

**Policy No. 5218  
Personnel**

It is the policy of the Washington School for the Deaf to continually evaluate and revise its customer documents and web pages to ensure they are as clear, concise and straightforward as possible.

The purpose and goal of the “Plain Talk” policy is to:

- give all WSD customers, such as staff, students, parents, and the community, their rightful access to needed information by providing clear and easy-to-use documents and web pages;
  - improve customer service;
  - make agency operations more efficient and cost-effective by reducing misunderstandings, phone calls, follow-up letters and complaints.
- Employees are expected to write clear documents and web pages the intended audience can easily understand. This applies to both new and existing material. Existing documents and web pages will be reviewed and revised to reflect plain language principles if needed.

When prioritizing needed revisions, programs will take into account:

- how frequently the documents are used;
  - how critical they are to the efficient operation of the program; and
  - how important they are to the rights and time required of the customer
- Employees are expected to use plain language principles when writing documents and web content.
  - Employees will:
    - use plain language principles when writing documents and web content, as described in Executive Order 05-03;
    - develop their own skills in this area by using resources that will be made available by this agency through training offered by the Department of Personnel and resources/templates on the state’s Plain Talk web site;
    - use clear language commonly used and understood by the intended audience;
    - include only the information the customer needs, and present it in a logical sequence;
    - use short sentences;
    - write in the active voice; and
    - use a layout and design that helps the customer understand the message on the first try, including:

- adequate white space;
  - bulleted lists;
  - visual aids, such as tables;
  - helpful headings; and
  - other proven techniques.
- Documents affected by this policy are:
  - letters;
  - instructions and applications;
  - forms;
  - publications;
  - brochures;
  - reports;
  - presentations;
  - web pages;
  - any other public documents.

**Reference: Executive Order 05-03**