Washington State
Health Care Authority

style
guide

the **official word**
on matters of style
— *for* —
communications

About the style guide

This style guide is the official word on matters of written style for communications for the Washington State Health Care Authority including:

- Forms
- Manuals
- Brochures
- Websites
- PowerPoint presentations
- Promotional items

The guide creates a single source for questions on style, grammar, word use, and punctuation. The principles of Plain Talk are represented in these guidelines.

This guide also highlights information frequently needed by staff members. If you can't find what you want listed here, email HCACommunications@hca.wa.gov.

Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of entries are indicated for each item in the Style: A to Z section. If a word or phrase is capitalized in the style guide, it is always capitalized. If it is not capitalized here, it should usually not be capitalized elsewhere, unless it begins a sentence or a line of type. Examples of usage, both incorrect and correct, are given.

Authorship of this guide

This guide is compiled and maintained by the Communications Division. To suggest changes, updates, and additions, email **HCACommunications@hca.wa.gov**.

Correspondence Guidelines

HCA's Correspondence Guidelines are considered a companion piece to this document, to be used when writing letters, envelopes, and memos. If you have questions, check the Correspondence Guidelines accordion tab on Inside HCA's Communications tools page, or access the HCA Correspondence Guidelines (4/17) directly.

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Writing for the Health Care Authority

As representatives of our state and employees of the Health Care Authority (HCA), we are committed to doing our jobs as efficiently and effectively as we can. We use many forms of communication with our clients, providers, the public, other state agencies, and each other, and we strive to make our communications clear and understood.

Plain Talk

The Governor's Plain Talk executive order 05-03 requires all state agencies to use simple and clear language when communicating with citizens and businesses. HCA employees also need to be familiar with HCA Policy 1-08, Plain Language in Written Communications. Employees must use Plain Talk/plain language principles in all written communications with customers and others with whom we communicate about agency programs and activities.

Each HCA program is responsible for reviewing materials before making them available to the public, to ensure compliance with Plain Talk guidelines.

Managers and supervisors should introduce their new employees to Plain Talk principles and guidelines during new employee orientation. They also are responsible for ensuring all employees who write letters and other customer communications receive additional online or classroom training in using plain language. Contact **HCA Communications** with questions about Plain Talk, or about the Writing for Your Audience course.

All program writers are encouraged to read and follow the Plain Talk guidelines.

1) Understand customer needs.
2) Include only relevant information.
3) Use words your customers use.
4) Use the "active voice."
5) Use personal pronouns.
6) Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
7) Design clear pages.

See also: *Use person-first language*.

Writing tips

Plan your writing

Before you begin to write, think about what you want to achieve. What do you want the reader to do or remember? Write appropriately for your specific audience. Make sure your meaning is clear.

Focus on people

Help your readers see themselves in the text. Use personal pronouns or name the person doing the action. Use words such as "I," "me," "we," and "our," when referring to the sender or the Health Care Authority. Use "you" and "your" when referring to the reader.

I am writing in response to your request.

Jane Jones will contact you about your questions. You may copy this certificate.

Use short, simple sentences

Keep each sentence to one or two tightly connected thoughts. If you have to read a sentence more than once to understand it, it's too long.

Separate information into manageable pieces. This will help keep sentences and paragraphs short and simple.

Avoid unnecessary words

Preferred

We have accepted your claim.

Avoid

The purpose of this letter is to tell you that we have accepted your claim.

Give the information in the clearest way

Preferred

Send comments to:

Health Care Authority
PO Box 42684
Olympia, WA 98504-2684

Deadline: January 1, 2021

Avoid

Interested persons, on or before January 1, 2021, may submit written comments regarding their claim to the Health Care Authority at PO Box 42684, Olympia, WA 98504-2684.

Use active voice

The active voice shows who is responsible for doing what, which helps eliminate confusion and makes your writing more interesting.

Active voice

All homeowners must complete Form C.

You must complete Form C.

Passive voice

Form C must be completed by all homeowners.

Use action verbs

Instead of:	Use:
affix a signature	sign
make payment	pay
maintenance	maintain, keep up
concur	agree
transmit	send

Use short and simple words

Instead of:	Use:
cease	stop
commence	begin
employ	use
furnish	give
in order to	to
inquire	ask
prior to	before
procure	get
request	ask
remit	send, pay
retain	keep
terminate	end
transmit	send
utilize	use

Avoid legal jargon

Instead of:	Use:
aforesaid	the
provided	if, but
pursuant to	the law says
said person	the person

Avoid aggressive words

Instead of:	Use:
shall	will
obligation	responsibility
permission	may

Use gender-neutral words when possible

HCA's style is to use gender-neutral words when possible, but not to sacrifice clarity.

Preferred

Each employee must fill out a time sheet.

Avoid

Each employee must fill out her time sheet.

In rare cases, to avoid an assumed "he/she" or "his/her," you might choose to use "they/their"—but pay attention to whether you're mixing singular and plural and creating confusion.

Preferred

Give this proposal to your employer—we hope it meets both their and your needs.

Avoid

Give this proposal to your employer—we hope it meets both his and your needs.

See also: *them / they*.

Use person-first language

Person-first language is used to speak appropriately and respectfully about an individual, emphasizing the person first, and not the service they seek or the condition they might have.

Preferred

An individual interested in supportive housing services.

An individual is looking for mental health providers.

A person is seeking treatment for substance use disorder.

A person with diabetes has questions about their coverage.

Avoid

A diabetic client is asking about their coverage.

A mental health client is coming to HCA for help.

Define unusual terms

Readers don't understand government jargon. Avoid jargon and explain terms that they need to know.

"Fee-for-service" is a model in which payment is made for individual health care services.

Make the text visual

Leave white space on the page. Use lists, tables, and graphs when possible. Organize information into small, related units to make it easier to read and understand. This is especially useful in web writing because readers tend to scan pages looking for key words.

Example

The state government includes:

- Executive branch
- Legislative branch
- Judicial branch

Make addresses, phone numbers, and web addresses stand out. If space permits, display addresses in blocks.

Example

Please complete the enclosed form and mail it to:

Health Care Authority
PO Box 47478
Olympia, WA 98504-7478

Writing for the web

Follow the HCA Style Guide

The style guide applies to all communications.

Good web writing is like a conversation

To be effective, web content must be short and easy to scan. It answers people's questions, addresses one subject per page, and links to related topics.

Put conclusions at the beginning

Include your main point in the first paragraph. Web readers are usually looking for specific information. They scan pages to find what they are looking for and move on.

Use lists

Lists are easier to scan than paragraphs, especially if you keep them short.

Make links relevant to the content

Links stand out from normal text and provide more cues as to what the page is about. Do not use "click here" for link text. Include enough text in the hyperlink that readers will know what they will get when they click on it. Do not hyperlink headlines. Do not spell out the URL on a webpage or in an email. Embedding the links in regular text as below also helps screen readers.

Preferred

Download the enrollment form.

Visit the Health Care Authority website.

The Governor delivered his State of the State speech today.

Avoid

Click here to download the form.

To visit the website, click here.

Visit the HCA website at www.hca.wa.gov.

Make sure links take readers where they expect to go

Preferred

Reduced-Cost Health Care > Reduced-Cost Health Care webpage

Legislative Reports> Health Care Authority Reports to the Legislature

Avoid

Reduced-Cost Health Care > Looking for Cheap Insurance

Medical Homes > E2SHB- 2549 Primary Care-Pilot Project

Don't underline

Underlining makes text look like a link. Use bold for emphasis, but use it sparingly. If you try to emphasize too much, you emphasize nothing.

ADA compliance/accessibility

An accessible website allows all people the opportunity to understand, navigate, and interact with web content. For questions specifically about ADA compliance, contact HCA's internal control officer. For more information on how this relates to web content, contact the web content manager or visit the Web Accessibility Project team site.

Headings/titles

Do:

- Describe the content that falls under the section
- Add headers to help distinguish content on the page and aid scanning
- Use descriptive headings
- Use keywords
- Use sentence case
- Be concise

Do not use:

- Jargon
- The same word as the beginning of each heading on a page. This makes scanning difficult for users.

  Avoid:
  Managing group provider
  Managing individual
  Managing a clearinghouse

- Title case

  Exception:
  If using proper nouns in a heading or title, you may use title case on the proper noun. This includes content on the page as well as links to documents and other web pages.

Writing for social media

Writing for social media generally throws out formalities of traditional writing rules.

What is a good social media post?

