing. As the agency's executive correspondence office, the Executive Secretariat leadership is committed to promoting plain writing throughout ICE to ensure that it uses clear communication that its audiences can understand.

Accomplishments

- The ICE Metrics Evaluation and Analysis (MEA) Unit verifies that ICE data reported to the public is both clear and consistent with previously-reported data. The Unit developed an MEA standard operating procedure (SOP) that provides an overview of MEA procedures and highlights how analysts should verify the use of clear language to describe ICE data and statistics.
- The ICE Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES) updated its style guide. The style guide includes overviews of the types of written materials that OES produces, grammar and formatting rules, general syntax, and other helpful hints. The updated style guide stresses the importance of plain writing.
- MEA created an MEA Data Dictionary that associates definitions, pre-cleared plain writing, and example documents with commonly-reported ICE data and statistics. This tool enables offices to capture and organize the best-worded language to improve the use of clear and plain writing used in ICE communications.
- OES created an Executive Secretariat SOP that includes an overview for all OES functions, including correspondence, taskings, questions for the record, and mail intake. The tool also delivers instruction on language usage for routing correspondence and guides users to cleared templates written in plain language.
- ICE created an outline for an ICE document repository. The outline shares the plan for a SharePoint-based enterprise-wide document repository. The repository will be able to store approved style guides, templates, resources, and previously-cleared documents. Those documents will showcase previously-cleared language and provide plain writing examples for employees to follow when producing written materials.

(ICE continued)

Training

Training Offered: ICE Exec Sec Style Guide training provided an overview of basic grammar rules and how ICE staff should use them to develop clear written work products. It provided examples for how to implement different style and grammar rules for each Exec Sec work product, including tasking requests for information, correspondence, and questions for the record (QFR). Plain writing usage was the highlight of the training.

Who Was Trained/Mode: The training was in person and included Exec Sec staff and brown bag lunches with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor and other correspondence units in ICE.

Training offered: ICE Exec Sec QFR step-by-step training manual.

Who Was Trained/Mode: This step-by-step in person training went over the new training manual and provided detailed instructions for routing QFRs as well as instructions for editing and compiling these documents, with an emphasis on plain writing and what to look for.

Training offered: Basic Grammar, Writing, and Language/Clear and Concise Email and Business Writing

Who Was Trained/Mode: 12 Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) employees participated in the webinar.

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

FEMA's Director of the Executive Secretariat is the component senior-level official responsible for FEMA's implementation of this initiative and serves as the component's plain-writing representative, in coordination with FEMA's program area and Regional office coordinators.

Accomplishments

- FEMA began emphasizing plain writing in 2009 through a National Incident Management System (NIMS) Alert: NIMS and Use of Plain Language. Additionally, FEMA updated the NIMS doctrine in 2016, and emphasized the use of plain writing as the standard for communications during incidents.
- In 2016, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) created a plain writing subcommittee under their Web Advisory Committee and periodically hosts free webinars on the importance of plain language in communications.
- FEMA's Office of Disability and Integration Coordination reviewed 29 programmatic documents to ensure they can be understood by those with disabilities or access and functional needs, such as cognitive or intellectual disabilities.
- FEMA updated its Directive 112-12 guiding the development and implementation of FEMA policies, management directives and doctrine, which requires the use of plain writing in the drafting of these products.
- FEMA's Continuity of Operations Division of National Continuity Programs edited its website content to meet plain writing guidelines (<https://www.fema.gov/continuity-operations>). As updates are made to documents, the appropriate plain writing guidelines will be applied.
- FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Division of National Continuity Programs worked with FEMA External Affairs over the last 12 months to complete a refresh of the IPAWS website in December 2015, and also of IPAWS transition materials in May 2016. This combined effort entailed revising 27 webpages and 34 other documents or materials related to IPAWS resources and initiatives to ensure compliance with the Plain Writing Act.

(FEMA continued)

Training

Training Offered: DHS S&T Workshops

Who Was Trained/Mode Online: 37 FEMA employees took advantage of S&T's online writing workshops.

Training Offered: Business Writing

Who Was Trained/Mode: 2 FEMA National Exercise Division employees attended a DHS OCFO-funded course.

Training Offered: Plain Writing Course

Who Was Trained/Mode: 50 employees trained during a disaster deployment in Region VII (DR-4238/Missouri).

Training Offered: Plain Language Training (USCIS slides)

Who Was Trained/Mode: 67 Region VIII employees trained in 2015; 20 Region VI employees trained in 2016.

