

Style Guide for the Utah County Health Department

The Utah County Health Department is committed to promoting the health of our community through disease- and injury-prevention, health promotion, and emergency preparedness and response. We strive to interact with Utah County residents in ways that are respectful, effective, collaborative, and safe. By doing so, we provide public health services that are invaluable to the education and ~~health~~-wellbeing of the community.

This guide is meant to encourage consistency in all internal and external communications, including websites, emails, PowerPoints, and printed materials related to our department. By applying these recommendations, employees will reinforce our department's visual identity and purpose through color, type, images, words, layout, and use of the official logo across all communication channels. We believe that our brand can make us stand out and become a better and more available resource to the public.

As part of upholding our department values, especially excellence in communications and operations and professional customer service, this style guide mainly adheres to the standards within *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition). This style guide is not meant to be comprehensive; however, situations not discussed in *Chicago* are outlined, principles that are commonly overlooked are emphasized, and; in cases where there are equal alternatives, the preferred option is listed. Style preferences that depart from *Chicago* guidelines are specifically noted. All such decisions ultimately strive to make department communications consistent and clear to employees and those they serve.

In Utah, many residents ~~come from~~have emigrated from Spanish-speaking countries and may have difficulty navigating the department website or other resources. In keeping with the department value of careful, open, and fair consideration ~~for~~of the concerns and cultural values of all people, this guide also incorporates elements of global English as outlined in John R. Kohl's *The Global English Style Guide: Writing Clear, Translatable Documentation for a Global Market* (2008, SAS Press: Cary, North Carolina, ISBN 978-1-59994-657-3).

5 Grammar and Usage

5.1 Nonstandard English

Avoid using nonstandard English words and phrases. Many of our presentations and public information pieces are translated for the Spanish-speaking population living in Utah County. Nonstandard words like *ain't*, *gonna*, and *irregardless* are not common for non-native speakers and may cause confusion and should be avoided (*Global English* 9.14).

× Janae and Shannon gotta visit all the gas stations in Provo that sell e-cigarette products.

✓ Janae and Shannon have to visit all the gas stations in Provo that sell e-cigarette products.

Commented [SU1]: To improve readability, I indented the examples and added a space after each example paragraph.

Commented [SU2]: For clarity's sake, it's best to change the font of the examples. If the rest of the text is in an Oldstyle font like Times New Roman, consider using a sans serif font like Arial, Calibri, or Oswald for the examples. Here I've changed it to Calibri.

5.2 Singular *they*

Many style guides do not currently accept *they* as a singular pronoun. However, as a department we encourage the use of singular *they* and its various forms in order to reduce wordiness, slashes, or unnecessary awkwardness in sentences.

× If your child has not received his or her flu shot, please bring your child to the immunization clinic as soon as possible.

× If your child has not received his/her flu shot, please bring him/her to the immunization clinic as soon as possible.

✓ If your child has not received their flu shot, please bring them in to the immunization clinic as soon as possible.

5.3 Ambiguous pronouns

Make sure that pronouns clearly refer back to the correct noun. If it is in any way unclear what the pronoun refers to, replace the pronoun with its noun. Watch carefully for ambiguous pronouns in long paragraphs or with multiple antecedents. Pronouns like *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* should always be used as adjectives and should therefore be followed by a noun (*Global English* 5.2).

× Each applicant needs to bring his or her birth or marriage certificate. Those are issued by the County Clerk's Office in the County Administration Building.

✓ Each applicant needs to bring his or her birth or marriage certificate. Marriage certificates are issued by the Utah County Clerk's office.

× The director asked Kyle to attend the emergency preparedness meeting so that he could be better prepared for Friday's presentation.

✓ The director Kyle to attend the emergency preparedness meeting so that Kyle could be better prepared for Friday's presentation.

5.4 Biased language

The UCHD does its best to help people who are at risk of contracting or spreading STIs. Since many STIs are spread through the LGBTQ+ population, it's important to

communicate the desire to help in a nonjudgmental, caring, and sensitive way. For example, don't use the generic *he*. Only refer to specific genders when necessary.

× Men who have multiple partners, particularly male partners, are at greater risk of getting an STI and should visit the local health department for regular screening.

✓ People who have multiple sexual partners are at greater risk of contracting an STI and should visit the local health department for regular screening.

6 Punctuation

6.1 Ellipses

Ellipses should only be used when quoting a source. Insert ellipses to tell the reader that something the source said has been deleted, or include ellipses if they were directly part of the quote.