On social media, viewers only pay attention for three seconds before moving on, so we must be intentional with how we write our posts and how we use images and videos with the message. Keep your content brief, engaging, and informal. Social media is extreme Plain Talk.

Top rules of writing for social media

1) Tailor your writing to your audience. Research how your audience speaks, reacts, and typically engages on social media so your message doesn't fall flat.

2) Keep posts short and simple, without sounding like a robot.

3) Your voice should be casual and informal, but still professional.

4) Always use a call to action to engage viewers. (Go to the link, share the post, watch the video, or join the event.)

5) Avoid using agency jargon. Our audience's knowledge varies, so write for those who do not know what HCA does.

6) Don't use a long word if there is a shorter alternative.

7) Don't rely on images for content. Images with a lot of text are hard to read on smartphone screens, and the text is inaccessible to those with vision impairment.

Rewriting traditional text for social media:

When using existing content from an email, document, or webpage that you want to promote on social media, reducing it to the basics can be challenging. Provide a URL for people to get more information is helpful if you can't fit all the details in the post itself.

Important things to remember

Character limits: Twitter copy must stay within 280 characters, including spaces, links, and hashtags. Facebook and LinkedIn allow for much longer content, but it's best to stick to a few short sentences.

Links: You can't hyperlink text in social media, so you must spell out the URL to create a link. To prevent a URL from using up your character limit, shorten long URLs with Bitly, TinyURL, or our social media scheduling software.

HCA vs. Health Care Authority: Writing out "Health Care Authority" isn't necessary since our agency name follows our logo when we post. We do not need to repeat it, so using "HCA" is fine.

Traditional text:
306 characters with spaces

"Today the Health Care Authority (HCA) will be having a webinar from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 1, 2019 to explore the effects of adverse childhood experiences and how behavioral health providers can better serve individuals using a trauma informed approach. You can register online here."

Rewritten for social media:
186 characters with spaces

"Behavioral health providers: Join us for a webinar Oct. 1 from 10am – 11am exploring adverse childhood experiences and treatment using a trauma informed approach. https://bitly.is/123445"

Using hashtags

A hashtag (#) categorizes the content of your social media post and is an easy way to increase visibility of your content by jumping on trends. Every day new hashtags are trending that relate to current events, politics, or awareness. Incorporating hashtags in your posts for Twitter and LinkedIn is more advantageous than Facebook; Facebook doesn't place a high value on hashtags.

Example:

SEBB Employees: Have you qualified for the $50 SmartHealth incentive yet? Complete the SmartHealth Well Being Assessment by Nov. 15, 2019 to qualify. Go to https://smarthealth.hca.wa.gov to get started. #SmartHealth #WhatsYourWhy

Tips:

- Don't place hashtags in the middle of your post. Always place them at the end of your post after the URL link.

- Don't use generic, single-word hashtags: #sunset #olympia #health #puppy. This can lower your content rating. Specific hashtags are better: #sunsetonblvd #onlyinolympia #ilovegermnashepardpuppies #healthishappiness.

- It doesn't matter whether or not you capitalize each word in your hashtags.

- Make sure your hashtag is meaningful and complements your message.

- To avoid using a hashtag that might associate you with something you don't want, search your hashtag on Google or Twitter to see how it is used.

- For Twitter and LinkedIn, limit hashtags to only one to three per post.

If you need help

More information about writing for social media is available in the social media section of the communications tools webpage on InsideHCA. Please email our **HCA social media manager** if you have additional questions.

A to Z

24/7

A term indicating that something happens "24 hours a day, seven days a week."

> We are on guard 24/7.

911

Use 911, with no hyphens, in all references for the U.S. emergency call number.

> Call 911.

....

addresses

Use this format for mailing and street addresses:

> Health Care Authority
> PO Box 45502
> Olympia, WA 98507-9030

Use U.S. Postal Service state abbreviations below only when indicating a mailing address, addressing a letter or envelope. Spell out both cities and states in narrative text. See also "state" and "states" entries.

AL	Alabama	**KY**	Kentucky	**ND**	North Dakota
AK	Alaska	**LA**	Louisiana	**OH**	Ohio
AZ	Arizona	**ME**	Maine	**OK**	Oklahoma
AR	Arkansas	**MD**	Maryland	**OR**	Oregon
CA	California	**MA**	Massachusetts	**PA**	Pennsylvania
CO	Colorado	**MI**	Michigan	**RI**	Rhode Island
CT	Connecticut	**MN**	Minnesota	**SC**	South Carolina
DE	Delaware	**MS**	Mississippi	**SD**	South Dakota
DC	District of Columbia	**MO**	Missouri	**TN**	Tennessee
FL	Florida	**MT**	Montana	**TX**	Texas
GA	Georgia	**NE**	Nebraska	**UT**	Utah
HI	Hawaii	**NV**	Nevada	**VT**	Vermont
ID	Idaho	**NH**	New Hampshire	**VA**	Virginia
IL	Illinois	**NJ**	New Jersey	**WA**	Washington
IN	Indiana	**NM**	New Mexico	**WV**	West Virginia
IA	Iowa	**NY**	New York	**WI**	Wisconsin
KS	Kansas	**NC**	North Carolina	**WY**	Wyoming

affect / effect

affect: (verb) to influence

> The court's decision will not affect the legal precedent.

effect: (verb) to bring about, cause to happen, or create

> The attorney hoped to effect a solution.

effect: (noun) intent, appearance, influence, essence

> The effect on the law was minimal.

Affordable Care Act (ACA)

The Affordable Care Act refers to two separate pieces of legislation: the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. Together, they expand Medicaid coverage to millions of low-income Americans and make numerous improvements to both Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). "Affordable Care Act" is preferred form. Do not abbreviate as PPACA. "Obamacare" is now considered an acceptable reference in more informal communications.

African American

Not hyphenated unless used as a compound adjective modifying a noun.

> African Americans make up 25 percent of the population.

> The African-American vote will be important in the upcoming election.

age / ages / aged

In most cases, use "age," not "ages" or "aged."

> "…if you or any dependent (age 13 and older) enrolled on…"

agency

Use sparingly as an alternative to the formal name of an agency or its acronym.

agency-wide

Hyphenate.

a.m.

Standard abbreviation for "morning" with a specific time.

See also: *time*.

American Indian/Alaska Native

Preferred over Native American, or use the specific tribe name when available. Note: not "Alaskan."

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Americans with Disabilities Act notices must appear on all significant HCA publications, reports, and electronic media. Check with **HCACommunications@hca.wa.gov** for the specific language appropriate for your publication.

See also: *disability / disabled*.

ampersand / &

Do not use ampersands in text. However, it's acceptable in charts, graphs, and in the formal name of a company, such as a law firm, or organization, such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Apple Health (Medicaid)

See: *Washington Apple Health (Medicaid)*.

Apple Health for Kids

Apple Health for Kids with premiums includes all Medicaid and CHIP programs for children in Washington State.

assure / ensure / insure

assure: to promise or to make a positive declaration

> I want to assure you nothing will go wrong.

ensure: to make certain, guarantee

> Can you ensure nothing will go wrong tomorrow?

insure: to protect against financial loss

> You should insure this painting for $5,000.

at risk / at-risk

Hyphenate when your meaning is an at-risk population.

> Washington serves many at-risk children.

> The girl in the news story wants to help people who are at-risk.

Do not hyphenate in other uses.

> If you have high blood pressure you are at risk of developing heart disease.

Basic Health

No longer in use. Refers to our previous state-sponsored program that provided low-cost health care coverage through private health plans. It was discontinued December 31, 2013, when Medicaid expansion began.

building names

Cherry Street Plaza (626 8th Avenue SE, Olympia); use **CSP** only on second reference

Townsquare 1 (621 8th Avenue SE, Olympia); use **TS1** only on second reference

Townsquare 2 (621 8th Avenue SE, Olympia); use **TS2** only on second reference

Townsquare 6 (805 Plum Street SE, Olympia); use **TS6** only on second reference

HCA Tumwater (unstaffed warehouse space)

bulleted lists

Use bullets to visually separate items in a short list. Use a numbered list for instructions that need to be completed in a specific order.

Capitalize the first word of each item or phrase in a list. No periods are needed after single words or short phrases that do not complete a sentence (similar to a grocery list).

Office supplies:

- Copier toner
- Fax paper
- File folders

Use periods after words or phrases that complete a sentence.

Please bring me the year-end figures on:

- Domestic sales revenues.
- Total operating costs.
- Net operating income.

Use parallel construction in lists.

Use this

Individuals applying for permits must:

- Be 21 or older.
- Possess a valid driver license.
- Reside in this state.