Training Offered: Writing Effective Policies and Procedures

Who Was Trained/Mode: 23 employees from FEMA's Office of the Chief Financial Officer trained at the FEMA Finance Center in Winchester, VA, emphasizing the use of plain writing for policies and standard operating procedures.

Training Offered: USDA/NIH/FAA/other online plain writing training

Who Was Trained/Mode: 17 FEMA employees participated in online plain writing training/webinars offered by other departments or agencies.

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FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING CENTER

Component Mission

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) provides career-long training to law enforcement professionals to help them fulfill their responsibilities safely and proficiently. The Protocol and Communications Office (PCO) supports FLETC's mission by providing outstanding support, analysis, communication services, and general assistance to FLETC's Executive Leadership. Given the sensitivity of homeland security issues, it is critical that FLETC articulate its policies and positions to target audiences effectively and efficiently. FLETC's audiences include staff, students, federal partner organizations, state and local governments, law enforcement associations, academia, and the private sector.

Plain Writing Leadership

FLETC PCO is the Designated Office for Plain Writing. As such, PCO is FLETC's lead for the plain writing initiative. FLETC Director Connie Patrick is a proponent of plain writing, and is committed to ensuring FLETC communicates effectively with its stakeholders.

Accomplishments

- Established a FLETC Plain Writing Plan in 2015, which was shared with the Department of Homeland Security.

Training

FLETC has taken advantage of training opportunities held by the Department.

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

Effective communication of NPPD's policies, procedures, programs and initiatives remains a vital element of NPPD's commitment to improve the security and resilience of the nation's critical infrastructure. The Plain Writing Program Plan serves as another tool to facilitate this goal.

Accomplishments

- Published Plain Writing Tips and Articles in Directorate Newsletter.
- Participated in Writing Workshops hosted by the Science and Technology Directorate.

Training

NPPD staff attended departmental training opportunities in collaboration with headquarters and individual components.

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OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

Component Mission

The Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman), established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, assists individuals and employers with problems they are having with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The Ombudsman provides individual case assistance, and makes recommendations to improve the administration of immigration benefits and services by USCIS.

Plain Writing Leadership

The Deputy Director will serve as the Senior Designated Official. The Special Advisor for Public Engagement will serve as the Plain Language Coordinator and is responsible for the development and implementation of the Plain Writing initiative.

The Deputy Director, Special Advisor for Public Engagement, and other Ombudsman staff review all public-facing written materials to make sure they adhere to the standards of plain writing. This is especially important given that many seeking assistance from the Ombudsman have limited English proficiency.

Accomplishments

- Developed plain writing checklist for all public-facing documents.
- Developed Ombudsman Implementation Plan.
- Participated in four plain writing workshops.
- Incorporated plain writing guidelines in new employee orientation.
- Distributed monthly announcements on plain writing workshops on internal SharePoint site.

Training

The Ombudsman staff utilized departmental training opportunities in collaboration with Headquarters and individual components.

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OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Component Mission

The 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. CRCL integrates civil rights and civil liberties into all of the Department's activities by:

- Promoting respect for civil rights and civil liberties in policy creation and implementation by advising Department leadership and personnel, and state and local partners.
- Communicating with individuals and communities whose civil rights and civil liberties may be affected by Department activities, informing them about policies and avenues of redress, and promoting appropriate attention within the Department to their experiences and concerns.
- Investigating and resolving civil rights and civil liberties complaints filed by the public regarding Department policies or activities, or actions taken by Department personnel.
- Leading the Department's equal employment opportunity programs and promoting workforce diversity and merit system principles.

Plain Writing Leadership

CRCL's Executive Officer and Communications Managers serve as Plain Writing Officials and Coordinators, respectively. Both positions reside in CRCL's Front Office, which manages and facilitates business operations and administrative functions for the office.

Accomplishments

CRCL has accomplished the following items related to the Plain Writing Initiative:

- Communicated requirements of the Plain Writing Act to all CRCL staff.
- Provided Plain Writing trainings to CRCL staff.
- Shared writing workshop training opportunities with staff and encouraged participation.
- Collaborated with the Department's Plain Writing Coordinator to review materials that may be submitted to the Center for Plain Language for the annual evaluation.
- Participated in Department-wide plain writing meetings and events.
- Submitted CRCL's 2016 Plain Writing Implementation Plan Progress Report to the DHS Plain Writing Coordinator.
- Developed and implemented CRCL's Style Guide, which is a complement to the DHS Correspondence Manual.

(CRCL continued)

Training

Training Offered: Plain Writing 101

Who Was Trained/Mode: In-person training provided to members of CRCL at all-staff meeting (approximately 90 individuals were trained).

