

# **HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) Writing Style Guide**

May 2017

## **Welcome to the HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) Writing Style Guide!**

This guide was developed to provide direction and support for HAB staff when writing documents for the Bureau. It includes information on appropriate uses of vocabulary and grammar commonly found in Bureau documents and ensures that writers use these items consistently throughout all of HAB's materials. It also provides guidance on how to refer to various aspects of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and how to use key terms unique to HAB. The HAB Writing Style Guide is intended to supplement Departmental and Agency writing standards and requirements and should be used in conjunction with these resources. This guide also provides information on creating PowerPoint slides, as well as resources on writing in plain language.

The HAB Writing Style Guide should be used by all HAB staff for documents where the intended audience is outside of HAB. This includes formal correspondence, Funding Opportunity Announcements, emails and notes to recipients, policy documents, manuals, factsheets, PowerPoints, and other documents of this nature.

Please contact Amy Schachner or Jennifer Moore with suggestions for improving the HAB Writing Style Guide or for more information on writing documents for HAB.

## **Guidelines for Creating PowerPoint Presentations**

When creating a PowerPoint presentation, please keep in mind the following tips:

### **Use of Logos**

For HIV/AIDS Bureau presentations, please use only the currently approved Health Resources and Services Administration's HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) logo. The HRSA logo is required on the first and last slides, preferably on the lower right-hand corner of the slide. The HRSA logo should be easily viewed from a distance and should not overlap any text or other graphics on the slide. You should not include additional logos in your presentation.

If you are presenting alongside a member of your grant recipient, only the HAB staff employee's slides should include the HRSA logo. Under U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines, grant recipients are not authorized to brand their products with HRSA or HAB logos.

### **Required Slides for PowerPoint Presentations**

Within each HAB presentation, PowerPoint decks should include both an introductory slide as well as a closing slide.

An introductory slide should include the following information:

- Title or subject of your presentation
- Organization or group to whom you are speaking
- Date of the presentation
- Your name(s)
- Your title
- Branch, Office, Bureau
- Health Resources and Services Administration
- Approved HRSA logo in right corner of slide

A closing slide should provide contact information on how the audience may get in touch with HAB/HRSA. This information should include the following:

- Your name
- Your office phone number and address
- Your e-mail address
- Any toll-free telephone numbers
- Approved HRSA logo in one corner of the last slide

## **Guidelines for Creating PowerPoint Presentations**

Please consider the following additional items when creating your presentation deck:

1. Contrast - Use contrasting colors for the background and the font to ensure that the text is easily visible. Avoid using dark type on dark backgrounds. Black type on a white background is the best contrast.
2. Font - Common typefaces such as Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial, and Helvetica are preferred. Do not use fancy scripts or font types that are difficult to read. Your font should be large and easy to read from a distance.
3. Bullets - Bullets should emphasize key points. They should not be complete sentences or paragraphs. Do not provide too much information on a single slide. It is recommended to use no more than three to five bullets on a slide and to use continuation slide(s) when necessary.
4. When using slides produced by someone else, make sure that the information is current, and that all necessary changes were made on previously cleared slides.

## Using Formal and Informal Legislative Citations

When developing written documents, you may be required to include legislative citations. In general, using an informal citation is acceptable. However, formal citations are recommended when writing funding opportunity announcements (FOAs), or other formal, legal documents. Please use the following guidance for formal and informal citations:

### Formal Citations

RWHAP legislation, title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-11, et seq.

RWHAP Part A legislation, sections 2601-2610 of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-11-300ff-20.

RWHAP Part B legislation, sections 2611-2623 of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-21-300ff-31b.

RWHAP Part C legislation, sections 2651-2667 of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-51-300ff-67.

RWHAP Part D legislation, section 2671 of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-71.

RWHAP Part F legislation, section 2691 of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-101. (SPNS)

RWHAP Part F legislation, section 2692(a) of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-111(a). (AETC)

RWHAP Part F legislation, section 2692(b) of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-111(b). (Dental)

RWHAP Part F legislation, section 2693 of title XXVI of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 300ff-121. (MAI)

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards, 45 CFR part 75. *NOTE: This is the proper reference to the entire grants regulations; there is nothing following the "75." If you are citing to a specific section of the grants regulations, you should use either the word "section" or the section symbol "§," and provide the specific citation following the "75." For example, if you are referring to the rule regarding program income, you would refer to "45 CFR § 75.307" or "45 CFR section 75.307."*

### Informal Citations

When using an informal citation, omit the United States Code reference.