Not this

Individuals applying for permits must:

- Be 21 or older.
- Possession of a valid driver license.
- Residency in this state.

capital / capitol

capital: the city that is the seat of government

Olympia is the capital of Washington State.

capitol: the building where the government meets

The Legislature meets in the Capitol Building.

capitalization

Research shows that capital letters slow the reader down and diminish comprehension. "The current trend is to use capitalization more sparingly—to give importance, distinction, or emphasis only when and where it is warranted." (Gregg Reference Manual)

Similarly, do not write words or sentences in all caps for emphasis. Words written in all capital letters have "no shape," while words with small letters vary in height. When we read text, especially when we're skimming, we read whole words and phrases—and we recognize these words and phrases partly by their shape. (englishclub.com)

Programs vs. services: Use title case if it's the name of an official program, and only capitalize "program" if that is part of the official name. Services are not given title case.

Washington Prescription Drug Program

Mental health services

Capitalize the proper names of agencies, departments, divisions, programs, governing boards, committees, health plans, providers, etc.

Health Care Authority

Public Employees Benefits Board Program

Uniform Medical Plan

Committee on Health Disparities

Capitalization in headings and subheads— see: *titles (capitalization)*.

Do not capitalize the words "agency," "board," "committee," "program," "unit," "section," "office," "division," etc., unless the entire proper name is used.

Contact the agency for details.

The board voted to adjourn.

The Rates Committee meets tomorrow.

This plan offers a low deductible.

That division meets today.

Capitalize "state" in "Washington State," but not in "the state," or "state of Washington," except when referring to an official government entity. It is not necessary to use "State" after "Washington" unless referring to the government or comparing to Washington D.C.

> Washington State funds K-12 schools.

> In the state of Washington, apples are a major export crop.

> I work for the State of Washington.

> If you moved to the state recently, you might not know how to pronounce Puyallup.

Capitalize "building" only when it is part of the official name.

> Russell Senate Office Building

> General Administration Building

> The new administration building is under construction.

Capitalize "biennium" only when referring to a specific biennium.

> 2015-17 Biennium

> The same thing happens every biennium.

Capitalize the words "senator," "director," or "representative" only when used with the person's name.

> Senator Tom Jones spoke at the conference. Representative Smith spoke to the director. The senator spoke to the congressman.

Always capitalize:

Congress

Governor

Governor's Mansion

House (meaning House of Representatives)

House of Representatives

Legislature

President (when referring to the U.S. President)

Senate

Vice President (when referring to the U.S. Vice President)

Do not capitalize:

budget

capital campus

capital grounds

fiscal year

legislative

legislator

legislation

Capitalize "federal" only when it is part of an official name.

> Federal Reserve Board

> It is subject to federal, state, and local taxes.

Capitalize "capitol" when referring to the Washington State Legislative Building.

> Meet on the steps of the Capitol Building.

Avoid using ALL CAPS in text, forms, headlines, or subheadings, except for commonly used acronyms, computer terms, and trademark names that use all caps.

> IBM

> CEO

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

A federal agency within the United States Department of Health and Human Services that administers the Medicare program and works in partnership with state governments to administer Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and health insurance portability standards.

Cherry Street Plaza

HCA's main office building, located at 626 8th Ave SE in Olympia. Use CSP only on second reference.

child care

Two words. Don't use "day care."

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Part of Apple Health for Kids, a program that provides low-cost health coverage to children in families that earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid.

clichés

Keep clichés to a minimum. If you do use a cliché, do not put quotation marks around it.

Correct

Health care workers may not always practice what they preach when it comes to keeping up to date with cancer screenings.

Incorrect

Health care workers may not always "practice what they preach" when it comes to keeping up to date with cancer screenings.

COFA Islander Health Care

Under a state law passed in 2018, HCA pays health care premiums for qualified individuals from Compact of Free Association (COFA) Islands. The COFA nations include the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated State of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau.

complement / compliment

complement: to complete or to make perfect

A simple dessert of berries makes a fine complement to a meal.

compliment: to praise or to flatter

The CEO was full of compliments for your presentation yesterday.

compound modifiers

A compound modifier (or compound adjective) consists of two or more hyphenated words that function as a unit, express one thought, and modify a noun.

fast-track career

well-known speaker

up-to-date report

high-tech equipment

If the words are not before a noun, do not hyphenate them.

We're on a fast track.

The speaker is well known.

The report is up to date.

The equipment is high tech.

Do not hyphenate adverb + participle combinations if the adverb ends in "ly."

newly eligible enrollees

highly valued employee

computer and web terms

Note hyphenation and capitalization:

e-business

e-commerce

email

home page

internet

intranet

iPhone

Listserv

online

team site—refers to HCA SharePoint pages created and used by specific work or project teams

web

webmaster

webpage

website

World Wide Web

conference rooms

Cherry Street Plaza conference room names generally have themes according to each floor: 1st floor/fruits, 2nd floor/trees, 3rd floor/flowers, 4th floor/native tribes, 5th floor/birds. In Townsquare 1, the conference rooms have mountain names; in Townsquare 2, they are Pacific ocean life (Coho, Orca). Townsquare 6 has the Columbia room on the third floor.

When writing the name of a conference room, use both the name and the number, without the words "conference room" and without a number sign. It is not necessary to include "CSP" or "TS."

Correct:

My next meeting is in Eagle 552.

Incorrect:

My next meeting is in Eagle Conference Room….my next meeting is in Eagle…my next meeting is in Eagle #552.

consumer-directed health plan (CDHP)

A type of insurance plan that has lower premiums, higher annual deductibles, and higher out-of-pocket maximum than traditional health plans.

contact information

Addresses:

Person's Name
Division/Program Name
Name of Organization/Agency
PO Box 12345
Olympia, WA 98504-2345

Phone numbers:

800-660-9840

360-725-1915

See also: *telephone numbers*.

Email:

jane.jones@hca.wa.gov

Web addresses:

www.hca.wa.gov or **hca.wa.gov**

Do not use "http://" in a normal web address, but do use it for noting a secure site that has an "s" in it.

https://

continually / continuously

continually: an action that recurs regularly and frequently

It rains continually in the Pacific Northwest.

continuously: an action that never stops over a period of time

It rained continuously the entire day.

continuation coverage

Continuation coverage allows someone who recently lost their employer-based health coverage to continue their current insurance policy as long as they pay the full monthly premiums. COBRA is one example.

copay

Do not hyphenate.

coverage without a managed care plan (also referred to as fee-for-service)

Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) coverage without a managed care plan is a model where payment is made for individual medical services. Apple Health directly pays the health care professional who provided the health care services.

coworker

Do not hyphenate.

cubicle

See: *office and cubicle addresses*.

dates and days

Do not abbreviate months or days of the week, except in forms, tables, or narrow columns where space is tight. Do not add "st," "nd," "rd," or "th" to the date.

> Correct
>
> September 17

> Incorrect
>
> September 17th

Separate the day of the week and date with a comma.

> The initiative began on Monday, September 17.

When using the month, day, and year, separate the year with commas.

> The initiative began on March 10, 2003, and continued for five years.

Do not place a comma between the month and the year when the date is not included.

> Correct
>
> September 2012

> Incorrect
>
> September, 2012

For year/month/day numeric sequences, the international standard is YYYY-MM-DD, such as 2018-10-18 for October 18, 2018.

Use through/to/and or hyphens to indicate ranges:

- Monday through Friday or Monday-Friday
- March 22 to April 10, 2018, or March 22–April 10, 2018
- November 1 through November 30 or November 1-30

day care

See: *child care*.

disability / disabled

Acknowledge the individual person, not the disability.

Correct

List your dependents with disabilities on form C.

Incorrect

List your disabled dependents on form C.

dollars

Spell out when referring to nonspecific amounts, and use the $ symbol for specific amounts.

The Governor said every dollar we spend on education is an investment.

The grant included $5 million for communications.

A state employee pledged $150 for the charity.

Do not add a decimal point or zeros to a whole dollar amount.

Correct

The ticket was $1.

I paid $5 at the door.

The budget for the project is $110,000.

Incorrect

The ticket was S1.00.

I paid $5.00 at the door.

The budget for the project is $110,000.00.

Exception: Use a decimal point and zeroes in a column format if needed to maintain a uniform column.

$150.50

25.00

8.05

Format fractions of dollars as shown below, whether in text, charts, or graphics.

Lunch cost $1.50 per child.

The group raised $331.75 at the car wash.

The amount owed is $1,570.82.

However, dollar amounts used in text are often rounded, if the specific amount is not important.