Training Offered: Academic vs. Workplace Writing: Similarities, Differences, and Some Advice for Succeeding in Both.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In-person training provided to CRCL staff.

Training Offered: CRCL Style Guide

Who Was Trained/Mode: In-person training provided to members of CRCL at all-staff meeting (approximately 90 individuals were trained).

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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 Executive Leadership. Given the sensitivity of homeland security issues, it is critical for the Department to articulate its policies and positions to target audiences effectively and efficiently. ESEC's audiences include the White House, Members of Congress, intergovernmental officials, state and local officials, the private sector, foreign officials, and the American public.

Plain Writing Leadership

The Executive Secretary, as the Department of Homeland Security's Designated Senior Official for Plain Writing, is the plain writing initiative's lead within the Department of Homeland Security. The Secretary of Homeland Security strongly supports the DHS unity of effort and plain writing plays an integral role in ensuring clear and consistent Departmental communications.

Accomplishments

- Organized quarterly meetings with DHS's 24 Component plain writing points of contact.
- Developed, but have not yet released, the second edition of the DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook which continues to feature an entire section dedicated to the importance of plain writing, helpful hints, and plain writing resources.
- Compiled DHS's 2016-2017 plain writing compliance report, including reports from every Component.
- Worked with Component plain writing representatives to identify the top forms by usage and burden hours to prepare for the Center for Plain Language Review set for the 2016 grading cycle.
- Maintained a collaborative relationship with the Center for Plain Language (CPL) and contributed to productive conversations about plain writing within the Department and the Federal government.
- Relied heavily on our USCIS and S&T members of the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN).
- Reviewed and participated in CPL's webinar regarding the 2016 Federal Plain Language Report Card grading criteria.

(ESEC continued)

Training

Training Offered: Plain Writing 101.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person training provided to members of the Federal Executive Secretariat's Council.

Training Offered: Utilizing PLAIN in the production of Departmental Forms.

Who Was Trained/Mode: Training provided in-person to PLAIN POC's during a quarterly meeting.

Members were provided with the top forms in their Component using the CPL guidance of usage/burden hours from OMB reporting to select the top forms.

Training Offered: Setting Goals and Highlighting Results.

Who Was Trained/Mode: Training provided in person to plain writing points of contact during regular meeting.

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

OGC Chief of Staff

OGC Executive Secretary

Accomplishments

- OGC sent all staff the Plain Language resource link and encouraged staff to review the Federal Plain Language Guidelines. OGC provides this link to incoming staff as well.
- In April 2016, OGC hosted an Advanced Writing Seminar for OGC staff.
- In August 2016, the Deputy Associate General Counsel for Regulatory Affairs conducted Regulatory Training for two of the Department's largest regulatory Components (USCG and USCIS). The Training will focus on drafting well-written regulatory documents.

Training

Training Offered: Advanced Writing Seminar.

Who Was Trained/Mode: OGC Headquarters staff trained in person.

Training Offered: Regulation Writing Training.

Who Was Trained/Mode: Relevant USCG and USCIS personnel.

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

The ESEC of Office of Health Affairs is designated as the OHA plain writing official.
The OHA Plain Writing Official:

- Communicates requirements of the Plain Writing Act of 2010 to employees.
- Represents OHA at Department-wide meetings.
- Collaborates with the Department's plain writing coordinator to identify materials that may be submitted to the Center for Plain Language for the annual evaluation.
- Communicates plain writing training opportunities to employees.
- Provides compliance reports to the Department's senior designated official for plain writing.
- Ensures communications generated by OHA and intended for public audiences receive a plain writing review prior to publication.

Accomplishments

- OHA has communicated training opportunities available through the Department or other offices/Components to staff through e-mail notifications. OHA shares these training opportunities via a daily email to employees.
- OHA has conducted a plain writing review on all communications intended for a public audience. This process is formalized as part of the internal official document clearance process.
- OHA 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.
- OHA has revised its fact sheet template to focus on clear, short descriptions of program activities, useful facts, and relevant images. As of July 2015, OHA has updated and developed seven fact sheets.

Training

OHA encourages staff to participate in training provided by other DHS components and offices.

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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Component Mission

The Office of 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.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Designated Official

Assistant Inspector General, Office of Integrity and Quality Oversight

Primary Point of Contact

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

DHS OIG is committed to the principles of the Plain Writing Act of 2010, which requires all Federal agencies to communicate with their taxpayer-stakeholders in a straightforward manner. We strive to make all of our reports and other public information as clear and concise as possible. We have a responsibility to make our work as transparent as possible by adhering to the guidelines of the Plain Writing Act.