Although ellipses can be used to illustrate hesitation or an incomplete thought (*Chicago* 13.50), please do not use them for such purposes in department emails, brochures, presentations, etc. Use commas, colons, semicolons, or periods instead.

× Sexually active adults at risk of an STI should get screened regularly. . . . The MSM population is at a particularly high risk; individuals from this group should get screened every three months.

✓ Sexually active adults at risk of an STI should get screened regularly. The MSM population is at a particularly high risk; individuals from this group should get screened every three months.

✓ "This should serve as a reminder . . . to take steps to prevent mosquitoes and West Nile Virus. The importance of using insect repellent with DEET cannot be overstated," says Mosquito Abatement Director Dan Miller.

6.2 Em dashes

Em dashes or paired em dashes are appropriate for emphasis or parenthetical statements. Em dashes can introduce certain phrases but should never immediately precede a complete sentence (*Global English* 8.5). Do not use double hyphens to replace an em dash (*Global English* 8.4). Instead, insert an em dash by learning the alt code or by searching through insertable symbols in your chosen word processor.

× Being prepared at the county level -- since all threats are "local" -- is vital in protecting health and property should the worst situation occur.

✓ Being prepared at the county level—since all threats are "local"—is vital in protecting health and property should the worst situation occur.

6.3 En dashes

In our department, generally the only use for the en dash is in a numerical range.

However, a numerical range should not be shown with an en dash if the numerals are preceded by *from* or However, a numerical range should not be shown with an en dash if the numerals are preceded by *from* or *between*.

- × We administer the DTaP vaccine to children 0-6 years old.
- ✓ We administer the DTaP vaccine to children 0=6 years old.

× Our immunization clinic is open from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

✓ Our immunization clinic is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

6.4 Sentence spacing

Put only one space between a punctuation mark and the letter that begins the next sentence (*Chicago* 2.9). Some people have been trained to press the spacebar twice before moving on to the next sentence, but we do not encourage this practice. In department publications, it will be considered an error.

× The yellow fever vaccine has been used safely and successfully in more than 70 countries over the last 30 decades. As with any clinical trial, please allow extra time for the paperwork involved.

✓ The yellow fever vaccine has been used safely and successfully in more than 70 countries over the last 30 decades. As with any clinical trial, please allow extra time for the paperwork involved.

Commented [SU3]: Added “and successfully” to make the sentence long enough that the double space would be visible after the first period.

6.5 Commas

When used correctly, commas can enhance the readability and flow of a sentence. However, obsessive comma use can clutter a sentence, distracting and stumbling the reader. In some cases, you may want to precede the word *because* with a comma to show that the final clause is not central to your meaning. In other cases, the comma before a phrase like *such as* should be omitted (*Global English* 8.3).

× WNV is not spread through casual contact, such as touching or kissing.

✓ WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing.

6.6 Serial commas

We advise everyone to use serial commas in any list of three or more items. The serial comma is put after the second-to-last item on the list (before the *and* or the or) so that the reader can’t confuse the last two items for a combined pair. Please be consistent in your use of the serial comma.

× Utah County Substance Abuse offers subsidized treatment according to a sliding fee scale that is based on current federal poverty guidelines, income and family size.

✓ Utah County Substance Abuse offers subsidized treatment according to a sliding fee scale that is based on current federal poverty guidelines, income, and family size.

Commented [SU4]: The sentence “Our website has sentences like the following:” didn’t seem necessary because readers assume that this department’s website will adhere to its own style-guide rules.

6.7 Slashes

Slashes can and should be replaced by *or* or *and* to avoid ambiguous meaning (*Global English* 8.12). Exceptions include abbreviations, in which cases the slash is widely accepted and understood. For example, HIV/AIDS is acceptable.

× Birth/death certificates are available at the Utah County Health and Justice Building.

✓ Birth and death certificates are available at the Utah County Health and Justice Building.

6.8 Quotation marks

Use smart quotation marks rather than apostrophes or straight quotation marks to separate quotations from the running text. Straight quotes should only be used with numerals, specifically to stand in for units of measurement. Do not use quotation marks for metaphors or common expressions.

× Other equine "encephalitic" diseases (sleeping sickness, eastern equine encephalitis, western equine encephalitis, and Venezuelan equine encephalitis) belong to another family of viruses for which there is no cross-protection.

✓ Other equine "encephalitic" diseases (sleeping sickness, eastern equine encephalitis, western equine encephalitis, and Venezuelan equine encephalitis) belong to another family of viruses for which there is no cross-protection.

✓ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that children should be restrained in booster seats until they are 4'9" and weigh about 80 pounds.