This year's auction raised more than $1,000.

Last year's auction raised thousands of dollars.

For monetary amounts of less than one dollar, use figures and spell out "cents."

The increase was 25 cents.

In graphs and charts, use decimal points to indicate amounts less than one dollar.

.25

.33

.58

driver license

Not "driver's license."

email

One word, no hyphen. Accepted term in all uses for electronic mail.

Employees and Retirees Benefits Division (ERB)

Formerly the Public Employees Benefits Division, it was renamed in October 2017 to reflect the addition of the School Employees Benefits Board program. Note: ERB is a *division* that contains two *programs*, PEBB and SEBB.

EOC

Employer of Choice, a term describing HCA's strategy and desire to attract and keep good employees.

every day / everyday

every day: happens each day.

> You eat oatmeal for breakfast every day.

everyday: ordinary.

> These are my everyday clothes.

farther / further

farther: distance

> She swam farther than anyone else.

further: to a greater degree or extent

> We will look into this further.

federal

Capitalize "federal" only when it is part of an official name.

> Federal Reserve Board

> It is subject to federal, state, and local laws.

federal income eligibility guidelines

Set by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and used by state agencies to determine the income eligibility of people applying to some federal programs.

federal poverty guidelines

Official income amounts per person and per family that the federal government defines as being in poverty. The poverty guidelines are issued each year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

federal poverty level

The federal poverty guidelines are sometimes referred to as the "federal poverty level," but that phrase is ambiguous and should be avoided, especially in situations (e.g., legislative or administrative) where precision is important. The phrase "federal poverty guidelines" is preferred.

fee-for-service (also referred to as coverage without a managed care plan)

"Fee-for-service" is a model in which payment is made for individual medical services. Most Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) clients now have managed care coverage, rather than fee-for-service coverage.

It is a compound adjective modifying a noun, such as "program." It should be hyphenated and go before the noun it modifies. Do not capitalize unless it begins a sentence.

> You may get your health care through the state's fee-for-service program.

See also: *managed care*.

fewer / less

fewer: plural things that can be counted

> Fewer cars

> Fewer accidents

less: singular things that cannot be counted

> Less traffic

> Less stress

First Steps

See: *Maternity Support Services and Infant Case Management*.

fiscal / FY

Fiscal year 2017

FY 2017-18

floor

Building floors do not need to be capitalized.

It's on the fourth floor.

form

Never capitalize the word form. Do not use in the title of a form. For example, "This is the Enrollment/Change form."

fundamentals map

HCA's fundamentals map shows our mission, vision, and values; key goals; processes and process measures; and outcomes and outcome measures. It is the foundation of HCA's performance measurement system.

General Fund

The state General Fund is the state fund from which the ongoing expenses of state government are paid.

HCA style on this term follows the Governor's Office use: lowercase "state" when used as a preceding adjective, but capitalize "General Fund."

GovDelivery

GovDelivery is the technology system we used to send information by email to targeted groups of customers or stakeholders.

Governor

Always capitalize, even without a specific name.

headlines and subheads

See: *titles (capitalization)*.

Health Benefit Exchange

The name of the quasi-state agency that operates the health exchange in Washington State.

See also: *Washington Healthplanfinder*.

health care

Two words.

Health Care Authority

Official agency name is Washington State Health Care Authority, although Health Care Authority is acceptable as the first reference for most in-state and HCA-internal uses. HCA is acceptable on second reference.

Use of "the": Use "the" when spelling out the name of HCA or any state agency

I work for the Health Care Authority.

I used to work for the Department of Enterprise Services.

When using the acronym, do not use "the"

I work for HCA.

I used to work for DES.

See also: *Washington State Health Care Authority*.

health care reform

All lowercase.

health care system

All lowercase.

health exchange

The health exchange is the website where people apply for Medicaid or subsidized health insurance. Ours is run by the Health Benefit Exchange, and we call it Healthplanfinder.

Health Home

Washington's Health Home program is made possible by the Affordable Care Act, which allows states to provide care coordination to high-cost/high-risk Medicaid and Medicare/Medicaid (dual)-eligible clients.

Health Information Technology (HIT)

Specific measures defined in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (HITECH) 2009. Do not use "HIT" when referring to general health information technology issues.

health information technology

Generic term. Not the same as Health Information Technology (HIT).

Health Insurance Premium Tax Credits

HIPTC or Tax Credits acceptable on second reference. Do not use "Advanced Premium Tax Credit" or APTC.

Healthier Washington Collaboration Portal

A web-based platform that supports people and teams engaged in transforming our health and wellness system. The resources and collaborative spaces are used by a variety of partners, including physical and behavioral health providers, public health, Accountable Communities of Health, and community organizations.

https://waportal.org

HealthPathWashington

No longer in use. Formerly a managed fee-for-service payment model for dual-eligible Medicaid and Medicare patients.

Healthplanfinder

Do not use alone; always use "Washington Healthplanfinder."

See: *Washington Healthplanfinder*.

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) program

Washington's Health Technology Assessment (HTA) program uses scientific evidence to determine if health services are safe and effective.

Help Desk

Do not use. See "Service Desk," the official HCA term.

he/she, he or she

Avoid using in a sentence; rewrite around it.

Preferred

Clients who want to change coverage should call us as soon as possible.

Avoid

If a client wants to change coverage, he/she should call us as soon as possible.

his/her, his or her

Avoid using in a sentence; rewrite around it whenever possible.

Correct

Clients may add their newborn children to their accounts.

Incorrect

A client may add his or her newborn child to his or her account.

Hispanic / Latino

"Hispanic" focuses on Spanish-speaking origin. This means Spain is included, but Brazil is not, because Brazilians speak Portuguese. "Latino" refers to people of Latin American origin. This includes Brazil and excludes Spain.

home page

Two words describing the main landing page of an intranet or internet site.

Inside HCA

The title of HCA's intranet.

Inside HCA Digest

Staff newsletter, emailed to all staff on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Formerly called HCA Insider.

inter / intra

Do not hyphenate either of these prefixes when joined with a noun, unless it is a proper noun.

inter: means "between" or "among"

interagency

interstate

intra: means "within" or "inside"

intranet

intrastate

italics

Avoid using italics to add emphasis (use bold instead). Use italics for footnotes, or to denote the titles of books, newspaper articles, published forms and documents, and other works.

Gone With the Wind

Wheel of Fortune

Mona Lisa

The Seattle Times

For Your Benefit

its

Possessive of "it."

The vendor lost its contract.

it's

Contraction of "it is."

It's my turn to drive.

jargon

Avoid using jargon, or words that only a small subset of your audience understands.

> Preferred
>
> Are you eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare?
>
> Avoid
>
> Are you dually eligible?

Labor and Industries (L&I)

OK to use the ampersand in abbreviations, headlines, or instances of limited space. Otherwise, spell out the word "and." Do not use "LNI."

Lean

Lean means maximizing customer value while minimizing waste—or creating more value with fewer resources. Capitalize the L (consistent with Results Washington). Do not write it in all caps—it is not an acronym and does not stand for anything.

legal documents

Capitalize specifically named documents. Do not capitalize when used as a term of general classification.

> Submit the 2016 Employee Enrollment/Change form within 31 days.

> Submit the enrollment form within 31 days.

legislative

Annual legislative sessions are identified by the year in which they occur.

> The 2016 legislative session

legislative citations

"WAC" stands for Washington Administrative Code; WACs are regulations adopted by agencies. "RCW" stands for Revised Code of Washington; RCWs are laws passed by the Legislature.

Do not use periods after the letters for "RCW" or "WAC."

Avoid citing "RCW" or "WAC" if possible by using Plain Talk techniques to explain the citation. Substitute the words "state law" if you don't need to be specific. When the context calls for it, cite the specific WAC or RCW ("WAC 14-104" or "RCW 5.24.010") to give people the information they need to follow up on the listing.

Legislature

Capitalize when referring to a specific state's legislature.

> the Washington Legislature
>
> this year's Legislature in Olympia
>
> state legislatures around the nation

local health jurisdictions

A city/county health department or related agency.

log in / log on — login / logon

Log in or log on (two words) should only be used as verbs. Login or logon (one word) can be nouns or adjectives.

logos

Reference: Inside HCA > Tools & resources > Communications tools > Brand guide.

managed care

Apple Health pays a health plan a monthly fee for clients' care, including preventive, primary, specialty, and other health services. The health plan then pays the health care professional who provided the care.

managed care organization (MCO)

An organization under contract with the Health Care Authority to provide health care services through their network of providers.