Accomplishments

- Participated in DHS plain writing meetings, and conference calls;
- Developed the OIG Plain Writing Compliance Report;
- Reviewed and approved all OIG draft/final reports, and executive correspondence to ensure compliance with plain writing guidelines; and
- Communicated training opportunities to staff through OIG Training.

Training

Training Offered:

Plain Language: Intro--What is Plain Language?

Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity.

Plain Language 3: Organization, Coherence, and Document Design.

Who Was Trained/Mode: OIG staff, in person.

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OFFICE OF INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYSIS

Component Mission

The mission of the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) is to equip the homeland security enterprise with the timely intelligence and information it needs to keep the homeland safe, secure and resilient.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Official
I&A Chief of Staff

Primary Point of Contact
Plain Writing Coordinator

The Department of Homeland Security relies on consistent, effective communication to carry out its vital mission. Timely, accurate, and transparent communication is one of the Secretary's highest priorities. I&A is committed to ensuring we convey a clear, direct message to each audience we address by following Plain Writing Guidelines.

Accomplishments

- Updated I&A's public-facing websites on DHS.gov to comply with plain writing guidelines.
- Published plain writing-compliant recruiting material.
- Updated I&A 101 presentation to comply with Plain Writing guidelines.

Training

Training offered: S&T Plain Writing Training.
Who Was Trained/Mode: I&A ESEC employee, (online).

Training offered: The Plain Writing Act.
Who Was Trained/Mode: I&A Strategic Communications (online).

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Designated Official

OLA Chief of Staff

Coordinator

OLA Special Assistant

Accomplishments

- Communicated plain writing requirement to staff via posted notices and memoranda.
- Training information provided to staff throughout the year.
- Staff received training beyond overview training this year.
- Coordinator has attended and participated in all DHS plain writing meetings.
- Plain writing requirements included in SOP.

Training

Training Received: Multi-Author Document: Revising, Editing and Unifying.

Mode: Webinar.

Training Received: 5-Minute Briefs.

Mode: Webinar.

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Designated Official
Chief of Staff
Plain Writing Coordinator
Plain Writing Point of Contact

As OPS regularly communicates – particularly in writing – with stakeholders across the homeland security enterprise, we are committed to the goal of the Plain Writing Act of 2010 which aims “to improve the effectiveness and accountability of Federal agencies to the public by promoting clear Government communication that the public can understand and use.”

Accomplishments

- Developed a 2016 Plain Writing Implementation plan for OPS.
- 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).
- Attended all monthly ESEC-sponsored Component plain writing meetings.

(OPS continued)

Training

Training Offered: How to write Effective Policies and Procedures.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person training provided to seven employees (HQ Centralized Training Program).

Training Offered: Writing for Results.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person training provided to two employees (HQ Centralized Training Program).

Training Offered: In Plain English: Government Writing and Plain Language Made Easy.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person training provided to four employees (HQ Centralized Training Program).

Training Offered: Editing Skills for Administrative Professionals.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person training provided to one employee.

Training Offered: Career Optimizing (CO2) Writing Training.

Who Was Trained/Mode: In person and webinar: multiple OPS employees trained.

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OFFICE OF PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Component Mission

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Partnership & Engagement (OPE) coordinates the Department of Homeland Security's outreach efforts with key stakeholders nationwide on a variety of topics that span the entire DHS mission space. Specifically, OPE serves as the first line of communication with state, local, tribal and territorial officials, members of the private sector, state and local law enforcement officials, members of the academic community, and multiple DHS Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) related committees; thus, underscoring the importance of relaying issues of public safety and national security as effectively and clearly as possible.

Plain Writing Leadership

OPE's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, in coordination with the OPE Executive Secretariat points of contact, implements this initiative and serves as OPE's plain writing senior representative.

Accomplishments

- Provided training to the new OPE staff on the Executive Correspondence Handbook, a guidance document which features an entire section dedicated to the importance of plain writing and helpful hints.
- Participated in multiple plain writing in-person meeting and conference calls, hosted by DHS ESEC, to discuss plain writing resources.
- Prepared an OPE Plain Writing Implementation Plan which guides OPE's efforts to use plain writing in all of its communications with stakeholders.

Training

Plain Language training offered on several occasions to OPE Executive Secretariat staff.

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OFFICE OF POLICY

Component Mission

The Office of Policy's (PLCY) mission is to develop and implement strategy, policy, and planning that facilitates senior leadership decision-making and enables Components to more effectively and efficiently achieve objectives.

Plain Writing Leadership

PLCY's plain writing senior representative is the Director of the DHS Lexicon Program.