KEY TERMS				
<i>Please do use</i>	<i>Please do not use</i>	Source	Example	Rationale/comment
CDC and HRSA Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan, including the Statewide Coordinated Statement of Need	CDC and HRSA Integrated Prevention and Care Planning	<a href="#">CDC/HRSA Plan Guidance</a>		Use the official title of the document.
Changing health care landscape, evolving health care landscape	Health Insurance Marketplace, Marketplaces or marketplace, Medicaid Health Care Coverage Expansion or Medicaid Expansion	HAB internal decision	The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program works within the changing health care landscape to support and strengthen the safety net of HIV care and treatment available to people living with HIV.	Use when discussing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and its role in health care.
client; patient <b>only when</b> discussing people receiving direct healthcare services	Patient when referring to all people served by the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program	HAB internal decision	More than half a million clients were served by the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program in 2015.  The RWHAP Part C recipient provides direct healthcare services to thousands of patients each year.	
diagnose (HIV is diagnosed)	diagnosed with (people are not diagnosed)	CDC	Use: Many autoimmune diseases have similar symptoms, which makes them very difficult to diagnose.  Use: Ten percent of RWHAP clients had diagnosed HIV infection.  Do not use: Rachel was diagnosed with a chronic disease.	Diseases and conditions are diagnosed; people are not diagnosed.

<b>KEY TERMS</b>				
<b>Please do use</b>	<b>Please do not use</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
health care coverage or healthcare	healthcare coverage or health care	HAB internal decision	<p>Use: Many clients have some form of health care coverage when they attend a medical visit.</p> <p>Use: Access to quality healthcare remains a challenge for many clients.</p>	<p>Use health care (two words) coverage when referencing insurance and/or a health plan.</p> <p>Use healthcare (one word) when referring to the provision of care.</p>
HIV care continuum, HIV continuum of care	HIV Care Continuum Initiative, cascade	HAB internal decision		<p>The HIV care continuum was incorporated into the national goals for ending the HIV epidemic and therefore the use of HIV Care Continuum on its own is limited.</p> <p>Use HIV care continuum when referring to the stages of HIV care for PLWH.</p>
HIV viral suppression, viral suppression, suppressed HIV viral load, or suppressed viral load	HIV viral load suppression	HAB internal decision	<p>Use: 83.4 percent of RWHAP clients achieved viral suppression in 2015.</p> <p>Use: 81.4 percent of RWHAP clients had a suppressed viral load in 2014.</p>	<p>In an HIV-specific document, the HIV can be eliminated after the first use, if its use would cause redundancy.</p>

<b>KEY TERMS</b>				
<b>Please do use</b>	<b>Please do not use</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) or Medication	replacement, substitution	Office of National Drug Control Policy Memorandum: Changing Federal Terminology Regarding Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders		The term “medication-assisted treatment” (MAT) refers to the use of any medication approved to treat substance use disorders combined with psychosocial support services. “Medication” refers to a specific FDA-approved drug for addiction treatment such as buprenorphine.
National goals to end the HIV epidemic or national goals	National HIV/AIDS Strategy: Updated to 2020 (NHAS 2020), NHAS Action Plan or NHAS	<a href="#">Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Annual Client-Level Data Report, 2015</a>		HAB has focused on four goals to inform programmatic effort and funding to end the HIV epidemic.
payor of last resort, third-party payor, and payer		HAB internal decision	<p>Use: The RWHAP statute includes a payor of last resort provision, which requires that all other available sources of funds are used to pay for a service before RWHAP funds are used.</p> <p>Use: The RWHAP statute requires applicants to provide the average costs of services, and the extent to which such costs are paid by a third-party payor.</p> <p>Use: Cost sharing is imposed on individual payers.</p>	<p>Use payor of last resort when referring to the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program because payor is a good way to distinguish between an institution that pays for something versus an individual that pays for something.</p> <p>Use payer when referring to an individual that pays for something.</p>

<b>KEY TERMS</b>				
<b>Please do use</b>	<b>Please do not use</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
people living with HIV (PLWH)	persons living with HIV, people living with HIV/AIDS, people infected with HIV, PLWHA, or HIV-infected	<a href="#">UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines</a>		HIV encompasses all stages of disease, including AIDS. Terms such as “HIV infected” can convey unintentional stigma and have negative consequences for people living with HIV (PLWH). The use of preferred language is important for reducing stigma and empowering PLWH.
person with a substance use disorder, person with an alcohol use disorder, person in recovery, a person who is not currently using substances, a person who is currently using substances	abuser, addict, alcoholic, clean, dirty	Office of National Drug Control Policy Memorandum: Changing Federal Terminology Regarding Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders		Person-first language is the accepted standard for discussing people with chronic medical conditions. Research shows terms such as “abuser” negatively affect perceptions about people with substance use disorders.
pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)	pre-exposure Prophylaxis	CDC		Use PrEP in upper and lowercase when referring to the HIV prevention tool (e.g., Truvada).