Maternity Support Services and Infant Case Management

Sometimes referred to as First Steps, this program helps low-income pregnant women get the health and social services they may need and covers a variety of services for pregnant women and their infants.

M.D.

Doctor of Medicine degree. Goes after a person's name. Do not use both "Dr." and "M.D." for the same person.

Correct

Dr. David Johnson
David Johnson, M.D.

Incorrect

Dr. David Johnson, M.D.

Medical Assistance Customer Service Center (MACSC)

Pronounced "Max." The call center that takes questions about Apple Health from clients and providers.

Medicaid

In Washington State, Medicaid is called Washington Apple Health. It is the largest Washington State medical assistance program, providing health care coverage to approximately 1.8 million Washington residents in 2019. Many are children covered by Apple Health for Kids. Medicaid's costs are shared by the state and federal governments. Medicaid was created by Title XIX of the Social Security Act of 1965.

Medicaid expansion

The part of the Affordable Care Act that raised the income limits for Medicaid eligibility, effective January 1, 2014.

Medicaid Transformation

A five-year agreement between the state and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that provides up to $1.5 billion federal investment for regional health system transformation projects that benefit Apple Health (Medicaid) clients.

Medicare

Medicare is a national social insurance program administered by the federal government. It provides health insurance, regardless of income or medical history, to Americans age 65 or older, younger people with disabilities, and people with end-stage renal disease.

Medical Eligibility Determination Services (MEDS)

The HCA call center that takes questions about Apple Health eligibility and conducts post eligibility reviews.

more than / over

More than: greater than, or of a greater duration

More than 80 people signed up.

He worked here for more than a decade.

Over: above, beyond, or at an end

The bread is in the cupboard over the toaster. Your cell phone minutes are over the limit. The enrollment period is over.

My Account (PEBB Program or SEBB Program)

When PEBB or SEBB is referencing "My Account," the acronym must always appear before "My Account" and a space must always appear between the two words.

Correct

PEBB My Account

SEBB My Account

Incorrect

PEBB MyAccount

SEBB MyAccount

My Account

Native American

Preferred:

American Indian/Alaska Native (not *Alaskan*)

navigator

A person trained to help people use the Healthplanfinder website.

non

Do not hyphenate the prefix "non" when joined with a common noun.

nonstandard

nonstop

nonprofit

Do hyphenate it when joined to a proper noun modifying another noun.

non-American tourist

non-Congressional rule

numbers

For the most part, spell out numbers zero through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above.

> She brought five cupcakes to the meeting.

> He ate 15 grapes at lunch.

Use numerals (including 1 through 9) to express periods of time and when they are used as technical measurements and significant statistics (as in ages and percentages).

> The winning time for the marathon was 2:20:43.

> She won 53 percent of the vote.

> Mortgage rates start at 5 percent.

> The 8-year-old boy rode his bike.

Spell out all numbers when they begin a sentence.

> Seventy-five people attended the meeting.

> Nineteen eighty-five was an interesting year.

Spell out "hundred," "thousand," "million," etc., when writing whole numbers in text.

> He said it a thousand times.

> She collected hundreds of signatures.

> Billions of stars light the sky.

> $13 million

Spell out units of measurement (e.g., inches, feet, pounds) in text, but use figures for specific measurements.

> 12,000 pounds

> 9 by 12 inches

Compound numbers below 100 made up of two words are hyphenated. Do not hyphenate numbers above 100. These would only rarely be spelled out, as in when they begin a sentence.

> Twenty-four blackbirds were baked in a pie.

When a decimal stands alone without a whole number preceding the decimal point, insert a zero before the decimal point (keeps the reader from overlooking the decimal).

> 0.25 (not .25)

office and cubicle addresses

HCA has a number corresponding to every employee office and work station in its Cherry Street Plaza, Townsquare 1, Townsquare 2, and Townsquare 6 buildings. Generally, CSP offices, CSP cubicles, and offices in TS1, TS2, and TS6 contain the floor number within the coding, so adding "5th floor" is unnecessary. Work stations in TS1 and TS2 include floor numbers. The formats are as follows:

Cherry Street Plaza:

CSP-R543   (indicates an office—"R" — on the fifth floor of CSP)
CSP-5283   (indicates a cubicle on the fifth floor of CSP)

Townsquare 1, 2, and 6:

TS1-FL3-16 (indicates a cubicle on the third floor of Townsquare 1)
TS1-R415   (indicates an office—"R" — on the fourth floor of Townsquare 1)

online

Do not hyphenate.

out-of-pocket

Hyphenate in all instances.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

See: *Affordable Care Act*.

PEBB Program

See: *Public Employees Benefits Board Program*.

percent

Express percentages in numerals and spell out the word "percent." The % symbol may be used in technical or statistical material, and in graphics and columns.

> We got answers from 25 percent of the population.

Like pizza	Like hamburgers	Total
64%	36%	100%

Ph.D.

Doctor of Philosophy. Not a medical degree (M.D.). Goes after a person's name.

Do not use both "Dr." and "Ph.D." when referring to a person.

Plain Talk

The Governor's Plain Talk Executive Order 05-03 requires all state agencies to use simple and clear language when communicating with citizens and businesses. HCA employees also need to be familiar with HCA Policy 1-08, Plain Language in Written Communications.

Also see: *Writing for the Health Care Authority— Plain Talk*.

p.m.

Standard abbreviation for "afternoon" with a specific time.

See also: *time*.

position titles

Capitalize position titles when they come before a person's name. Lowercase if the title comes after the name.

> Vice President John Smith attended the meeting.

> John Smith is a vice president with that organization.

Set off titles with commas when used parenthetically following a name. Do not separate the name from the title with a comma when the title precedes the name.

> John Doe, deputy director, spoke at the conference.

> Deputy Director John Doe spoke at the conference.

PO Box / post office / US Postal Service

Capitalize "PO" in an address.

The mailing address is PO Box 34.

Lowercase "post office" when referring generically to the building.

The parking lot is next to the post office.

Capitalize when referring to the US Postal Service.

The US Postal Service raised the price of first-class stamps today.

Premium Surcharge Help Sheet

Not "Surcharge Help Sheet" (old term).

Prescription Drug Program

See: *Washington Prescription Drug Program*.

preventative / preventive

HCA's preferred form is "preventive."

ProviderOne

ProviderOne is Washington's social and health services provider payment system.

Public Employees Benefits (PEB) Board

The Governor appoints nine members to the PEB Board to set eligibility requirements, approve employees' premium contributions, and approve benefits of participating health plans.

Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Program

Administered by the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, this program provides insurance coverage to eligible state and higher education employees, retirees, and their dependents, as well as eligible groups. Capitalize "Program" when used in the entire proper name or with the acronym when referring to the program.

Q&A, Q&As

Question and answer; no apostrophe in plural form.

QTR

Short for quarterly target review of agency performance measures established by HCA leaders.

qualified health plan

A private health plan approved for the Washington Healthplanfinder.

Qualified Health Plan with Tax Credits

"QHP with Tax Credits" or "Tax Credits" acceptable on second reference. Do not use "Advanced Premium Tax Credit" or "APTC."

RCW

Revised Code of Washington; format as RCW followed by numbers:

RCW 1.04.040

regarding / regardless

Avoid "in regard to / in regards to / with regard to / as regards / irregardless."

Results HCA

Results HCA helps us track and measure progress in key areas of our work. Results HCA is guided by our fundamentals map, which shows our mission, vision, and values; key goals; processes and process measures; and outcomes and outcome measures. HCA is similar to Results Washington, the statewide performance measures that agencies report to the Governor's Office.

Retiree Coverage Election/Change

Not "Retiree Coverage Election Form" (old term).

reuse

Do not hyphenate.

room

See: *conference rooms*.

rulemaking

One word, no hyphen.

School Employees Benefits (SEB) Board

Created in the 2017 Legislative Session. The Governor appoints nine members to the SEB Board to design and approve insurance benefit plans for school employees and to establish eligibility criteria for participation in insurance benefit plans. Starting January 1, 2020, school employees of charter schools, and represented employees of educational service districts will participate in the SEBB Program.

School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) Program

Administered by the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, this program provides insurance coverage and other benefits to eligible employees of school districts and charter schools, and their families. Capitalize "Program" when used in the entire proper name or the acronym when referring to the program (SEBB Program). Together, the SEBB and Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Programs make up the ERB Division.

self

Hyphenate the prefix "self" when joined to a noun.

> self-addressed envelope
>
> self-help

Omit the hyphen when "self" is the base word followed by a suffix.