Accomplishments

- Re-designed International Engagement briefing memo template to more effectively and efficiently communicate complicated, nuanced policy issues for Senior Leadership.
- As one of the offices tasked most frequently to draft briefing materials for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, committed to streamlining content to approximately 3 pages to ensure DHS positions, background, and context are clearly identified.

Training

Training Offered: PLCY Writing Course.

Who Was Trained/Mode: PLCY's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary taught a multi-week, in-person writing class open to the entire PLCY staff. Each class averaged approximately 35 people.

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OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Component Mission

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) coordinates the public affairs activities of all of the Department's components and offices, and serves as the Federal government's lead public information office during a national emergency or disaster.

Plain Writing Leadership

OPA's plain-writing senior representative is the Director of Web Operations and Communications.

Accomplishments

- In FY16, the DHS Office of Public Affairs (OPA) implemented the plain writing plan for DHS.gov that was first authored in FY15. The Web Communications Team in OPA led the implementation effort through:
 - training the Web Communications Team and all DHS.gov CMS users on plain writing practices;
 - applying plain writing practices to the web content on DHS.gov; and
 - proactively reviewing and editing all content on DHS.gov.
- In total, over 9,000 published pieces of content were reviewed and remediated (if necessary).
- DHS.gov was last redesigned in 2012 in an effort to institute a Department-wide, web-centric culture that reinforced the "One DHS" approach. The website creates and maintains a consistent DHS brand representation and a uniform look and feel throughout. It also provides better usability and overall service to the public and improves ease of access to key materials for the public and stakeholders. In addition, the website achieves greater cost efficiency in operations through the use of a common content management system (CMS) and a shared hosting platform and security posture.
- In FY16, in an effort to improve the customer satisfaction and overall customer experience of DHS.gov, the Web Communications Team led an effort across the website to simplify the content on DHS.gov, optimize content for search engines and simplify navigating the website. All three of these major goals are byproducts of one large overarching goal – apply the principles of the Plain Writing Act of 2010 to DHS.gov content.
- At the end of the effort, over 9,000 published pieces of content on DHS.gov were reviewed, including:
 - 3,043 news items (press releases, speeches, fact sheets, etc.);
 - 1,812 "normal" content pages and 221 landing pages; and
 - 70 high-level topic pages.

In addition to a number of more technical checks, each page on DHS.gov was specifically reviewed for the following plain writing criteria (and fixed if necessary):

(OPA continued)

- **Page Introductions**

- Does the page have a clear, concise introductory paragraph? Does the intro paragraph explain the “who, what when and/or where” of the page?
- Does the page NOT start with an “About Us” paragraph (unless an organizationally-focused page)?
- Have you verified that no top heading appears above the introductory paragraph?

- **Page Format**

- Is the content easy to skim?
- Is the content clear, concise and to the point?
- Does the page make good use of headings?
- Does the page make good use of bullets?
- Is the page content in a logical order?

- **Page Content**

- Does the content follow the DHS Style Guide?
- Does the page limit redundancy?
- Does the page avoid overly technical language or jargon?
- Does the page avoid overuse of long titles or abbreviations?

- **New Plain Writing Support Page**

- To help support the implementation of the DHS.gov plain writing plan, the Web Communications team created a new plain writing support page on the DHS internal website (DHS Connect). The page highlights plain writing resources throughout DHS and also presents the DHS.gov Plain writing plan in a location accessible to all DHS employees.

- **Site Improve Website Management Tool**

- In November 2015, we began working with FEMA to pilot a new website management tool. The tool, called Site Improve, continuously scans DHS.gov from the public perspective, looking for misspellings, broken links, grammatical errors, and Section 508 accessibility errors. To date, we have used the tool to fix over 1,350 broken links and over 4,330 misspellings on the site.

Training

OPA encourages staff to participate in training provided by other DHS components and offices.

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OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT

Component Mission

The Office of the Under Secretary for Management delivers quality administrative support services and provides leadership and oversight to all Department management and operations functions.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact

Director, Management Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Participated in plain writing meetings.
- Participated in plain writing-related trainings.
- Reviewed documents to ensure compliance with DHS plain writing guidelines.
- Monitored team members compliance with and understanding of plain writing as a part of performance work plans.
- Revised MGMT ExecSec Standard Operating Procedures for clarity and plain writing.

