

Section C: Content and Formatting Standards

Content and formatting standards for directives provide a logical and consistent structure for users to locate information quickly and fully. Plain, clear language is used to achieve the directive's objectives.

C-1 Content preparation: Communications that constitute directives, as defined by this handbook, are created and cleared electronically, even if the subsequent communication is to be distributed electronically through email or website posting. Electronic communications include the ability to incorporate hyperlinks or tags, which are electronic tools that link to other documents or source materials.

Directives do not use the terms “shall”, “must”, “required”, “requirement,” or other mandatory prescription or present a course of conduct intended as an enforceable action, unless, the directive cites a statutory or regulatory source or other explicit authority to impose a binding requirement through a nonrule document. Directives may impose an information collection or recordkeeping requirement, if approved by OMB, and an OMB approval number is cited.

C-2 Handbook formats: Handbooks are to include:

1. A table of contents, if the handbook contains more than 20 paragraphs;
2. A list of forms and/or reports required by the handbook, provided on a separate page following the table of contents;
3. A consistent outline format throughout the document;
4. A classification number assigned by the DDMO;
5. An Office number as a sequential identifier following the DDMO classification;
6. An effective date shown on each page;
7. A transmittal signed by the HUD Principal with the same DDMO classification and office number; and
8. Appendices with the effective date, DDMO subject classification and office number shown on each page, if applicable.

To present changes to a handbook, identify the revised chapters, sections, paragraphs, and/or pages in the table of contents with the effective date of the change. On each page containing a change, indicate “changed on date shown as xx/xx/xxxx” immediately adjacent to the page number. When more than half of the pages of a handbook are changed, a complete revision of the document is required, including showing a revision date on each page. Program offices may elect to clear a complete revision even if less than half the pages are changed, so as to avoid the requirement to mark changes.

To cancel an obsolete handbook, the originating organization prepares a form HUD-23 to transmit to the DDMO and clear with offices having responsibilities affected by the canceled handbook, that in turn ensures that references to the canceled handbook are removed from other handbooks by the respective DMO.

C-3 Notice formats: Notices are to include:

1. A banner using form HUD-21-B that identifies the parties to whom the notice is addressed, a title for the notice; office number; telephone number; room number; applicable cross-references, if any; date of issuance, date of expiration; or a statement that the notice remains in effect until amended, superseded, or rescinded. If a notice amends or supersedes a prior notice, identify the prior notice in the banner;
2. Text presenting the purpose, background, and guidance in clear, plain language with acronyms spelled out and defined at first use;
3. Identification of all OMB approval numbers for recordkeeping or information collections required by the notice;
4. Contact information for further information or assistance, identifying a contact person or office by name and email; and
5. Signature of the HUD Principal. Original signatures are maintained by the originating offices with electronic postings showing execution as “/s/”. Do not include the signature symbol while the notice is in departmental clearance.