> selfish
>
> selfless

Service Desk

(Not Help Desk.) The HCA work group that addresses employee needs regarding desktop support, system accounts, software, servers, purchasing, and Facilities/Building Services requests.

Services Card

Issued to Apple Health clients to show they are enrolled. It shows their ID number and is used much like other insurance cards.

SmartHealth

SmartHealth is the state's voluntary and confidential wellness program for Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Program and School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) Program members. It includes a mobile-friendly website that allows participants to track their wellness activities and earn incentives. The Washington Wellness program within the ERB Division of HCA manages the SmartHealth program.

Social Security number (SSN)

Capitalize Social Security in all cases. In straight text, the word "number" is not capitalized. However, in forms and graphics, the abbreviation "SSN" is acceptable.

staff

The word "staff" is singular, meaning all the people on the staff. It does not mean a single person.

> The staff is handling this case with care.
> Jody is a staff member here.

stakeholder

Do not hyphenate.

state

Capitalize "state" when it follows "Washington."

> Washington State Legislature
>
> I live in Washington State.

Do not capitalize "state" when used generically or in place of an actual state name.

> He moved to the state last year.
>
> She visited every state in the country.
>
> These employees work for the state.

state-registered domestic partner

Not "registered domestic partner."

states

Always spell out state names in text. Do not use U.S. Postal Service abbreviations or other abbreviations except when giving a mailing address.

Correct

> Toppenish, Washington
>
> Carmel, California

Incorrect

> Toppenish, WA (USPS abbreviation)
>
> Carmel, Calif. (Associated Press abbreviation)

statewide

Do not hyphenate.

sub

Do not hyphenate when used as a prefix, except when joined to a proper noun.

> subcommittee, subcontract, sublease
>
> sub-Saharan

TANF

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a federal program that provides temporary cash for families in need. Administered through the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.

telephone numbers

Use a hyphen to separate an area code from a phone number: 360-123-4567. Because differing area codes are so common in everyday use—and also because Western Washington switched to mandatory 10-digit dialing July 29, 2017—do not write a telephone number without using the area code, even for local Olympia numbers. This includes internal HCA numbers and employee cell numbers that do not follow the 360-725-#### format (see below).

Correct:

Call restaurant in Olympia at 360-754-8909.

Incorrect:

Call the restaurant in Olympia at 754-8909.

Use the same format when referring to a toll-free number, with "toll-free" afterward:

877-123-4567 toll-free.

For internal uses, most employee and conference room phone numbers follow the format 360-725-1234—when writing a phone number in this group, preferred internal style is to abbreviate it as 5-1234. Do not use "x" or "ext."

911 (not 9-1-1):

"Call 911."

"Make a 911 call."

Note: To access 911 from HCA's Olympia-based telephone system, you must first dial 9.

than / then

than: shows comparison

Rather than ignore the problem, face it head on.

We would rather be safe than sorry.

then: at that time, next, or in a logical progression

The line was higher then.

Pour the concrete first, then smooth it out.

If you didn't want it, then why did you take it?

that / who

that: can refer to a category or type of person

He is the kind of student that should take advanced math.

All the clients that responded preferred option B.

who: refers to an individual person or group

She is the only one of my managers who can speak Japanese fluently.

John, who stayed until the end, enjoyed the show.

See also: *who / whom*.

their / there / they're

their: possessive of "they"

Kathy and Johnny painted their house an interesting color.

there: a place

Please put it down over there.

they're: contraction of "they are"

They're going on vacation next month.

them / they

When referring to a department, company, or organization, use the singular pronoun "it," not "they" or "them," as the subject.

Correct

The Health Care Authority has advised me it will continue to maintain its facilities.

Incorrect

The Health Care Authority has advised me they will continue to maintain their facilities.

Avoid using "he or she" more than once within a sentence as a gender-neutral, non-specific pronoun. Whenever possible, rewrite the sentence to make the subject plural.

Correct

Clients may add their newborn children to their accounts.

Incorrect

A client may add his or her newborn child to his or her account. A client may add their newborn child to their account.

See also: *Use gender-neutral words when possible*.

time

For time on the hour, do not use zeroes to denote that there are no minutes.

Correct

The meeting begins at 3 p.m.

Incorrect

The meeting begins at 3:00 p.m.

Punctuate "a.m." and "p.m." with periods.

Be here by 8 a.m. if you want to get a parking spot.

If "a.m." or "p.m." ends the sentence, no other period is needed.

The deadline is 5 p.m.

Use through/to/and or hyphens to indicate ranges.

7 a.m. to 10 p.m. or 7 a.m.–10 p.m.

Use "noon" rather than 12 p.m. and "midnight" rather than 12 a.m.

Pick up your check between 9 a.m. and noon.

The bill goes into effect at midnight.

If the start and end times of an event are both in the morning or both in the afternoon/evening, use the corresponding a.m. or p.m. reference only once.

Lunch is from 12:30 to 2 p.m.

If the time span stretches between a.m. to p.m., use both.

The meeting goes from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

time zones

HCA is located in the Pacific Time Zone. If it's necessary to refer to our time zone, use Pacific in parentheses:

> Our New York clients should be aware that our work group starts the day at 9 a.m. (Pacific).

Do not use PDT (Pacific Daylight Time), PST (Pacific Standard Time), or related terms. These refer to whether we are "in" daylight-saving time or not, which is confusing to many people, as well as unnecessary. Referring to the name of the time zone is adequate and preferred.

titles (capitalization)

For page titles and headings on HCA websites, the preferred style is sentence case—capitalize only the first word and any proper nouns.

> Providers care for your health

> Join us for Public Service Recognition Week

For forms, webinar and presentation/program titles, HCA publications, Legislative reports, and other official publications, capitalize every word except articles (a, an, the), short conjunctions (and, as, but, if, or, nor), and short prepositions (at, by, for, in, of, on, out, to, up). The first and last words should always be capitalized, regardless of whether they are conjuctions or prepositions.

> Providers Care for Your Health

Townsquare 1, Townsquare 2, Townsquare 6

Townsquare 1 and Townsquare 2 are joined office buildings HCA occupies at 621 8th Avenue SE in Olympia. Townsquare 6 is at 805 Plum Street SE in Olympia. "Townsquare" is capitalized. Do not use roman numerals, and only abbreviate as TS1, TS2, or TS6 on second reference.

tribe / tribal

Lowercase unless part of a proper noun.

> Snoqualmie Tribe

> Puyallup Tribal Health Authority

Tricare

Do not use in all caps.

try to

Not "try and."

Correct

We're going to try to balance the budget.
Try to get some sleep.

Incorrect

We're going to try and balance the budget.
Try and get some sleep.

underline

Use underlines only when a word is hyperlinked.

under way / underway

under way: Use to describe a project or program getting started

The project gets under way next week.

underway: A nautical term used only when referring to nautical crafts

The aircraft carrier got underway.

Uniform Medical Plan (UMP)

Uniform Medical Plan Classic and Consumer-Directed Health Plan (CDHP) are self-insured by the state of Washington and offered to Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Program members. Uniform Medical Plan Achieve 1, Achieve 2, and High Deductible are self-insured by the state of Washington and offered to School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) Program members.

See also: *UMP Plus*.

UMP Plus

Also self-insured by the state of Washington, UMP Plus is offered to PEBB and SEBB Program members who live in certain Washington counties. UMP Plus is part of HCA's move to value-based purchasing, emphasizing quality of care, lower cost, and customer experience. Do not use a + in place of "Plus" or spell out Uniform Medical Plan Plus in written communications.

unique

Means "one of a kind." Do not use to mean "unusual." There's no such thing as "very unique."

United States / U.S.

Spell out when used as a noun; abbreviate when used as an adjective.

The United States is a big country.

How can we improve the U.S. economy?

URL (including shortened forms)

Uniform resource locator, commonly referred to as a web address.

value-based purchasing

Hyphenate first two words only.

voicemail

One word, no hyphen. Do not shorten to v-mail or vmail.

VSM

Value stream mapping—putting in order all of the activities required to fulfill a customer request.

WAC

Washington Administrative Code; format as WAC followed by numbers:

WAC 182-12-1234

Washington Apple Health (Medicaid)

The name for Medicaid in Washington State. On first reference, use the full name; on subsequent references, use Apple Health. Some cases—such as web headings and social media—might not allow for full use of the first-reference term. Contact **HCACommunications@hca.wa.gov** for assistance. Do not use WAH as an abbreviation.