Training

Training Offered: Business Writing

Who Was Trained/Mode: MGMT Exec Sec team members

Training Offered Plain Language Review

Who Was Trained/Mode: MGMT Exec Sec

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PRIVACY OFFICE

Component Mission

The DHS Privacy Office (PRIV) works to protect the privacy of all individuals and to ensure compliance with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements for the Department. With expertise in privacy laws, both domestic and international, we inform privacy policy development both within the Department and in collaboration with the rest of the federal government. We evaluate Department programs, systems, and initiatives for potential privacy impacts, and provide mitigation strategies to reduce the privacy impact. And we advise senior leadership to ensure that privacy protections are implemented throughout the Department.

PRIV is dedicated to ensuring that the Department's privacy policies and compliance documentation, as well as communication with members of the public seeking information through FOIA and *Privacy Act* processes, are readily understandable and accessible to a wide range of audiences.

DHS relies on consistent, effective communication to carry out its vital mission. This is especially important to PRIV because being able to communicate with the public in a clear and consistent manner is critical to providing accurate information about how information is being handled at DHS, consistent with law and policy.

Plain Writing Leadership

Plain Writing Official

Associate Director for Communications

Accomplishments

- PRIV's public-facing documents go through a rigorous, multi-person editing and review process.
 - Our most common public-facing document is the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), a decision-making tool used to identify and mitigate privacy risks at the beginning of and throughout the development life cycle of a program or system. We are in the process of streamlining the PIA to make it easier to read and use, including the ability to search for relevant information.
- Further enhanced our website by adding more succinct page introductions, eliminating jargon, and making pages easier to skim for content.
- Provided all new PRIV staff with the DHS Privacy Office Style Guide for use in preparing all internal and external documents.

Training

Plain Writing 101 - In person training provided to all staff by USCIS training experts.

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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.

Plain Writing Leadership

S&T Plain Writing Official

Senior Writing Consultant

S&T has made plain writing a high priority since 2011 when the internal training program (CO2) 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, including the option for employees to earn a writing certificate.

Accomplishments

- Our writing workshops continue to reach beyond S&T to most DHS components.
- In April 2016, S&T held its first annual Plain Language Awards. We solicited nominations of any type of document and received 32 entries. We then created 6 categories of awards based on common purposes and formal elements. We gave awards for each of the 6 categories and a Best Overall Plain Language award. We plan to continue the awards program in the spring of 2017.
- S&T's Financial Services Division applied plain writing principles to an internal customer service site called "PR First Stop." The use of plain writing on the site helps users from across the Directorate find their way through the complicated process of executing funds through procurement requests.
- In July 2016, S&T supported the DHS Mentoring program with a half-day workshop combining plain writing principles and a review of common problem areas in grammar.

Training

The table below lists communication training (writing and speaking) provided by DHS S&T. Classes are interactive workshops 90-120 minutes long. Although not all workshops foreground "plain writing" in the title, all aim to help employees incorporate plain writing principles into their various forms of writing. Personnel trained include S&T federal employees and contractors and employees from across DHS, including HQ directorates (e.g., MGMT, PLCY, NOC, CRCL), FEMA, USCIS, CBP, TSA, and ICE.

Training Offered (In person and Webinar)

"So What?" Writing for Impact

5-Minute Briefs and Elevator Speeches: Preparation and Delivery

5-Minute Briefs: Focus, Structure, and Style

Before You Hit SEND: Effective Email at DHS

Before You Hit SEND: Effective Email, Memos, and Letters

Before You Hit SEND: Writing Effective Email
Courageous Conversations
Courageous Conversations: Giving Constructive Feedback Even When It's Hard
ECQ Drafting and Revising
ECQ Essays: Intro and Overview
Effective PowerPoint Slides
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Drafting and Revising
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Intro and Overview
Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) Essays: Introduction and Overview
Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ): Drafting and Revising
Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ): Intro and Overview
Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) and the 5-Page Résumé
Executive Résumés and ECQs
Executive Summaries
Executive Summaries and Writing for the Boss
Factsheets and One-Pagers
Factsheets: Your Project and the Public
Federal Résumés
Federal Résumés: Drafting, Updating, Revising
Friendly Feedback: Giving Constructive Comments on Others' Writing
Friendly Feedback: Giving Effective Writing Critique to Others
Grammar 1: A Whirlwind Review
Grammar 2: Beyond the Basics
Grammar Review 2: Beyond the Basics
Microsoft Word: 5 Intermediate Tools
MS Word Intermediate
Multi-Author Documents: Revising, Editing, and Unifying
Notetaking You Can Really Use
Performance Appraisal Writing
Performance Plan and Goal Writing
Performance Plan Revision
Plain Language 1: Intro – What's Plain Language?
Plain Language 2: Revising for Clarity
Plain Language 2: Clarity, Cohesion, Concision
Plain Language 2: Revising and Editing
Plain Language 3: Organization, Coherence, and Document Design
Plain Language 3: Word Choice
Plain Language 4: Word Choice - Using or Abusing?
Plain Language: Organization, Coherence, and Document Design
Policy Writing
Policy Writing Principles
PowerPoint: Friend or Foe?
Proofreading Strategies and Tips
Proofreading, Editing & Multi-Author Documents
Read-Aheads, Briefing Memos, and Talking Points
Read-Aheads, Talking Points, and Writing for the Boss
Responding to Congress
SOPs and Policies: Writing and Revising