7 Spelling, Distinctive Treatment of Words, and Compounds

7.1 "A" and "an" before acronyms

The article preceding an abbreviation is based on how the acronym or initialism is pronounced. For example, MS could be spoken as *em ess* (when referring to multiple sclerosis) in one context and spoken as *manuscript* in another; each option takes a different article (*Chicago* 10.9).

× A RN will administer a TB test.

✓ An RN will administer a TB test.

7.2 Spelling

For the standard spelling of words, follow the accepted American English guidelines in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (*Chicago* 7.1).

7.3 Hyphenation of compounds

Use current forms of closed, open, and hyphenated compounds as listed in *Webster's* (*Chicago* 7.81).

× He has an interesting mindset.

✓ He has an interesting mind-set.

8 Names, Terms, and Titles of Works

8.1 Position titles

In headings, lists, or addresses, or in direct or formal address, always capitalize position titles (*Chicago* 8.20).

× The patient is ready for you, doctor.

✓ The patient is ready for you, Doctor.

8.2 Titles with names

In formal text, capitalize position titles only when they immediately precede a personal name; when they appear alone or after personal names, they should be lowercase (*Chicago* 8.19).

× Ralph L. Clegg is the Executive Director.

✓ Executive Director Ralph L. Clegg toured the new office last week.

8.3 Headline style

Traditional headline style should be used in all titles and subtitles (*Chicago* 8.159). Capitalize the first and last words in headlines and all major words. Prepositions should be lowercase regardless of length, except when they are part of a two-word verb such as *turn on, look up*, etc.

× Parenting With Love And Logic.

✓ Parenting with Love and Logic.

9 Numbers

9.1 Numerals

In running text, spell out all numbers ten and under (*Chicago* 9.3). Use numerals for numbers over ten, including money, ages, and dates, unless the number begins a sentence.

× The Board is made up of nine community volunteers who serve 3-year terms.

✓ The Board is made up of nine community volunteers who serve three-year terms.

9.2 Money

Most of the department's visitors are low-income families, so it's important to make service prices obvious and easy to read. Use numerals and the dollar symbol for all costs (unless the service is free; then writing out "free" would be the best option).

× If you attend our car seat class, you can purchase a car seat from us for just twenty-five dollars.

✓ If you attend our car seat class, you can purchase a car seat from us for just \$25.

9.3 Dates

Most American English-speakers will know that dates like *10/5/19* or *11/3/15* list the month, then day, then year, but in other countries the month and date are reversed. To avoid any confusion, please write out or abbreviate the name of the month.

× The breastfeeding class in Lindon will start on 12/02/2019.

✓ The breastfeeding class in Lindon will start on December 2, 2019.

9.4 Telephone numbers

Telephone numbers should always be listed **as** numerals. Include the area code, separated by **a** hyphen. Do not use parentheses or an italic font.

- × 801xxxxxx
- × (801)xxx-xxxx
- ✓ 801-xxx-xxxx

10 Abbreviations

10.1 When to abbreviate

In formal text, write out acronyms and initialisms the first time they appear, especially if they may confuse readers who are unfamiliar with the terminology. Afterward, the terms can be shortened and written in all capital letters. In charts or as titles associated with personal names, abbreviations **are** always acceptable. See also *Chicago* 10.2 for appropriate punctuation.

- × The WIC program was created as a pilot program in 1972.
- ✓ The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program was created as a pilot program in 1972.

10.2 Periods with abbreviations

Do not put spaces or periods between the letters in acronyms and initialisms (*Chicago* 10.4). Exceptions to this rule include the abbreviations *a.m.* and *p.m.* and **any** initials in a proper name.

- × Executive Director Ralph L Clegg, E.H.S., M.P.A.
- ✓ Executive Director Ralph L. Clegg, EHS, MPA

10.3 Latin abbreviations

Many Latin abbreviations (such as *ca.*, *e.g.*, and *i.e.*) can cause confusion, especially to non-native speakers. To aid clarity, avoid these abbreviations by using more standard English phrases. Contrary to *Global English*'s recommendation, **the department** allows the use of *etc.* when necessary, although the phrase *and so on* is an ideal replacement (*Global English* 9.11).

- × Foster Grandparents serve at-risk children and youth with special needs through a variety of community organizations, e.g. schools, hospitals, drug treatment facilities, correctional institutions, etc.
- ✓ Foster Grandparents serve at-risk children and youth with special needs through a variety of community organizations, including schools, hospitals, drug treatment facilities, correctional institutions, and so on.