Washington Healthplanfinder

Online marketplace at **www.wahealthplanfinder.org** designed to help individuals, families, and small businesses find quality health plans. Always use the full name; do not shorten to "Healthplanfinder" on subsequent references.

Washington Prescription Drug Program (WPDP)

HCA administers the WPDP. The Prescription Drug Discount Card is one feature of the program. The card provides prescription drug discounts for Washington residents who don't have prescription drug coverage. The WPDP also participates in the Northwest Prescription Drug Consortium, which allows Washington state agencies, local governments, businesses, labor organizations, and uninsured consumers to pool their purchasing power to get better prices on prescription drugs.

Washington State

Capitalize "state" when preceded by "Washington."

See also: *state*.

Washington State Health Care Authority

The formal name of our agency, used especially on legal documents or when involving audiences outside the agency. Within the agency, "the Health Care Authority" or "HCA" is normally adequate.

See also: *Health Care Authority*.

Washington Wellness

Washington Wellness helps organizations participating in the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Program and School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) Program to build and grow sustainable wellness programs. It is a program within the ERB Division of HCA.

web addresses (URLs)

Do not include "http://" when noting a URL. ln many cases, "www." is also unnecessary. When a web address comes at the end of a sentence, use a period after it.

Try to avoid splitting a web address over two lines. If you can't avoid splitting the URL, don't insert a hyphen at the end of the first line, as you would if a word were split.

Correct

See the chart at **www.hca. wa.gov**.

Incorrect

See the chart at **www.hca.- wa.gov**.

web

Lowercase; adequate reference to World Wide Web in all cases.

webpage

One word.

website

One word.

web terms

See: *computer and web terms*.

well-being

Noun; hyphenated.

well-being assessment

All lowercase; hyphenate first two words only.

which / that

Both are used to refer to places, objects, and animals.

which: introduces nonessential clauses, preceded by a comma

> John left his dishes, which he rinsed, in the sink.

that: introduces essential clauses that don't need commas

> Sarah cleaned the dishes that she had used.

who / that

who: refers to specific people

> James, who arranged transportation for everyone, came to the meeting.

that: can refer to objects and categories of non-specific people

> The clients that could arrange transportation came to the meeting.

who / whom

May be either singular or plural.

who: the nominative form, equivalent to "we," "I," "he," and "she." Substitute one of these pronouns in a sentence to test if you should use "who."

> Who left this here? (Test: She left this here?)

> Who is calling? (Test: He is calling?)

whom: the objective form, equivalent to "us," "me," "him," and "her." Substitute one of these pronouns in a sentence to test if it should be "whom."

> To whom were you talking? (Test: You were talking to him?)

> Whom should we charge? (Test: Should we charge her?)

who's / whose

who's: contraction of "who is"

> Who's going to get coffee?

whose: possessive of "who"

> Whose SUV is parked in the compact car space?

work group

Two words.

> Correct
>
> Children's Mental Health Work Group
>
> Incorrect
>
> Opioid Response Workgroup

your / you're

your: possessive of "you"

> This is your book.

you're: contraction of "you are"

> I heard you're getting a new dog.

ZIP code

Use ZIP in all caps (stands for zone improvement plan).

Punctuation

apostrophe '

Joins two words in a contraction.

> you're (for you are)
>
> it's (for it is)
>
> they're (for they are)

Shows possession for singular nouns that do not end in "s."

> John's book
>
> the boy's bike (belongs to one boy)
>
> the providers' payments (more than one provider)

Shows possession for irregular plural nouns that do not end in "s."

> the children's toys

Shows possession for plural nouns and names that end in "s."

> the boys' tree house (belongs to more than one boy)
>
> the Hendersons' house {the house belongs to all the Hendersons)

Shows possession for singular nouns and names that end in "s."

> the bus's door
>
> the boss's office
>
> James's work station

Apostrophes are rarely used to change a singular noun to a plural.

> two divisions not two division's
>
> all managed care plans not all managed care plan's
>
> the reports are done not the report's are done

In rare cases where confusion might otherwise result, use "apostrophes" to make a noun plural.

> I got all A's on my report card.
>
> There are too many l's in your memo.

Lowercase letters are made plural by adding "'s."

> dotting the i's and crossing the t's
>
> wearing pj's
>
> Mind your p's and q's.

Indicates an omission of one or more letters or numbers. Note that the apostrophe curls toward the missing number or letter.

> beggin' your pardon
>
> y'all come back now
>
> in the '80s

asterisk *

Used to call attention to a footnote at the bottom of the page.

brackets [ ]

Use brackets to enclose an insertion within a direct quote.

> "The picnic is scheduled for Saturday [editor's note: contingent on the weather] at the Town Center Park," according to the coordinator.

When a parenthetical element falls within another parenthetical element, use brackets to mark the inside element.

> We'll have a cake walk at the Bite of HCA again this year. (Everyone [except Elliott] enjoys the cake walk.)

Use brackets to enclose sic, which indicates that an error, peculiar usage, or misspelling is in the original quoted material. (Latin for "thus"; in full: sic erat scriptum, "thus was it written.")

> Joe said, "It's a doggy dog [sic] world," when the correct term would have been dog-eat-dog world.

colon :

Type only one space after a colon. Use a colon to introduce a short list.

> The agenda:
> • July 4 picnic
> • posters
> • clean-up crew

Use a colon to introduce items that complete a sentence.

> You may be eligible to enroll if you are a retiring employee of a:
> • State agency
> • State higher education institution
> • K-12 school district
> • PEBB-participating employer group

Capitalize the first word after a colon only if the material that follows stands alone as a sentence (unless the first word is a proper noun).

> The agenda is set: We will discuss ProviderOne Phase 2 at the upcoming forum. Two courses are required: algebra and history

> Two volunteers stepped forward: Ellen and Mike.

comma ,

Use a comma before the "and" in a simple series. This is often referred to as the "Oxford comma" (because of its traditional use by the Oxford University Press). *(Also see dates and days.)*

> She will be gone the first, third, and fifth day of the month.

dashes – or —

There are two dashes, the en dash and the em dash. Neither is a hyphen.

En dash –
Used to separate numbers. No spaces before or after an en dash.

> The conference will take place May 3–4.

> Enrollment increased by 25 percent in 2014–2015.

Em dash —
Use to set apart a nonessential element that you want to emphasize. An em dash indicates a dramatic pause or abrupt change within a sentence. At HCA, we use a space before and after the em dash so we can treat the em dash the same in our printed documents (and PDF files), as in our electronic documents (web pages and email). This before-and-after space prevents weird line breaks.

> The speaker had prepared for questions — but not for heckling.

ellipsis ...

Three periods with one space before and one after. Use to indicate a sentence that trails off, a long pause, or omitted text. Add a period when you use the ellipsis mark at the end of a sentence.

exclamation point !

Try to avoid in business communications. Reserve for situations that require exceptional feeling or emphasis. Do not use to set off "Note" boxes in HCA materials—use a colon instead:

Correct:

Note: If you are a retiree... [Or "Alert:" or "Important:"]

Incorrect:

Note! If you are a retiree... [Or "Alert!" or "Important!"]

hyphen -

Use a hyphen to make a compound word.

Connect two or more words functioning together as an adjective before a noun.

She wore her lazy-day clothes.

Split a word between syllables at the end of a line of text (when the software in use doesn't do it automatically).

Avoid ambiguity (a small businessman... or a small-businessman?)

Do not use a hyphen to connect –ly adverbs with adjectives to form another adjective.

Correct:

the barely used vacuum cleaner.

Incorrect:

the barely-used vacuum cleaner.

If you're not sure whether a word is hyphenated, check a recently published or online dictionary.

Often a word made from two words is hyphenated when it first comes into use (on-line and e-mail, for example) and later evolves into one word (online and email).

Hyphenate a compound adjective that comes before a noun, when needed for clarity. Do not hyphenate a compound adjective that comes after the noun.

She is an out-of-state auditor.

The auditor is out of state.

In general, do not use a hyphen to set off a prefix at the beginning of a word, or a suffix at the end of the word:

Correct:

biweekly

nondescrimination

Incorrect:

bi-weekly

non-descrimination

These words do not take a hyphen:

email	online
pretax	reenroll

Use a hyphen to join two words that commonly go together to make up one word or unit.

follow-up	drive-in
get-together	write-up

parentheses ( )

Use parentheses to enclose parenthetical material independent of the main thought of a sentence. Parentheses can enclose an entire sentence, a phrase, a word, a number, or an abbreviation.

> I couldn't remember his last name when I saw him again (but I think it started with a ''T'').

> Melanie introduced all the speakers. (Good thing I didn't have to introduce him.)