Storytelling: Giving Your Facts a Heart

Technical Writing 1: Translating the Technical--Best Practices for Making Specialized Info Clear to Others

Technical Writing 2: Definitions and Process Descriptions

Technical Writing: Charts, Graphs, and Words--Choosing and Explaining Your Visuals

Technical Writing: Charts, Graphs... and Words

Technical Writing: Definitions and Process Descriptions

Technical Writing: Translating the Technical

Tips for Time Management

Translating the Technical: Best Practices for Explaining Your Work to Non-Specialists

Translating the Technical: Making Specialized Info Readable

Writing for Impact: Connecting Readers to the "So What?"

Writing for Work vs. Writing for School

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TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Component Mission

The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) mission is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce. Given the sensitivity of transportation security issues, it is critical for TSA to articulate its policies and positions to target audiences effectively and efficiently. The TSA Executive Secretariat's audiences include the White House, Members of Congress, intergovernmental officials, state and local officials, the private sector, foreign officials, and the American public.

Plain Writing Leadership

Designated Senior Official

Director of TSA's Executive Secretariat Plain Writing Program.

Plain Writing Coordinator

Representative from TSA Executive Secretariat

Accomplishments

- Rewrote the material on TSA's website and TSA's mobile app in plain language. This effort was central to the Department of Homeland Security's "A" score from the Center for Plain Language for 2014.
- Rewrote TSA's correspondence manual and style guide in plain language.
- Rewrote TSA's correspondence templates in plain language.
- TSA is rewriting the email templates for the TSA Contact Center in plain language. These represent the largest number of written documents that TSA sends to the public.
- Added a section about plain writing to the TSA correspondence manual. This section directs users to write controlled correspondence in plain language and directs them to resources to help them do it.
- TSA's primary POC is a board member for the Center for Plain Language and a member of PLAIN and attends their monthly meetings.
- TSA has at least two plain language training sessions per year.

Training

Training Offered: Plain Writing 101.

Who Was Trained/Mode: TSA Office of Civil Rights (in person).

Training Offered: Plain Writing 101.

Who Was Trained/Mode: TSA Traveler Engagement (in person).

Training Offered: Plain Writing Refresher (Scheduled).

Who Was Trained/Mode: TSA's Executive Secretariat (in person).

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U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Component Mission

As the world's largest immigration agency, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) serves an especially large and diverse group of people with limited English proficiency. Communicating clearly is vital to our ability to provide accurate and useful information, grant immigration benefits, promote citizenship, and ensure the integrity of the immigration system.

Plain Writing Leadership

Designated Senior Official

Director, USCIS Plain Language Program

The USCIS Office of Communications oversees the USCIS Plain Language program. Begun as a grassroots movement in 2008, the program has evolved and now features in-person and remote training, short instructional videos, a Component-wide plain writing guide, a division of editors dedicated to reviewing external communications products for plain writing compliance, and an annual awards program.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) senior leadership has lauded USCIS for being the first Component to have an official plain writing program. USCIS provides training upon request to DHS Components and other agencies through a partnership with the Plain Language Action and Information Network.

Accomplishments

- Won a ClearMark Award from the Center for Plain Language for our online naturalization resources. This is a first for plain writing as a Component and for DHS. Also, our International Immigration Office pages earned an award of distinction from the Center as the only federal finalist in the best revised website category.
- Added new trainers to the program and rehearsed the material with them before pairing them with existing trainers to co-teach a class. Afterward, they were ready to teach classes on their own.
- Held the 2015 USCIS Excellence in Plain Language Awards ceremony on Oct. 13, 2015. The ceremony recognizes employees for writing clearly to USCIS customers and the workforce. Volunteer judges from around the agency selected 11 winners from 42 nominations.
- Held the USCIS Plain Language Spring Cleaning Challenge, in March, had 16 submissions in 2016, which was double the number of submissions in 2015.
- Created an improved customer experience by collaborating on user-focused language for upcoming online forms, including Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. The forms use plain writing to help ESL speakers through complex processes.