KEY TERMS				
<i>Please do use</i>	<i>Please do not use</i>	Source	Example	Rationale/comment
recipient or subrecipient	grantee or subgrantees	Uniform Grants Rules, 45 CFR part 75		Terms to accurately capture funding recipients (cooperative agreements are not a grant)
Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP)	Ryan White Program, Ryan White, or Program	HAB internal decision		When discussing the program as a whole, use RWHAP. When discussing a specific provision, use “the RWHAP statute” or “the RWHAP legislation.”  If RWHAP is used as a title or occurs at the beginning of a sentence, use The RWHAP
Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Part (A, B, C, D, or F); Part A, B, C, D, or F <b>only when</b> program part is repeated more than twice in a paragraph; Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program ADAP	Part (A, B, C, D, or F) Program or Ryan White HIV/AIDS Programs; RWHAP and ADAP; ADAP	HAB internal decision	Use: The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Part C provides grants directly to community and faith-based organizations, community health centers, health departments, and university or hospital-based clinics. RWHAP Part C supports comprehensive primary health care and essential support services in an outpatient setting. Part C is also authorized to fund capacity development grants.	Referencing the RWHAP part ensures that readers understand which federal program is being referred especially in public documents. Many other federal policies are also divided into parts (e.g., Medicare Parts A, B, C, D).

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Substance misuse or substance use disorder	substance abuse, substance dependence, or drug habit	Office of National Drug Control Policy Memorandum: Changing Federal Terminology Regarding Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders		Substance use disorder is the clinically accurate term to describe the constellation of impairments caused by repeated misuse of a substance. Substance misuse refers to the use of any substance in a manner, situation, amount or frequency that can cause harm to the substance user or those around them.
men, women, transgender people, transgender women, or transgender men	female, male, transgender, transgendered, transgenders, trans	HAB internal decision		Use specific terms to describe human beings.  Female and male are better reserved for use as adjectives.

<b>GENERAL WRITING TIPS</b>				
<b>Rules to follow</b>	<b>Common pitfalls</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
(1) as the preferred numbering for bulleted text	1. or 1).	HRSA Exec Sec	Use: Please (1) use this guide when writing, (2) check with your supervisor if you have questions, and (3) be consistent.	Use when there are two or more items.
Active voice is preferred when possible	Using passive voice	<a href="#">Plain Writing Act</a>	Do Not Use (passive): The report (subject) was completed (action) before the deadline by Mr. Blue.  Use (active): Mr. Blue (subject) completed (action) the report before the deadline.	Active voice is more clear and direct. It is easier to understand than passive voice.
Affect is usually used as a verb Effect is usually used as a noun			Use: The rain affected Amy's hairdo.  Use: The rain had no effect on Amy's hairdo.	Affect means "to influence," effect usually means "result."
Acronyms can be used after initially spelling out each word			Use: The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) provides HIV-related services for individuals who do not have sufficient health care coverage or financial resources for coping with HIV disease.	
Be consistent with word usage and terms		HRSA Exec Sec		Avoid confusion that can be caused by introducing multiple terms.
Be succinct	Redundancy	CDC	Do not use: It is possible that the treatment may work.  Use: The treatment may work.	"Possible" and "may" are redundant.

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Begin all paragraphs without indentation		HRSA SharePoint site		For correspondence, use full block and put on style header. Exceptions may exist for technical reports, other formatted reports, etc.
Cannot should be used in place of can not or can't	Using can not or can't	HRSA SharePoint site		
Capitalize federal, state, nation, congressional, members, government, department, etc. when they are part of a title or proper noun (i.e., the official name of a particular or unique person, place, or thing)	Unnecessary capitalization	<a href="#">Plain Writing Act</a>	Use: Many issues we address each day are subject to federal, state, and local laws.	
Consistently apply semicolons or commas to separate items in a list		HRSA Exec Sec	Use: The contractor developed handouts on three topics: how to use program income to improve your client services, health outcomes, and customer satisfaction; examples of vigorously pursuing overpayments of tax credits; and, shopping, cooking, and general food safety for people living with HIV.  Do not use: Please be merry; be kind, be joyous and genuine.	Use either commas or semicolons to separate items in a list. Use one or the other, but not both to separate items in a list. Commas are preferred for shorter sentences, while semicolons can be used for longer, more complex sentences and lists.