> She only likes one flavor (vanilla).

period .

Use only one space after a period.

Exception: Letters
(See: *Correspondence Guidelines*)

pipe |

Use to separate a section title from a following description; capitalize the first word following the pipe.

> Benefits | How to decide what you need

question mark ?

Put question marks inside quotation marks when it applies to the quoted material.

> "Did you finish that report?" he asked. "Do you have all the information?"

A question mark goes outside the quotation marks when it applies to the entire sentence but not to the quote.

> When did he say, "You did a nice job on that survey"?

quotation marks " " or ' '

Double quotation marks " " go outside of commas, question marks, and periods. They go inside semi-colons.

> "Go home," she said. "It's all over."

> He asked, "Would you repeat that?"

> The child yelled, "I want my toy"; everyone stared.

Single quotation marks ' ' are used for a quote within a quote.

> "Did you hear him say, 'I'll get you for that?" asked the attorney

> "No, but I heard her say, 'I wouldn't do that if I were you,' just before she vanished," replied the witness.

Also, use when a quote appears within a headline:

> 'I won't go quietly,' boxing contender says

Use italics rather than quotation marks to indicate the title of a book, movie or other work.

> The book is titled, *The Need for Speed.*

To indicate inches or feet in a measurement, use straight quote marks instead of curly quote marks. These are available through the *Insert Symbol* function in Word and Outlook.

> The envelope is 8" x 12".

> The area is 12' x 20'.

semicolon ;

Use to join two independent clauses that you want to be close in relationship to each other. (Independent clauses can stand alone as simple sentences.)

If I die, I forgive you; if I live, we'll see.
(Spanish proverb)

slashes / or \

Forward slash / used in URLs.

www.website.com/about

Used in some abbreviations.

c/o

w/

Used to express alternatives.

and/or

on/off

AM/FM

Used in ratios.

doctor/patient

cost/benefit

backslash \ This is only used in some URLs and computer codes.

C:\Users\employee\Desktop

Acronyms and initialisms

Acronyms are abbreviations that are pronounced as words, such as CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program). **Initialisms** are abbreviations that are pronounced one letter at a time, such as BHO (behavioral health organization).

Use acronyms and initialisms sparingly. Preferred style is to spell them out, especially for communications (print or online) intended for people not employed by the government.

In addition to the main listing in this section, you might also choose to access these longer lists for more detailed, program-specific style guidelines:

- Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery
- Healthier Washington
- Medicaid Transformation

Please report corrections and additions to **HCACommunications@hca.wa.gov**.

A&A	Office of Audit and Accountability (HCA division)
AA	Assistant administrator or administrative assistant
ABA	Applied behavior analysis
ACA	Affordable Care Act
ACH	Accountable Communities of Health
ACP	Accountable Care Program
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AFRS	Agency Financial Reporting System
AG	Attorney General
AGO	Attorney General's Office
AIAN	American Indian / Alaska Native
ARM	Analytics, research, and measurement
AMA	American Medical Association
AMG	Amerigroup Washington, Inc.
ASO	Administrative service organization
BHO	Behavioral health organization
BH-ASO	Behavioral health – administrative service organizations
CCO	Chief Communications Officer

CCW	Coordinated Care of Washington
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDO	Chief Data Officer
CDR	Clinical data repository
CFD	Combined Fund Drive
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
CHPW	Community Health Plan of Washington
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CIS	Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly INS)
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
COAP	Clinical Outcomes Assessment Program
COBRA	Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act
COC	Certificate of coverage
COCC	Certificate of creditable coverage (proof of loss)
COM	Communications (HCA division)
COPES	Community Options Program Entry System
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CQCT	Clinical Quality and Care Transformation (HCA division)
CSA	Central Services Administration (HCA division)
CSO	Community Service Office (Department of Social and Health Services)
CY	Calendar year
D&I	Diversity & Inclusion (HCA Committee)
DBHR	Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery
DCAP	Dependent Care Assistance Program
DLS	Division of Legal Services (HCA division)
DME	Durable medical equipment
DRS	Department of Retirement Systems
DSHS	Department of Social and Health Services
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EAR	Employee Action Request

EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EHB	Essential health benefits
EHR	Electronic health record
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
EMR	Electronic medical records
EMS	Exempt Management Service
EMT	Extended Management Team
EOC	Employer of Choice
EPSDT	Early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment program
ERB	Employees and Retirees Benefits (HCA division)
ERG	Employee resource group
ERISA	Employment Retirement Income Security Act
ERD	Employee Resources Division (HCA division)
ERMO	Enterprise Risk Management Office; part of DLS
ERT	Emergency Response Team
ESD	Employment Security Department
ESS	Employee Self Service
ETS	Enterprise Technology Services (HCA division)
EXO	Office of the Director
FAQ/FAQs	Frequently asked questions
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FEHBP	Federal Employees Health Benefits Program
FFS	Fee-for-service
FIG	Federal income guidelines
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act
FPL	Federal poverty level
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Centers
FS	Financial Services (HCA division)
FSA	Flexible spending arrangement
FTE	Full-time equivalent
FY	Fiscal year
HBE	Health Benefit Exchange

HCA	Health Care Authority
HDHP	High-deductible health plan
HEDIS	Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set
HIAA	Health Insurance Association of America
HIE	Health information exchange
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
HITECH	Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act
HMO	Health maintenance organization
HR	Human Resources
HRA	Health risk assessment
HSA	Health savings account
HTA	Health Technology Assessment
HTML	Hypertext markup language
IT	Information Technology
IR	Interactive response (formerly interactive voice response [IVR])
L&I	Department of Labor and Industries
LAN	Local area network
LTC	Long-term care
LTD	Long-term disability
LWOP	Leave without pay
MAGI	Modified Adjusted Gross Income
MACSC	Medical Assistance Customer Service Center; part of MECS
MCO	Medicaid managed care organization
MEC	Minimum essential coverage
MECS	Medicaid Eligibility and Community Support (HCA division).
MEDS	Medical Eligibility Determination Services; part of MECS
MHW	Molina Healthcare of Washington, Inc.
MITA	Medicaid Information Technology Architecture
MMA	Medicare Modernization Act
MMIS	Medicaid Management Information System (ProviderOne)

MOUD	Medication for opioid use disorder
MPOI	Medical Program Operations and Integrity (HCA division)
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
NCQA	National Committee for Quality Assurance
OE	Open enrollment
OFM	Office of Financial Management
OIC	Office of the Insurance Commissioner
OMEP	Office of Medicaid Eligibility and Policy; part of MECS
OMSD	Office of Medicaid Systems and Data; part of P1OS
OMWBE	Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprise
ONC	Office of the National Coordinator
OTC	Over the counter
OUD	Opioid use disorder
P1OS	ProviderOne Operations and Services (HCA division)
P4PH	Plan for improving population health
PA	Prior authorization
PAR	Position Action Request
PCP	Primary care provider
PDL	Preferred drug list
PDP	Prescription Drug Program
PDP	Performance and development plan
PEBB	Public Employees Benefits Board
PERS	Public Employees Retirement System
PHR	Personal health record
PMPM	Per member per month
POS	Point of service
PPO	Preferred provider organization
QA/QI	Quality assurance/quality improvement or quality initiative
QTR	Quarterly target review
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RFI	Request for information
RFP	Request for proposals

RFQ	Request for qualifications
RFQQ	Request for qualifications and quotations
RFR	Request for renewal
RHC	Rural health clinic
RIF	Reduction in force
RLS	Record Locator Service
RSA	Regional Service Area
SAAM	State Administrative and Accounting Manual
SEBB	School Employees Benefits Board
SHIBA	Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors
SLA	Service level agreement
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Social Security income
SSN	Social Security number
SSPS	Social Service Payment System
SSR	Supply service request
SUD	Substance use disorder
S&W	Safety & Wellness (HCA Committee)
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TPA	Third-party administrator
TPL	Third-party liability
TRS/TTY/TDD	Telecommunication Relay Service/ Teletype Telephone/ Telecommunication Device for the Deaf *HCA uses TRS.*
UDP	Uniform Dental Plan
UHC	United Health Care Community Plan
UMP	Uniform Medical Plan
URL	Uniform resource locator
VPB	Value-based purchasing or payment
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WDS	Washington Dental Service
WFSE	Washington Federation of State Employees

WIC	Women, Infants, and Children program
WMS	Washington Management Service
WPEA	Washington Public Employees Association
WSHA	Washington State Hospital Association
WSHIP	Washington State Health Insurance Pool
WSMA	Washington State Medical Association