(USCIS continued)

Training

The USCIS Plain Language Program has taught 8,228 people since 2008.

Training Offered: Plain Language Training for USCIS

Who Was Trained/Mode: Taught 645 USCIS employees over 31 classes, both in person and by videoconference for FY 16.

Training Offered: Plain Language Training for DHS Components

Who Was Trained/Mode: Taught 256 employees over 10 classes at DHS components including CBP, DHS headquarters, FEMA and TSA.

Training Offered: Plain Language Training for non-DHS agencies

Who Was Trained/Mode: Taught 98 employees over 2 classes at the National Institutes of Health and U.S. Geological Survey.

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Component Mission

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) safeguards our Nation's maritime interests in the heartland, in the ports, at sea, and on all seven continents. 88,000 active duty, reservists, auxiliary and civilian members protect the maritime economy and the environment, defend our maritime borders, and save those in peril at sea. 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.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior-level official – USCG Representative

Accomplishments

- Directed internal review and edits to DHS Records Management Directorate identified Coast Guard forms to improve overall plain writing compliance.
- Participated in DHS component Executive Secretariat Plain Writing meetings via Tele-con and in-person.
- Disseminated DHS provided online resources to internal Coast Guard Headquarters Directorates.
- Prepared and provided plain writing training in person and online to internal Coast Guard Headquarters Directorates.

Training

Training Offered: Plain Language Basic Course

Who Was Trained/ Mode: In person to Commandant's Executive Secretariat.

Training Offered: Plain Language Basic Class for Coast Guard

Who Was Trained/ Mode: Online per Coast Guard Headquarters Directorate's requests.

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U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION

Component Mission

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) mission is to safeguard the Nation from dangerous people and materials while enhancing the Nation's global economic competitiveness by enabling legitimate trade and travel.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Official/Primary Point of Contact

Director, Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES)

As defined in the Act, 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. OES leads the CBP plain writing program.

Accomplishments

- Created a CBP Plain Language Page.
 - A one-stop-shop plain writing resource page was created on our internal portal. The new page link is prominently displays on the OES portal page.
 - The plain writing portal link was posted on the CBP, Office of the Commissioner, and OES's portal homepage.
- Attended plain writing meetings.
 - OES staff was briefed and updated on the content of the meetings.

Training

CBP staff members have been identified as in-house plain writing trainers and will attend PLAIN's train-the-trainer course.

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UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE

Component Mission

The United States Secret Service (USSS) Protective Mission is responsible for the physical protection of the nation's highest elected leaders, visiting foreign dignitaries, facilities and major events. To ensure a secure environment for protectees, the USSS integrates a variety of innovative technologies and maintains a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

The USSS Investigative Mission safeguards the payment and financial systems of the United States from a wide range of financial and computer-based crimes. To combat these crimes, the USSS uses a proactive approach supported by advanced technologies and task force partnerships.

In response to the globalization of various threats, the USSS continues to grow its homeland and overseas liaison presence leveraging its integrated missions of protection and investigations. Liaison also includes developing and providing appropriate and quality information to the three branches of the Federal Government, world-wide law enforcement partners, and citizens of the United States.

Though recognized for the central role in the protection of the Nation's leaders and the financial and critical infrastructure of the United States, the USSS also contributes to the Department of Homeland Security's common mission of protecting the American people from harm.

Plain Writing Leadership

Senior Designated Official

Chief Knowledge Officer in the Office of Training

The Management and Organization Division oversees the Secret Service's compliance with the Act, which includes policy and procedure revisions, and annual reporting.

The Rowley Training Center (RTC) coordinates the Plain Writing training for Secret Service employees, and helps employees to comply with the Act.

Accomplishments

- Participated in the DHS Plain Writing Quarterly Meetings.
- Monitored, tracked, and disseminated plain writing training opportunities internally and externally.
- Identified employees responsible for authoring documents to be delivered and distributed to citizens and various organizations.
- Coordinated plain writing meetings with offices whose employees had been identified as authors.
- Provided training to the authors (employees).

(USSS continued)

- Reviewed the “secret.service.org” to ensure the quality of the public-facing site corresponds to the Information Quality Standards guide.
- Submitted “Operation Safe Kids” – Parental Consent Form (Revised 2015) with Usage Burden Hours to comply with DHS request.

Training

Training Offered: Introduction to the Plain Writing Act.

Who Was Trained/Mode: Members of the National Threat Assessment Center, USSS. Online Training.

Training Offered: Being a Self-Editor.

Who Was Trained/Mode: Instructors of the James J. Rowley Training Center, USSS. Online Training.