<b>GENERAL WRITING TIPS</b>				
<b>Rules to follow</b>	<b>Common pitfalls</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
<p>Consistently format citations</p> <p>Citations in parentheses are placed before the period</p> <p>Superscript numbers are placed after the period</p>		<a href="#">Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual</a>	<p>Use: The recommendations were issued by the Hospital Infection Committee (Smith, 2010).</p> <p>Use: The recommendations were issued by the Hospital Infection Committee.<sup>1</sup></p>	Preferred citation style is <a href="#">APA</a> .
Database is one word	data base	HRSA Sharepoint site		
<p>“e.g.,” is an abbreviation for “for example”</p> <p>“i.e.,” is an abbreviation for “that is”</p>			<p>Use: Tomorrow I plan to do some lawn work (e.g., mow the lawn, weed the garden).</p> <p>Use: After work, I’ll walk over to the Thunderdome (i.e., the new sports arena a few blocks away).</p>	<p>Use “e.g.,” when giving a few examples, but not a full list. Always use a comma after “e.g.,” and always put the entire phrase in parentheses. Do not use “and” in the list of examples.</p> <p>Use “i.e.,” when giving further explanation of something. Always use a comma after “i.e.,” and put entire phrase in parentheses</p>
Hyphenate and use consistent capitalization for Co-Chair or co-chair	Cochair, co-Chair	HRSA Exec Sec		
<p>In running text, when words follow the date put a comma after the year</p> <p>No comma between month and year when no date included</p>		CDC	<p>Use: The meeting will be held December 5, 2012, in Atlanta.</p> <p>Use: The festival took place in May 2012.</p>	
Include a comma before “which” clauses			Use: The recommendations were issued by the Hospital Infection Committee, which was established in 1985.	

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Numbers nine and below should be spelled out; numerals should be used for numbers greater than nine	Spelling out numbers higher than nine; numerals for numbers less than nine		Do not use: The boy had 8 basketballs and sixty-four model cars.  Use: The boy had eight basketballs and 64 model cars.	May be appropriate to use numerals for 1-9 when in a data report or other publication.
Place punctuation on the inside of quotation marks at the end of a sentence			Use: I was informed to “always put the period before the quotation mark.”  Do not use: I told my colleague that it is not appropriate to “put the period after the quotation mark”.	
Plural verbs should be used for data and criteria		CDC	Use: The criteria are not new.  Do not use: The data is new this year	
Serial commas should be used when there are two or more items		HRSA Exec Sec	Use: Please (1) use this guide when writing, (2) check with your supervisor if you have questions, and (3) be consistent.	Include a comma before “and” in the last item.
Spell out percent instead of using the symbol	%	<a href="#">Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual</a>	Use: 80.4 percent of people living with HIV in the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program are virally suppressed.	This usage is preferred by the Government Printing Office. However, there may be some instances when using data where “%” may be used such as data reports or publications.

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<b>Rules to follow</b>	<b>Common pitfalls</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
Subcommittee is one word	sub-committee, sub committee			
United States written out or U.S. with periods to indicate the abbreviation	US	<a href="#">Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual</a>		United States must be spelled out when appearing in a sentence containing the name of another country. The abbreviation U.S. is used when preceding the word Government or the name of a Government organization. Otherwise, the abbreviation U.S. is used in the adjective position, but is spelled out when used as a noun.
Write out full state name if it is used alone		CDC	<p>Use: Bozeman is in Montana.</p> <p>Use: The meeting was held in Bozeman, MT (or Bozeman, Montana).</p> <p>Do not use: The meeting was held in MT.</p>	

**FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE**

<b>Please do use</b>	<b>Please do not use</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale/comment</b>
HAB letterhead for correspondence for Dr. Laura Cheever	HRSA Letterhead	OAA		
HRSA letterhead for correspondence for Dr. George Sigounas	HAB Letterhead	HRSA Exec Sec		
No date in executive and formal documents (e.g., letters for the Secretary's or Administrator's signature)		HRSA SharePoint site		The date may be variable depending on when the signature is received or approved. The letter will be hand-stamped with a date when it is ready for mailing.
Sincerely	Very Respectfully, Very Truly Yours, etc.	OAA		
Two spaces following a period	One space following a period	HRSA Exec Sec		