**Plain Language Report Card for: Health & Human Services (HHS)**

**Agency Home Page: http://www.hhs.gov  
Grade: Basic requirement: C (72)  
 Other activities: B (130)**

**Part 1: How well does the agency comply with the basic requirements of the Act**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Notes | Score |
| Agency plain language page URL | <http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/index.html> | **10** |
| Linked from the homepage? | Yes | **10** |
| Do they name a senior official? | They provide the title of the official, but no name. | **8** |
| Do they list other contacts? | No | **0** |
| Is there contact info for the other contacts? |  | **0** |
| Do they have an implementation plan? | [http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/ plain\_writing\_act\_report.pdf](http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/%20plain_writing_act_report.pdf)  Updated in 2012 so you can’t tell what they said in 2011. | **10** |
| Do they have a 2012 compliance report? | [http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/ plain\_writing\_act\_compliance\_report.pdf](http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/plain_writing_act_compliance_report.pdf) | **10** |
| Does the website provide feedback mechanism? | [http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/ plain\_writing\_act\_compliance\_report.pdf](http://www.hhs.gov/open/recordsandreports/plainwritingact/plain_writing_act_compliance_report.pdf) | **10** |
| Are they using plain language in all new or substantially revised covered documents? | Agency did not get back to us. CMS is working on it. And we know that NIH and FDA are working on it. | **5** |
| How did they inform employees of requirement | Broadcast email with timeframes, sessions for leadership, e-newsletter  No apparent directives. | **9** |

**Total score for basic compliance with Act: 72 (out of 100)**

**Part 2: Agency compliance with the Plain Writing Act – Supporting activities**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Notes | Score |
| Implementation Plan |  | **45** |
| Does the plan list objectives | Yes. Establish a long-term, dept-wide training plan. Recognize outstanding pl documents  Senior management models pl, many others | **15** |
| Do they identify specific actions to implement objectives | Yes. Table presentation clearly associates actions to objectives. | **15** |
| Do they identify time frames | Yes, same as previous cell. | **15** |
| Compliance Report |  | **23** |
| Does agency list types of covered docs? | No | **0** |
| Does plan discuss sustaining change? | Yes. Meetings of senior officials, encourage agencies to include pl in performance plans | **9** |
| What docs are focus of pl work pl? | FDA - paperwork reduction act notices  CMS – medicare info  SAMHSA – product descriptions  See long note below | **10** |
| Tracking documents created in or revised into pl? | Some agencies | **4** |
| Measurements |  | **10** |
| Testing pl quality of documents | Spotty- some agencies are doing testing. | **5** |
| Testing effectiveness of documents? |  | **5** |
| Is agency measuring effectiveness of program? |  | **0** |
| What else, if anything does agency measure |  | **0** |
| Other Supporting Info |  | **52** |
| Do they list contact info for the lead official on the pl page? | No |  |
| What categories of employees must take training? | OIG writers and editors. Not clear if required for anyone else. Planning a best practices work group. | **5** |
| How long is the training | Varies by agency. Not clear if all agencies have any. NIH has excellent on-line training used by many other agencies. CMS has training | **5** |
| How is training delivered? | Computer based in NIH, others unknown | **5** |
| Who have they gotten trained so far? | OGC, OMHA, DAB have had legal writing training. Not clear if any specific pl training completed. Supposedly CMS has trained all staff. |  |
| 6Did they respond to our email? | Yes. Called me and had a long talk. | **10** |
| Did they provide all requested info? | No, still working on it. | **5** |
| Did they provide sample docs? | No. But have some listed in compliance report. |  |
| How well did docs score | They didn’t send us any documents, but based on samples we know from the ClearMark awards. | **16** |

**Total score for supporting activities 130 (out of 200)**

**From the compliance report:**

The Department has eagerly embraced this requirement, and all operating divisions and most staff divisions use the plain writing guidelines to develop web-based and paper communications with the public. For example:

• SAMHSA developed new, concise, plain language product descriptions for all 1,300 publications it offers on various behavioral health issues.

• IHS revised over 200 patient education materials and posted them on its website.

• ACF wrote or revised program descriptions and leadership profiles for more than 65 programs, 19 offices, and 10 regions for use in the new ACF website launched in January 2012.

• ACF also wrote 150 “success stories” about ACF programs in accordance with plain writing principles, posting about 80 on its website.

• CDC estimates that it produced between 250 and 300 plain writing documents since October 13, 2011.

• FDA developed a template for notices on the Paperwork Reduction Act to more efficiently and effectively convey information about the paperwork burden to the public. In 2011, FDA published over 200 such notices in the Federal Register and expects the new template to have a significant positive impact.

• AoA has a correspondence section on its internal intranet that links to a website devoted to “Writing User Friendly Documents” that employees can use to improve their written work.

Additionally, the Office of the Executive Secretary and ASA are discussing plain language requirements for all grant applications, responses to requests for proposals, and grant agreements, contracts, and other procurement documents**.**